



TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 1

I was born as Thembisa Ntaka, to wonderful yet incredibly strict parents Ntombenhle and Xolani Ntaka. I'm one of two children they have. The

oldest. My younger sister is only 5 years younger than I am. Once I'd finished my Grade 12, I was excited to go out into the world to study. I had dreams of working in an office. I couldn't decide what exactly I wanted to study and so I chose Law. I was accepted at Mountain Peak University to my disappointment, the institution was good but I really would've preferred to be in the other side of the country. Beggars can't be choosers and so off to MPU I went. My parents were happy with this arrangement because we lived in eMthinomkhulu village, which would allow them to travel to see me without being on the road for hours. I loved this setup too because I'd also be able to go home often.

Xolani: "Ntombi yam. I want you to make us proud. Please stay away from drugs and alcohol and these night places. We taught you to respect yourself. Stay away from men." I should've listened to my dear father. My first year in university was great, I had made a friend who was originally from a bigger city in my province which was called Kingstown, her name is Zimmy. She made my life exciting with just her stories. She would be the one who goes out and comes back to our room with shocking funny situations. Our first year came to an end. It was finally time for me to return home.

Zimmy: "Friend, we need to celebrate. We finished our first year! Come on."

Me: "Tshomi please. You know I don't go out to clubs and such. I hate those places."

Zimmy: "How can you hate something you've never experienced? Please be serious babe. Look, give it two hours. Just two, then we come home."

Me: "Fine. No drin-"

Zimmy: "Two drinks. Just two."

Me: "Fine. Two hours. Two drinks. Then I come home." She squealed, excited. Zimasa is a child honestly. We spent the afternoon choosing clothes to wear.

Zimmy: "Oh this would look so good."

Me: "I think not. Zimmy, this won't even go over my bum. No short dresses."

Zimmy: "And this?" I looked at the red body hugging dress.

Me: "Immediately no."

Zimmy: "This two piece."

Me: "I don't think so. What's wrong with my clothes?"

Zimmy: "Maxi dresses? Them bisha, don't make me hate you. Jeans then? And a cute crop top that carries your boobs like Jesus does his cup of wine." I laughed.

Me: "You come from hell don't you?" We settled on skinny jeans and a black crop that was backless, plus a very short block heel sandal. Zimmy had the shortest denim shorts, a floral wrap top that only tied up her breast, a white blazer and black heels. She helped me with a soft glam makeup look. By 8 in the evening, we made our way to the club. This was one of the upper class spots in Mountain Peak, by the looks of the cars outside. We got a high table, sat down and Zimmy ordered cocktails. I have to admit I didn't hate looking this good. Finally doing something grown and fun, not just studying and revising. Our cocktails arrived, looking so pretty. I took my first sip.

Me: "This tastes nice."

Zimmy: "It does ne? So... What do you think of the place?"

Me: "It's gorgeous. Looks expensive."

Zimmy: "There is absolutely no need to worry about that. I just need you to let loose. You go home tomorrow and I know you'll spend your entire holiday tending to sheep." I laughed.

Me: "We don't have sheep. Just a few goats and chickens."

Zimmy: "I wish you'd visit me in Kingstown at least for a week."

Me: "If my mom says yes then sure. I would love to come to visit." I took another sip looking around the club. It was starting to fill up with gorgeous girls, dressed in sexy dresses and heels. My eyes landed on someone sitting on one of the velvet couches. He stared right back at me. I smiled sweetly. No smile, nothing. I swallowed and looked away, embarrassed. I was just trying to be polite.

Zimmy: "Stop checking the time. It's only been 30 minutes."

Me: "The music is too loud." She laughed.

Zimmy: "It's a club, people are here to dance." I shook my head and continued looked around but my stupid gaze landed on the same person. He still stared at me with a drink in his hand. Okay, this is now officially awkward and embarrassing.

Me: "Can we change seats?"

Zimmy: "Why?"

Me: "I feel like I can't see people fully from this side." She smiled and gladly swapped with me.

Zimmy: "Omg, you had the view of the VVIP this entire time?"

Me: "Is that what it is? Looked like a very uncomfortable cult meeting to me." She laughed. A man walked over to our table.

Zimmy: "Hey Khaya! You're still here?"

Khaya: "Where would I go?"

Zimmy: "Home obviously, you finished writing days ago."

Khaya: "Oh yeah. I'll probably make my way over near Christmas."

Zimmy: "It's nice having an off campus apartment ne?"

Khaya: "And a rich dad who doesn't care what I do in my spare time as long as I pass. Yes." They laughed. "Who's this?"

Zimmy: "This is Thembisa. A friend of mine."

Khaya: "From? I know your friends."

Zimmy: "You don't know her. She's my roommate. Doesn't go out, so I wanted to show her the world before she goes back home." Khaya looked at me smiling.

Khaya: "Hello Thembisa, I'm Khaya." I shook his hand, smiling.

Me: "Lovely to meet you."

Khaya: "Are you studying here?"

Me: "Yes. Doing my LLB."

Khaya: "That's crazy. So am I. Third year next year."

Zimmy: "Did you even pass this year?"

Khaya: "Obviously." He rolled his eyes, laughing.

Zimmy: "Have you decided where you'd do your articles?"

Khaya: "Whew, we're still far from that." He laughed again.

Zimmy: "I meant here or up north in Golden Crown? Thembi, Khaya's dad owns the biggest law firms in the city. This one says he doesn't want to work with him." Golden Crown was a city up north in our country that specialized in mining precious minerals. Anyone who moves up there needs to know their story but clearly Khaya didn't have that problem.

Khaya: "Okay, why are you hanging my laundry now?" He laughed. "Look, I'm unsure if I want to pursue law, I'm more interested in other things." He winked. Zimmy rolled her eyes laughing. "Hey, let me get us a table at VIP. I'll be back." He walked away.

Me: "And how do you know him?"

Zimmy: "We go out to mostly the same spaces. Khaya is a nice guy and rich as hell. He knows how to make any time a good time. He's a great person to have as a friend. When his dad isn't around, he takes us to the mansion for a party. It's so much fun." I sipped my cocktail.

Khaya: "Okay, let's go ladies." We went over to the VIP lounge and sat down.

Zimmy: "Do you like him?"

Me: "He seems nice."

Zimmy: "Hmm." She giggled. I smiled, shaking my head. I've obviously had crushes but never had a boyfriend. I wasn't even Khaya's type because suddenly as we sat there, a few girls came in, one of them kissing him full on the lips. She looked like a supermodel.

Zimmy: "Do you want the same cocktail?" I looked at my near empty drink.

Me: "Uhm, yeah."

Zimmy: "Don't want to try anything else?"

Me: "I don't want to make a fool of myself."

Zimmy: "I'm right here. Nothing will happen to you. I swear. We'll pour the drink together and pace ourselves. Here's some water too. Khaya ordered food." The other girls were carrying champagne glasses.

Me: "Okay. What do you suggest?"

Zimmy: "Let's have champagne baby." She jumped up and down in her seat like a child. My first sip of champagne was horrendous. I hated it immediately. What disgusting overpriced electric nonsense is this? It wouldn't be hard to pace myself because it would probably take me an hour to finish this one little glass. The club started to fill up. I didn't know most of the music but it was nice dancing with Zimmy and to the songs I knew, we sang.

Me: "Where's the bathroom? I need to pee."

Zimmy: "Let's go." She held my hand and we made our way out to the bathroom. I did my business and washed my hands. "So what do you think?"

Me: "Of what?"

Zimmy: "Club scene. Is it too much?"

Me: "It's okay."

Zimmy: "Just okay?" She came out the stall.

Me: "It's fun and I know what you're angling for, sure we can stay longer but how will we get home?"

Zimmy: "Same way I always get home. Don't worry, you're safe." She laughed. We walked out the bathroom and again, the same set of eyes found mine. This time he was getting up, and walking out the club with men in suits following him. That man was so strange or was I the problem? Why did I look at him first? But I always caught him staring at me so I wasn't the issue here.

We'd made it back to Khaya's apartment by 3 in the morning. When people talk about student apartments I always expect my type of room. Small, dull with a suspicious smell that no amount of cleaning gets rid of so you opt for room mist sprays. Khaya's apartment however was not that. The area on it's own was expensive. We'd come in through the basement parking so I don't know what it looked like outside. The lift up to his apartment though? Mirrored and sparkling clean with marble floors. He unlocked his door and we came in. Zimmy, Khaya, his girlfriend and I that is. I was quite tired honestly but I couldn't help but stare at this place in awe.

Khaya: "Okay. There's a second bedroom, you guys can use that."

Zimmy: "Just like that? I thought we'd have some drinks and chill?"  
Khaya laughed.

Khaya: "I have a hot woman in my bed and you want me to come drink and chill?" He looked at me. "Is that so, Thembisa?" I looked away, quite embarrassed.

Me: "No, I think you should go to bed."

Khaya: "Sure?" I looked at him and he smiled.

Me: "Yes. I think I'm turning in too. I'm tired."

Khaya: "Alright then. Goodnight ladies." He walked to his room. Zimmy looked at me and laughed.

Zimmy: "You know he's teasing you?"

Me: "For what?" She shook her head.

Zimmy: "Come, let's get you to bed. Last night was a blast." We entered the second bedroom. "Before we sleep, we wash the makeup off babes. Come." We washed our faces and made it back to bed. Just as I settled in, and closed my eyes, I could hear the sounds from Khaya's room. Really? She's not shy is she? I giggled and tried sleeping.

I was awake by 6 in the morning. I've always been an early riser. I can't sleep past 6. Especially in someone's house. It's incredibly rude. I got out of bed, starting in the bathroom then made it to the kitchen. It was so untidy and I wanted a cup of coffee. So the first thing I did was obviously clean up the dishes and kitchen. I was done in an hour, searching the cupboards for some Sphongweni coffee.

"Wow" I looked behind me to find Khaya.

Me: "I, Uhm Good morning." I looked away. He was only in his tight black underwear. I caught a glimpse of it and I understand why she was screaming.

Khaya: "Good morning. The kitchen looks nice. I don't remember calling the cleaning lady."

Me: "oh I'm sorry. I cleaned it. I was bored."

Khaya: "Bored? You clean when you're bored?"

Me: "Yeah."

Khaya: "Why won't you look at me?"

Me: "You're not fully dressed, it's rude." He laughed.

Khaya: "We're friends. You shouldn't be objectifying me like that."

Me: "I'm sorry."

Khaya: "What were you looking for?"

Me: "Coffee. I wanted to make some." He walked to where I was standing, stood directly in front of me.

Khaya: "It's right here on the counter. If you looked at me, you'd see it." I looked up at him. "There. See, you didn't explode." I looked on the counter and frowned.

Me: "Uhm. What is this?"

Khaya: "A coffee machine."

Me: "Machine? All I wanted was Sphongweni, you have that right? It's a very good coffee." He smiled.

Khaya: "I don't drink instant. Let me make you real good coffee." He took over and I stood aside watching him, well his body. He was a bit taller than me with a small body. The organ on him looked quite strong though. I'm going to hell for this thought, for sure. This was supposed to be my friend. Secondly, I wouldn't even know what to do. I hadn't gotten to the point of sex yet and my first time definitely won't be with That monstrosity.

Khaya: "There, now we give it a minute. Do you always wake up this early?"

Me: "Yes. Can't sleep past 6." Everything was just so awkward. He finally gave me a cup of coffee.

Khaya: "Do you want to go home?"

Me: "Uhm, when you're ready. I'm not in a hurry." To be honest, I really wanted to sit on that balcony and day dream. The views were spectacular.

Khaya: "I'm going back to sleep miss. So I'll probably be ready in some hours."

Me: "Oh." Hours would be a stretch. What would I sit here and do? "I can catch a taxi. It won't be a problem. I should leave after this cup. I would like to bath and change, I'm supposed to leave at 12 for home."

Khaya: "It's Saturday. Why don't you leave tomorrow? I wanted us all to go to a Mozambican restaurant for lunch and drinks, hit another club later tonight and have some fun. Just once before the holidays. I'm going to be in this city all alone when everyone goes to their families." My heart panged for him. Why didn't he want to go to his family?

Me: "Okay. I'll call my mom and let her know I'm coming later. Tomorrow."

Khaya: "Thank you. Oh and, I have some clean sweat pants and vest for you to change into. After your bath. Assuming you want to bath now?"

Me: "After my cup. Thank you Khaya."

Khaya: "You're welcome." He walked back to his room. I walked out on to the balcony and sat on the hanging chair. This view was beauty within itself. The cup of coffee I was having hit my soul. Even the air felt different here. Good different. Maybe delaying home for a few more days wouldn't be such a bad idea?

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## Chapter 2

I'd managed to convince my mother that I had an assignment to submit on Monday that I'd forgotten about. I had to sound really sad. She bought it, trying to encourage me. If only she knew I was staying in this city to eat a man's money. After a relaxing bath, I sat in the balcony chair just thinking about my usual nonsensical things. Around 9 I got up to make some breakfast for everyone to wake up to. Jimmy walked in the kitchen.

Jimmy: "Hey baby."

Me: "Hey. How are you?"

Jimmy: "Still sleepy. What are you wearing?"

Me: "Khaya gave them to me. I needed a bath."

Zimmy: "Omg?" She gasped. "You and him?"

Me: "No. He has a girlfriend who is still in his room. He's just being nice."

Zimmy: "Hmm." Khaya walked in the kitchen as I collected eggs from the fridge.

Khaya: "Good morning ladies." At least he was wearing shorts now. He took an apple, sitting on the bar stool next to Zimmy.

Zimmy: "Where's your girl?"

Khaya: "How do you ask about a person you're looking at?" She giggled.

Me: "Scrambled or fried eggs?"

Khaya: "Scrambled please."

Me: "What about your girlfriend? Is she still sleeping?"

Khaya: "No." Zimmy was beside herself laughing at something I have no clue about.

Me: "Is she coming to eat?"

Khaya: "Are you hungry?"

Me: "Okay, I'm confused. The girl who was screaming your name Khaya, is she coming out to join us for breakfast?"

Khaya: "Why are you yelling at me mami?"

Me: "I haven't even raised my voice."

Khaya: "She left at about 5." He bit into his apple.

Me: "5?? Did you fight?"

Khaya: "I don't fight baby, I only fuck. Her job was done and so she left." I was so shocked at his bluntness.

Me: "I see." Scrambled eggs it was. I made breakfast quietly while they talked and laughed. Zimmy made what she calls the breakfast juice for champions. Champagne with orange juice. I served them their food and we ate.

Me: "So I'll be leaving on Monday. I called my mother and she accepted."

Zimmy: "Yeeesss!! Thank you Khaya!!"

Me: "And why are you thanking him? I'm the one that lied to my mother so you better keep me alive until I enter her house." They laughed.

Zimmy: "Gladly."

Khaya: "Hey so why don't we go get your clothes? It'll be easier if you guys are just here honestly."

Zimmy: "This is true. We can go now while I still have energy."

Khaya: "Alright. Let me put on a shirt." He walked to his room.

Zimmy: "You like him ne?"

Me: "Yes he's a good guy."

Zimmy: "I think he likes you too."

Me: "Really? Is that why he brought a woman home and made her scream?" She chuckled.

Zimmy: "This bothers you?"

Me: "Not at all. Khaya is my friend and I'd rather keep him as that."

Zimmy: "If you say so."

Khaya drove us to Res. I hope he didn't want to come in with us. I can't remember if we left a mess before we left. Fortunately, he stayed in the car while we went up to our room. We packed our clothes in Zimmy's weekend bag. I changed into a comfortable flowy white boob tube dress, feeling more as myself. Since Zimmy was showering, I called my dad as I usually did on weekends to have a chat with him but I spoke mostly about having to finish the assignment I was supposed to do.

Xolani: "I'm so proud of you my child. Are you anywhere near finishing?"

Me: "Almost tata. I think I'll be done by tonight then I'll take a break and sleep. Tomorrow I want to double check everything and add my references which is an assignment on its own."

Xolani: "I know you can do it my child. You're very smart. Just keep praying and make sure that you don't lose focus. Are you eating well? Resting? That's as important too." I thought of just last night and this morning. I've hardly slept but I did eat well.

Me: "Yes dad. And are you well?"

Xolani: "I'm fine my child. I can't wait until you are home. Let me not keep you."

Me: "Okay. Please say hello to mum and Nele."

Xolani: "I'll do that. Goodbye angel."

Me: "Bye dad. I love you." I hung up.

Zimmy: "Done. Let's go."

Me: "I hate lying to him. I miss him so much."

Zimmy: "I know sweetie but your dad will still be there when you get home on Monday." We made our way downstairs. Khaya was in his car, listening to music with the seat pulled down, looking like he was sleeping. "Please sit in the front this time."

Me: "Why?"

Zimmy: "I already know him, you talk to him now." She climbed in the back with the bag. I entered the passenger seat. He smiled.

Khaya: "Where to now?"

Me: "I don't know. It's still quite early for lunch and I'm full."

Khaya: "Alright. We'll do drinks and movies until we get hungry. Everyone on board?"

Zimmy: "Happy with this suggestion."

Khaya: "Mrs?" I looked at him and laughed.

Me: "drinks and movies it is. Let's go." He started at the shops to stock up on snacks and drinks. It was two bottles of gin and condiments such as tonics, cordial, rosemary, mint. We made it back to his place and Zimmy made us some cocktails. Khaya sat next to me pressing the remote.

Khaya: "What are we watching?"

Zimmy: "Sasa loves romance movies."

Khaya: "Romance? Yoh, I'm going to fall asleep."

Me: "As long as it's not shooting and violence, I don't mind."

Zimmy: "Here you go. Drink up." I took a sip.

Me: "That is potent."

Zimmy: "Perfect." She sat on the single couch after drawing forward the curtains so that the room is darker. Khaya picked a movie which was a comedy, fortunately we enjoyed it. By my second cocktail I could feel a bit tipsy. So I put my drink aside.

Khaya: "Can I put my head on your lap?"

Me: "Yeah sure." He lay down on my lap. Only 5 minutes later, he was snoring.

Zimmy: "Why are you punishing yourself? Take him to bed, you're nodding off too."

Me: "I'm not taking him to bed."

Zimmy: "Babe, go to sleep. I myself am taking a nap. We slept at 3." She got up, walking to the other room.

Me: "Hey." I shook Khaya. "I think you'll be more comfortable in bed." He groaned, sitting up.

Khaya: "Didn't even realize I was sleeping. Coming?"

Me: "Uhm, I don't think so. I'll be in the other room."

Khaya: "I don't bite Thembisa." Oh what the hell. I followed him to his bedroom. "Sheets have been changed." He announced.

Me: "That's nice. Didn't take you for the domesticated type."

Khaya: "Cleaners came when I took you to get your things." He pulled the crisp white covers back, taking off his shirt. "Lucky for them, the kitchen was spotless. So they didn't have much to do." He handed me a t-shirt, then climbed in bed. I've never been in bed with a man. This scared me shitless. Especially because I know big "it" was. "You'll be more comfortable in a t-shirt than a dress." I took it off, folding it and placing it on the table. He stared at my bare breasts. I pulled on the t-shirt and climbed in bed. He cuddled me and in no time fell right back to sleep. Did I like Khaya? I think so. I really did. But we were friends. He didn't even seem like a relationship type of person.

I felt soft kisses on my neck, a hand gently squeezing my breasts. I was waking up, feeling a little hot. Then I felt his organ poking at my ass, I sat up straight. He looked at me.

Khaya: "hey." He licked his lips.

Me: "Uhm. Hi."

Khaya: "Did I make you uncomfortable?"

Me: "Erh..."

Khaya: "I'm sorry."

Me: "Don't be. I'm new to this. Being in bed with a man is something I've never done."

Khaya: "What, you fuck in the living room where you're from?" I looked away, embarrassed once again.

Me: "No."

Khaya: "You have.....fucked before right? Or maybe I'm being blunt, had sex? Made love?" I couldn't even look at him. "No fucking way." He got up from bed pulling on his shirt. "Thembisa, are you a virgin?" Oh Lord, I was about to throw up.

Me: "Yes."

Khaya: "Oh. I'm so sorry. Uhm.. I'll be in the lounge."

Me: "Why?" I looked at him. Was I disgusting suddenly.

Khaya: "Are you really a virgin? Straight talk."

Me: "Yes Khaya I am." I snapped.

Khaya: "I don't sleep with virgins Thembisa. Like at all. I am sorry. Can I get you a drink, snack? I'll be in the lounge." I stared at him in disbelief, I wanted to laugh actually. Even his erection went down.

Me: "Why?"

Khaya: "I don't have the patience Thembisa. You'll need someone gentle and loving to ease you into sex and I'm not a person who can do that. I don't want to hurt you." I nodded. He walked out the room while I got dressed in my dress. This was crazy. And very embarrassing. I made the bed, walking to the lounge. He was just sitting on the couch, clicking on

his phone. It had been a good three hour nap at least. It was now around 1 in the afternoon.

Khaya: "So I got us a reservation at the Mozambican restaurant I was telling you about. You will love their seafood. Trust me." I hope he meant fish. I wasn't a big fan of it but I didn't mind it.

Me: "Okay."

Khaya: "Why are you sitting so far now?"

Me: "Far how? We're in the same room." Zimmy walked in.

Zimmy: "Hey sweeties." She yawned, flopping next to Khaya on the couch since I took hers.

Khaya: "When should we go for lunch?"

Zimmy: "I'm down for now even. I'm quite hungry again."

Khaya: "Mrs? Are you hungry?" I stared at him. So if I'm "Mrs" who's supposed to sleep with me if it's not him? Khaya was a very confusing individual.

Me: "Yeah." I took my drink from where I'd left it before we all went to sleep.

Khaya: "Alright, let me take a shower." He went to his room, I heard the shower come on.

Zimmy: "You okay? Did he try something on you? You look mad."

Me: "No. I'm fine."

Zimmy: "Then what's wrong? We can leave if you don't feel safe."

Me: "It's not like he'll do anything to me Zimmy. He refused to have sex because I'm a virgin." She gasped. "I'm serious. I mean I understand it may be big but I would handle it."

Zimmy: "Thembisa. You're a WHAT." She hissed.

Me: "Have you ever seen me with a man Zimasa?"

Zimmy: "I just assumed you had one back home that you did the dirty with."

Me: "You know how strict my parents are. Where and how would that happen?" I sighed.

Zimmy: "And he said no?" I looked at her sarcastically. She laughed. "I'm so sorry."

Me: "I am so embarrassed, you have no idea."

Zimmy: "I can only imagine. I'm sorry friend. But nawe. All year, what were you doing while thina si-busy namadoda abantu?"

Me: "Mxim." She laughed again...

We made it to the Mozambican restaurant. I loved the aesthetic and vibe it had. We sat inside but near the balcony area. The light breeze was amazing. Zimmy ordered champagne as usual and I asked for a cocktail. No way I was going to pretend to even like that beverage. Our drinks were brought and I dove right into my cocktail. Zimmy was in her usual giggles. Honestly if you didn't know her, you'd swear she's on drugs.

Khaya: "Baby. Have you tried prawns?" After my long sip, I looked at the food menu.

Zimmy: "Baby." I looked at her. She pointed at Khaya with her eyes. I looked at him.

Khaya: "Have you tried prawns?"

Me: "Absolutely not. Don't even try to convince me."

Khaya: "Fine, what will you have?" I stared at the food options.

Me: "I think I'll stick to a burger."

Khaya: "At least promise me, you'll taste some of my food?"

Me: "I can't promise if I don't know what's on your plate. What if it catches me by surprise?" The waiter came to take our orders then walked away.

Khaya: "A few friends of mine will be joining us later."

Zimmy: "I hope it's not Craig."

Khaya: "I didn't tell you to sleep with him so it's not my business what happens between you."

Zimmy: "Urgh. I wish for just one normal weekend?"

Me: "Who's Craig?"

Zimmy: "Remember a month ago, the guy who's girlfriend walked in on us?" Khaya laughed. "Can you believe he threw me out?"

Khaya: "I told you let's go to my place and you acted boujee. It's what you get."

Zimmy: "Mxim." I sipped my drink quietly thinking. Was there something between Zimmy and Khaya?

Khaya: "Fucks sake. What's wrong with this guy?" He mumbled.

Zimmy: "What guy?" She looked around. "Oh, him."

Khaya: "He's so pretentious. Why go to public spaces if you'll be hogging 15 million bodyguards? Surely you must have your own restaurant by then so no one bothers you."

Zimmy: "So we have to leave now?"

Khaya: "Only if you're uncomfortable, are you okay babe?"

Me: "Who are you talking about?"

Khaya: "That guy there." I looked over and I saw him. He stared at me just as he did in the club.

Me: "Oh. He was also at the club last night."

Khaya: "You know him?" His tone ice cold.

Me: "How would I know him? I'm just saying I remember seeing him." I sipped my drink.

Khaya: "I see. He walks around everywhere as if he's the actual King."

Zimmy: "You need to keep it low. You know people around here don't want to hear slander on his name."

Khaya: "Mxim." He rolled his eyes.

Me: "Why does he have bodyguards? And why so many?"

Khaya: "Thinks people care enough to want to kill him." He hissed, sipping his beer.

Zimmy: "Why do you hate him so much?"

Khaya: "I don't hate him. He's just pretentious. He knows and everyone in this province knows who he is. Why does he want to be seen so badly? A person of his stature in clubs? Restaurants? Why?"

Me: "He's a human being. Surely he's allowed to enjoy himself."

Khaya: "Human being? Sure." He laughed.

Me: "You mean he's not a human?"

Khaya: "Of course he is, but he acts as if he's above all of us. My issue is, why then come be around us normal beings? Ai, let me not ruin my Saturday. I have beautiful women sitting with me." He looked at me. What a strange character Khaya was. Maybe he's interested in Jimmy? Why then doesn't he just ask her? I finished my drink while they talked about everything under the sun. I'd be on the way home now. I missed my dad more than anything. He was my best friend. He taught me quite literally everything. I spent all of my time with him. I love my mom too but my dad was my life. I got up, going to the bathroom, using the toilet and fixing my dress in front of the mirror. My cornrows were two weeks old, my hair needing a wash. I washed my hands and walked out. Just as I left the bathroom, I bumped into a hard chest in that short passage. When I looked up, a man in a black suit stood in front of me, holding a gun. I stepped back, hyperventilating. Guns scared the shit out of me. As if it was just my luck, I hit another wall and so I spun around almost in tears. It was him. He just looked at me as he always did. No smile, no emotion.

Me: "I'm so sorry. I didn't see you. I didn't know this area was closed off. I'll be out of your way." I squeezed myself around the bodyguard. Khaya walked toward me.

Khaya: "Baby? Is everything okay?"

Me: "Yes. I'm okay." I looked behind me. Mr Important was walking to his table with his bodyguards. He looked at Khaya for a brief second then went on his way.

Khaya: "Did something happen?"

Me: "No. Not at all. I just really hate guns."

Khaya: "Oh." He held my hand to our table. Our food had arrived. My appetite had just disappeared. I was actually really scared. Were they going to shoot me? He takes bodyguards to the bathroom? What the hell was that about?

Zimmy: "Baby, are you okay? You've been breathing heavy since you came back."

Me: "I'm okay." I poked at my fries.

Zimmy: "Is it Khaya again? Don't worry about him babe. Yena he likes you, he just needs to get over himself." I looked to where Khaya was supposed to be sitting. "He left 3 minutes ago."

Me: "Oh." I chuckled nervously.

Zimmy: "Thembisa please talk to me. You're scaring me."

Me: "I bumped into that guy and his bodyguard. He looked like he was about to shoot me dead." She looked at his table.

Zimmy: "Are you serious? No that's not okay Thembisa. That's intimidation mos, we're paying customers just like he is."

Me: "Please don't make a scene Zimasa. He didn't do anything or say anything. I'm just over reacting. You know how I feel about guns. I think I just want to go home."

Zimmy: "Fine. Let's pack this up." She called the waiter over then called Khaya. "Sthandwa? Your Mrs wants to go home. Okay cool." She hung up. "He's on his way." The waiter brought back our takeaways. Zimmy took out her wallet.

Zimmy: "And the bill please? I thought I said that before."

Waiter: "Your bill has been settled."

Zimmy: "I'm sure Khaya hasn't settled the bill, we weren't planning on leaving so soon."

Waiter: "Well... It has been taken care of."

Zimmy: "Okay then. Here's a tip. Thank you." She handed him R100, he thanked her and walked away. I looked up at the table out of curiosity and he wasn't looking at me. Finally. So this was all just a coincidence. I followed his gaze and it landed on Khaya who had just walked in. He bent over me hugging me.

Khaya: "We can go now." I got up from my seat. He held my hand as we walked out with Zimmy.

Me: "Who is he? Why is he like that?" I asked as we drove to Khaya's apartment.

Zimmy: "That's the Heir to the Royal Throne. That's why he's like that. Anyone without his blood is a peasant to him."

Me: "Oh." I swallowed, looking out the window.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

### Chapter 3

I had a lovely weekend with my friends. What I needed though was an extreme detox. I've never drank before but this weekend I consumed way more than a person should in their lifetime. It was now Monday and I had to go home. We came back to our flat yesterday evening and I slept in my bed. I hadn't been in bed with Khaya since Saturday afternoon when I scared him with my virgin status. We were taught that keeping our virtue as women was a good thing and only giving it to someone you see a future with. So if men don't want virgins how will I get a boyfriend? Or maybe Khaya didn't see a future with me? Dating and sex has become much more complicated than I ever imagined. Anyway, I packed my suitcases the previous night and I had nothing else left behind. Our small shared residence room had appliances, a bed, one sheet and pillow case, you had to bring a change for yourself, we had to leave all items as we found them in order not to get penalized. We were provided with food everyday and so never needed anything. The Residency leader had come to check for me and I passed my room check so I could leave. Zimmy was leaving on Friday and I don't know why but she'll have hers done then. I just know I'll really miss her. I might not even get her as a roommate next year and that scares me.

Me: "Friend, I'm leaving."

Zimmy: "I'm going to miss you so much." She hugged me. "Please promise me we will still be friends even if we get other roommates."

Me: "I promise. Also promise me you'll behave this December."

Zimmy: "I can't promise, I can only try." She laughed. "Oh and Khaya is downstairs."

Me: "Oh." I see they'll be having a lot of fun together when I'm gone.

Zimmy: "He's here for you." I looked at her.

Me: "Why."

Zimmy: "Can only ask him. Let's go." She helped me with one suitcase. I took the other.

Khaya: "Hey baby." He hugged me.

Me: "Hey. Why are you here?"

Khaya: "I'm taking you to the bus obviously."

Me: "Oh. Thank you." We loaded my things in his car.

Zimmy: "Call me when you get home."

Me: "You're not coming with us to the station?"

Zimmy: "No." She smiled.

Me: "We'll talk on the phone then. Take care."

Zimmy: "Bye baby." She giggled. I got in the car laughing. Khaya drove to the station.

Khaya: "I wish you didn't have to go."

Me: "Why?"

Khaya: "I enjoy being around you."

Me: "Really now." I wanted to roll my eyes at this.

Khaya: "Of course. That's why I spent all weekend with you."

Me: "So you fuck all of your friends?"

Khaya: "Why would I do that?"

Me: "You and I are friends, Saturday you initiated sex. Clearly you're not interested in relationships. So I'm wondering if you befriend people and have sex with them sometimes."

Khaya: "You sound upset."

Me: "Why would I be upset? You're not my man."

Khaya: "Then what's going on?"

Me: "Why do you pretend to be my boyfriend if you're going to be fucking women while I'm inside your house in the spare room?"

Khaya: "Pretend to be your boyfriend? Come on Thembisa. Why can't we just have a peaceful ride?"

Me: "You call me baby, or Mrs all the damn time."

Khaya: "And?"

Me: "And it seems like you're acting like a boyfriend."

Khaya: "You're not my type Thembisa. You're too....innocent for me. Maybe if I was a different man. In a different time. Maybe even when I'm near retirement I'd probably love to have a wife like you. But I'm literally 21, in university, I'm not looking for a wife. I want to fuck, drink and enjoy life."

Me: "Ok." I looked out the window.

Khaya: "You're making things uncomfortable now. I thought you were mature enough to understand this."

Me: "I'm making things uncomfortable?" Fortunately he pulled into the station and parked. I got out the car, unloading my belongings. "Thanks for the ride-"

Khaya: "Let me help you."

Me: "No thank you. I can take it from here. Enjoy your holidays. Take care." I dragged my bags and of course I had to do something embarrassing like trip over myself and fall. I quickly pulled myself up and walked away.

I got off my bus stop, struggling with my bags. My father was waiting there, smiling. I'd been updating him the whole way but I know he's been standing here for an hour if not more. I hugged him tight.

Me: "Daddy."

Xolani: "My baby girl. You look beautiful. University loves you." I laughed. We walked home together, taking a very slow stroll, catching up with each other. I will obviously spend a lot more time with him as I usually did but we loved our alone time.

Xolani: "The goats are doing very well. I manage to sell a few every month." We've had goats for as long as I can remember. My dad grew his few and started selling, then doing it over and over. His definition of few is probably 15 a month. He sells them for about R1200 to R1500, people come from far towns and villages for his goats. He managed to

build us a better house and upgrade some of our furniture. Now he pays for my tuition in school.

Me: "What about the chickens?"

Xolani: "I built a coup at the back. We sell eggs too now."

Me: "This is amazing Tata. I'm so proud of you."

Xolani: "I'm more proud of you. You're going to do big things in this world my child. You're studying to become a lawyer. That's a very serious career."

Me: "Thank you tata."

Xolani: "So? Is there a special boy?" I laughed.

Me: "No tata."

Xolani: "Who is he?"

Me: "Tata, there's no one."

Xolani: "What's his name?" I laughed again.

Me: "I've been very focused on school tata, I have no time for boys."

Xolani: "Are you sure?"

Me: "Yes tata." We entered the yard. My mother was in the lounge watching TV. Zanele my younger sister was with her. When she saw me, she jumped running to hug me.

Nele: "You're home!!"

Me: "Of course I am." I chuckled. "Hello mama."

Ma: "Molo Thembisa. How are you?"

Me: "I'm fine ma. I just missed you guys." I hugged her.

Ma: "At least you're here now. Take your bags to your room." I took my bags to my bedroom. It hadn't changed at all. I know I was home just two months ago. It was a very small room with a single bed pushed against the wall. The cupboard was on the opposite side of the room against the wall. So I basically had the small passage between bed and wardrobe which could only fit me. I also a small desk by the window and an old chair. Instead of unpacking I went back to my family.

Ma: "Did you manage to finish your assignment?"

Me: "Yes mama. I handed it in this morning. I couldn't wait to get out of there."

Ma: "Your father made you some dumplings and chicken stew."

Me: "And the way I'm so hungry. Yoh. Thank you tata." I went to dish up, sitting in the lounge to eat.

Nele: "How is university?"

Me: "Honestly? It's hard. You have to constantly be on top of your game, so I'm studying most of the time if I'm not in class."

Nele: "Do you have any friends?"

Me: "Yes, my roommate is my friend."

Mama: "Don't let people influence you there. Friends are bad. You must remember why you went to school and stop running around friends."

Xolani: "Hawu sthandwa. Surely it's okay to have one or two friends. Not everyone is a bad influence. It's not healthy to work all the time without break."

Mama: "Next thing you know she's back here with a baby and disease. Now we must take care of her and the child that doesn't have a father. Like Zoliswa's daughter. She was sent to Golden Crown to study and she came back pregnant, with a toddler in tow."

Nele: "Yoh, remember Andisiwe too?"

Mama: "Exactly. See where they are now? Stuck in this village."

Xolani: "People make mistakes. I'm sure if Zoliswa's daughter and Andisiwe had a support system they would've got back on track chasing their dreams but their parents wanted to keep punishing them to please the community. You can't raise your child by pleasing people of the street. They don't care. Look now, the families are suffering and no one in the community cares. Always take care of your children and family first so they can take care of you. Help them. Teach them."

Mama: "Sometimes you are boring. Those children were bad children. They didn't make mistakes, they knew what they were doing. That's what you get when you open your legs for city boys." I struggled finishing my food because now mom and dad were having a back and forth about parenting. I texted Zimmy telling her I'm home.

Zimmy: <glad to hear that. I hope the family is well?>

Me: <They're good. Arguing about parenting styles but they're okay. What are you doing?>

Zimmy: <Chilling with K and some friends.>

Me: <Who is K?>

Zimmy: <Khaya babe.>

Me: <Oh okay. We'll talk later then.>

Zimmy: <Okay babe.>

The first week home was mostly me doing housework. My mother always made me spring clean when I came home because 4 hands is better than 2. I woke up at my usual time, dressing up in leggings and an oversized t-shirt and boots. I made my way to the chickens to collect the eggs. My father was busy with the goats. I wanted to bake and sell some bread as well to make extra money while I'm here. If I were to visit Zimmy, I needed money. That's if my mother agreed. Back in the house, I started sorting the eggs. My phone rang. That was new. I hardly got calls because Zimmy only sends messages. I answered.

Me: "Hello." One of the neighbors boys knocked on the door. "Hello??" I say to my phone again. The neighbors boy is Aphiwe, in his teens. He was quite tall for his age and had a deep voice.

Aphiwe: "Sasa, I would like half a dozen please."

Me: "Okay." I sorted his 6 eggs, hanging up the phone because the other person had just kept quiet. "R12." Aphiwe accepted the eggs and gave me coins that made R12. He walked out. I looked at my phone again, I don't know this number and I wasn't about to waste my airtime with a person who refuses to speak. I made porridge for the family while still selling the eggs. The community supported us alot mostly because our prices were low. I tried telling dad to raise a bit of the prices but he refused. The profit was there but not as much as it should be. Mother woke up coming to sit at the table. I made her tea, then dished the porridge up for her. Father came in to wash his hands and I made him his tea with porridge. Zanele would only wake up around 11. I sat with my parents having my porridge with butter and sugar.

Me: "So I was thinking Tata. What do you usually eat eggs with?"

Xolani: "Some bread."

Me: "How about I start baking some scones and bread? To sell this month."

Xolani: "Wouldn't this be too much work my baby?"

Me: "No dad. I make the dough before I sleep and wake up early to bake. I will only make about 5 loaves at first. Then people can order when they want to be added to the order list."

Xolani: "Creating demand. That's very smart."

Mama: "Hewethu who will maintain this demand when you go back to school? You want people to come disturb my sleep every morning now?"

Xolani: "It's a holiday special. They will know it's only while Ntombiyam is here. You're so business minded and smart my child, you're just like your old man." I giggled.

Me: "So, can I do it?"

Xolani: "Yes. We'll go to town to buy ingredients now."

Mama: "And who will take care of the vegetable stand?"

Xolani: "You can or Zanele. We'll only be a short while."

Mama: "I'm not sitting in the sun for any reason. You know Zanele is still growing."

Xolani: "It's fine then. It's not like the business will be hurt if we close for one day. Let's go my baby, if we go now we can be back early." We got up from our seats. My mother was obviously angry at this but I didn't even care anymore. I've stopped being influenced by her negative remarks. For the longest time she would berate me for having ideas to make us money here at home. According to her that was a man's job and so my father must be the one working. What was our job? Well, mine. To clean the house spotless. From age of 10 I had to clean and cook. I thought when Zanele got to that age she would help but where? Nele was 14 now and didn't lift a finger unless she was keeping me company. I didn't mind though. I enjoy being busy. I went to get dressed and made my way out. Dad was starting the car outside, it was an old Nissan bakkie but it worked just fine. I got in the passenger seat and off we went.

Xolani: "So who is this special boy you're trying to forget?"

Me: "Tata come on."

Xolani: "You forget you're my child. I made you. You're more me than anyone I've ever known. So I know you're keeping busy because something is bothering you." I sighed.

Me: "He's no one, tata."

Xolani: "What is his name?"

Me: "Khaya Solinga."

Xolani: "What is so special about him?"

Me: "He's really sweet, handsome and gentle."

Xolani: "Then what's the problem?"

Me: " He doesn't want a relationship. He wants to be my friend but it confuses me alot because he acts like my boyfriend."

Xolani: "Why doesn't he want a relationship?"

Me: "He says he's only 21 and he wants to enjoy his life."

Xolani: "Have you slept with him?"

Me: "No Tata. I haven't slept with anyone."

Xolani: "Good. It seems this boy is confused and stringing you along."

Me: "I suppose."

Xolani: "You like him?"

Me: "I think so. My friend Zimmy also seems to think he likes me but I feel like she's more his type. She's the one who introduced me to him, so they're more friends than I am with him. They spend alot of time together."

Xolani: "And you're jealous?"

Me: "Do I even have a right to be?"

Xolani: "Yes. But perhaps stay away from him." I sighed. That won't be hard. Not once has he bothered to call or even text me since I last saw him.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

## Chapter 4

My mother had blatantly refused to let me go to Kingstown to visit Jimmy. I begged and pleaded but she was not having it. This made me sad but I was kind of expecting it. Dad had tried but he too couldn't convince her. It took weeks before I accepted this. I don't understand why my mother was so hard on me. My bread business was going really well. I had 10 orders a day, some families ordered two loaves at a time. For only R10 a loaf, it was a steal. More especially because it was fresh every morning. I got an order on the weekend of Christmas for a ceremony. It was Friday. They requested scones and muffins. I made three buckets by myself, my father helped me transport the buckets to the home. I'd made R300 altogether.

Me: "Thank you for helping me Tata. Can I buy you petrol?"

Xolani: "Absolutely not. I have a full tank already. You should spoil yourself."

Me: "You know mum will never let me go anywhere."

Xolani: "She means well."

Me: "How does she mean well tata? Nothing I do is ever good enough for her."

Xolani: "Just focus on school and doing well. Leave your mother be. She will come around." He drove me back home. "Ntombezwe is having Umgidi for her son. Don't you want to attend?"

Me: "No dad." I sighed.

Xolani: "Even if we go together? Your friends will be there. Come, I'm not taking no for an answer."

Me: "I don't even have anything to wear."

Xolani: "We might as well go to town and buy a dress. You just got paid." I giggled. He drove us to town.

I bought a beautiful traditional long skirt that was white with black beads and thread. I'd wear it with a fitted white t-shirt, I also added a black and

white beaded necklace. I would look so pretty. My dad had bought groceries and was packing them in the back of the bakkie.

Me: "I'm done tata."

Xolani: "Alright. Let's go." We drove back home. When we arrived, I helped dad with the groceries into the house. "Go get dressed my child. We leave in 30 minutes." I went to my room.

Mama: "Leaving for where?"

Xolani: "I'm taking her with me to Umgidi."

Mama: "Why are you taking her? Since when do you attend Umgidi?"

Xolani: "I was invited and I thought it would be nice to go outside for a bit and relax. Also, these are our neighbors, we should support them."

Mama: "And what about Zanele? Why aren't you taking her? She's also your child!"

Xolani: "Where is Zanele?"

Mama: "She went to her friends house down the village. You didn't tell her about taking her out, you only do that to your favorite child!"

Xolani: "So Zanele can go to her friends but Thembisa can't?"

Mama: "Thembisa's friends are in a far away city! For all we know it's a boyfriend she wants to go to and sleep with!"

Xolani: "Ok." I finished wearing my skirt, t-shirt and beaded necklace. I was wearing my sandals when my mother came into my room.

Mama: "Where does that come from?!"

Me: "I bought it in town toda-"

Mama: "So you get special treatment and clothes while the rest of us get nothing! You see that you're so selfish? Why didn't your father buy your sister something? Why didn't you tell him to?"

Me: "Tata didn't buy this mama. I bought it with my money that I made from the scones."

Mama: "Why can't you share with your sister!!"

Me: "She didn't even help me. Nobody did. I should be able to spend my money on myself mama-"

Mama: "You are so selfish Thembisa. Sies!! Your sister is a child and you expect her to scrub your feet to get something! You and your father are very evil." She walked out. I finished getting ready but now I didn't want to go. I went out the house. My father was outside, the hood of the bakkie lifted up, hea was fiddling with something.

Me: "Tata."

Xolani: "My baby. You look beautiful. Let me wash my hands so we can go."

Me: "I don't think I should."

Xolani: "Don't listen to your mother. You worked hard, you deserve to get yourself something nice. If anyone wants something, they must work for it. You're the example. Wait here." He went inside the house to wash his hands. We left the yard, walking to the house that had Umgidi. I could hear the singing from here. Tomorrow was Christmas day and everyone was in celebration mode. In the home, we greeted everyone. Dad went to the men's side and I helped the women, I'd gone to school with one of the girls of this home so I opted to helping her with everything she was doing.

The ceremony was very beautiful and I had quite a bit of fun. I reconnected with some of my high school mates. I wasn't a person that had friends in school but I knew most people and had conversations every now and again. It was dark when I found my father. It was time to go home and so we started walking.

Xolani: "Did you enjoy yourself?"

Me: "Very much dad. Thank you for convincing me to go."

Xolani: "Always do something that will make you happy mntanam. As long as it doesn't hurt others. Your happiness should be your first priority because other people's first priorities? Is themselves. Take care of you."

Me: "Thank you dad." I hooked my arm on his, resting my head on it. My phone rang in my pocket. "That's strange. I don't usually get calls."

Xolani: "Maybe it's a wrong number." I answered.

Me: "Hello."

Caller: "Hi."

Me: "Can I help you? You may have the wrong number because I don't recognize your voice."

Caller: "Who am I talking to?" Excuse me? You called me.

Me: "I'm Thembisa."

Caller: "Then it's not a wrong number."

Me: "Who are you?"

Caller: "Goodnight Thembisa." He hung up. I felt a shiver down my spine.

Xolani: "Who is it?"

Me: "I have no idea. He says it's not a wrong number but won't tell me his name."

Xolani: "Maybe it's a secret admirer." He laughed.

Me: "Those things don't happen Tata." I chuckled. We walked into the yard and into the house. Mama was in the lounge with her fleece blanket. She still looked angry.

Xolani: "Good evening my wife." She just looked at him then back at the TV. "Have you already had supper? I'm starving."

Mama: "Maybe you ate where you come from or your precious favorite daughter can cook for you."

Xolani: "You can't be this petty."

Mama: "What is petty? You spoil one child and not the other but I'm petty?"

Xolani: "I bought Zanele clothes a week ago. Throughout the year she gets pocket money and clothes. Thembisa isn't home most of the time and so I spend time with her. She worked hard and bought herself something instead of always expecting a hand out."

Mama: "Oh? So you're saying Zanele must go work instead of focusing on her books because you won't buy her anything?"

Xolani: "Can you even hear yourself?"

Me: "I'll make you something to eat tata. You can sit."

Mama: "Hm! Of course you will!" I went to the kitchen switching on the stove but it wasn't coming on. This was strange because the lights were on and this stove was less than five years old.

Me: "Tata."

Xolani: "Yes baby."

Me: "The stove isn't coming on." He came into the kitchen and checked it. He then pulled it from the wall to check behind and sighed. "What's wrong?" I looked. The wires had been cut. As in cut with a scissors or a knife. My heart plummeted.

Xolani: "I don't know anymore."

Me: "Mama how could you do this? How will we eat or bath? My business relies on this stove to work. Why would you do something like this?"

Mama: "Don't come irritate me! All you two know is stupid business and cutting us out of your lives as if we're dirty!"

Me: "MAMA-"

Xolani: "Thembisa, go to bed."

Me: "Tata, it's Christmas tomorrow!! How are we going to eat?" I had tears running down my face.

Xolani: "Go to bed my love. I'll make a plan." I went to the bedroom, shutting my door. I knew my mother was mean spirited but we never paid much attention to it but this was overboard. This crossed a line.

Christmas day was a dark time for us. Tata tried to call someone to fix the stove in the morning but no one was available on Christmas. We had no choice but to make a fire. My father and I collected the wood and he taught me how to make a fire. Occasionally taking pictures of us.

Me: "What if it blows up in my face?"

Xolani: "It won't baby. Just light it up like this. There you go. That wasn't so hard, was it?"

Me: "No it wasn't. So how then do we make it bigger?"

Xolani: "Be patient, my child." Zanele came out of the house, dressed in her Christmas clothes.

Me: "Hey! You look so pretty."

Zanele: "Thanks. What are you doing?"

Me: "Making a fire."

Xolani: "Come join us baby."

Zanele: "No thanks." Mother came out the house dressed in her Sunday best.

Xolani: "Where are you going?"

Mama: "To church. Then Makhumalo invited us for Christmas lunch. Since we have favorites in the house, I'm also taking mine out. Let's go Zanele."

Xolani: "Ntombenhle don't do this."

Mama: "Don't do what? You started it by favoring Thembisa now it's bad when I want to take out Zanele? Did you think of her when you went out yesterday."

Xolani: "She was not even home. I'm not favoring anyone, please put the bag down so we can spend time as a family."

Mama: "Zanele, let's go." They walked out the gate. I hate what my mother was doing honestly. My father was a very kind man. I know he didn't show any favoritism.

Me: "How do we keep the fire going Tata?" He hugged me.

Xolani: "Just let it grow." ...

We spent half the day cooking outside with the big iron pot. Our food was ready around 2 in the afternoon. Both of us exhausted after having to clean the pots, we boiled water. I washed first and he after me. I dished up our food, prayed over it and we ate. It was a tiring day but alot got done and I was proud of us. I received a message on my phone. <Merry Christmas Thembisa.> Was all that it said. It's the same number that called last night and I wasn't in the mood to ask this person again, who he was. If he wanted me to know, he would've told me. I sent Khaya and Zimmy Merry Christmas messages and put my phone away.

## TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

### Chapter 5

The next few weeks were quite tense at home. Father had to buy a new stove entirely. I felt that wasn't fair but he did it because mama always made me start the fire outside for food or water. At all times. It was my last week home. I had to go back to university. I only felt bad for leaving my dad behind. I so wish he would come with me and make a living in the city. This was selfish of me but he deserved more, surely.

Xolani: "Sasa. Aren't you going to be late for registration?"

Me: "We've gone through this tata. It opens only a week from today."

Xolani: "Okay. I'm very proud of your results. You got distinctions. That is very good. I want you to keep being focused like that and pass this year the same."

Mama: "And maybe it will be better for you if you got a part time job also. All the money we have here in the house goes to your schooling and that's not fair. We must be left with crumbs every month."

Xolani: "That's not true. There's always enough here at home. Sasa doesn't need to work."

Mama: "That university is very expensive. Then there's the place she lives in? No Xolani, that's not fair. Zanele also needs things. She's in high school."

Xolani: "Zanele doesn't need anything at all. No child of mine is going to be supporting themselves while I still live."

Mama: "She was selling bread not too long ago."

Xolani: "So that she can buy herself something nice. Thanks to you, that was cut short."

Mama: "Hehe! Now you're going to disrespect me in front of her so that she can have an attitude."

Xolani: "No one is disrespecting you. You're the only one fighting and you're fighting alone." He got up and walked out.

Mama: "This is all your doing. You've always been a selfish child. You want your father all to yourself because you're selfish. What about your

sister? Me? Everytime you're here, he ignores us for you because you want to be his shining star. Nxx!" She got up. "And wash those dishes!" She walked to the lounge. I got up to clean the kitchen spotless. Honestly, I don't think I'll be home for Easter. It will take God and a miracle to convince me. I needed a very long break from my mother but I knew this would hurt my father badly. I just don't know what to do. Maybe I should just suck it up for his sake.

My day of departure finally arrived. I'd packed my clothes days ago. I've been very ready. It was still morning and Tata had said he would drive me. I needed to secure a room at Res and register tomorrow. Dad would be there with me until I get settled into a room. I went to the kitchen where my father was. He was dressed already, drinking his tea.

Xolani: "Good morning my child."

Me: "Good morning tata and mama."

Mama: "Morning Sasa." Zanele was at school already.

Xolani: "We'll be leaving soon, are you ready?"

Me: "Yes tata. I'm ready." I sat down with my bowl of porridge. "I'm going to miss this."

Xolani: "You can come home on weekends my child." I ate my porridge.

Mama: "So where will you live? Do you get your old room?"

Me: "No mama. I have to go apply again."

Mama: "What if you don't get one?"

Me: "I hope I will. Off campus flats are expensive and I prefer being on school premises."

Xolani: "It will work out my child. Don't worry. Let's go."

Me: "Okay." I went to fetch my bags, taking them to the bakkie.

Mama: "So many bags? It's like you're not coming back."

Me: "I will come back mama. Sometimes I don't have time to wash clothes so I need as many."

Mama: "Okay then. Travel safely."

Me: "Thank you mama. I'll call when I arrive hopefully Zanele will be home so I can say hi to her." I hugged her. My father and I got in the car and off we left for Mountain Peak

We arrived in Mountain Peak in just over 4 hours. We had to look for a guesthouse for the night. It was only still around 12 in the afternoon. I was so happy to be back here and now with my dad, I can show him around. We got google directions to a cheap guesthouse to check in. We placed our belongings inside our room. It was a standard room but with two single beds instead.

Me: "Should we go get something to eat tata? Do you want to go to the beach? Maybe we could go to The Oceans Arena. You know I've never been? Strange right?" He laughed.

Xolani: "One thing at a time my angel. First, let's call your mother and let her know we arrived safely."

Me: "Okay." I dialed mum's number.

Mama: "Hello."

Me: "Mama, hi. It's me Sasa. We've arrived in Mountain Peak."

Mama: "That's good. What are you doing now?"

Me: "We're just sitting in our room doing nothing. We'll go find something to eat after we rest."

Mama: "Hmm. Okay."

Me: "Is Zanele home yet?"

Mama: "No she isn't."

Me: "Okay then. I'll call again later when she comes back."

Mama: "Okay. Bye bye then." I hung up.

Me: "Now what do we do?"

Xolani: "I'd love to go see Oceans Arena with you. Let's go." We left our guesthouse, driving straight to OA. It was quite full today but I could tell my father was pleased to see it. I took a number of pictures of him and with him. We started at Sea World. He purchased the tickets at the ticket office and in we went. Our day was spent exploring. We left and made

our way to the beach. My father had never been to a beach before in his life and so we went down to the beach. His pants rolled up his calf, I lifted my skirt above my ankles and we walked to the shore letting the water run through our feet.

Xolani: "This place is so beautiful."

Me: "It really is. Wouldn't you want to live here?"

Xolani: "No baby. My life is in the village but you? This suits you. Look at how beautiful you look standing in the beach." I laughed.

Me: "I'm serious tata. Maybe you and mama can get a house somewhere around and Zanele can go to school in town."

Xolani: "I do want Zanele to study here but I don't think I can live in the city. Where would my goats be?" He laughed. "Come, show me your favorite place to eat."

Me: "Yoh tata. It's expensive. We should get a take away of fish instead."

Xolani: "I didn't come all the way to Mountain Peak to have a take away. We'll buy it for when we go back to the room. I want to eat expensive food."

Me: "Tata, we can't be wasting money like this. You still have to pay for my school registration."

Xolani: "I had some savings. Don't worry my child. Let's go." The only restaurant I knew of to be honest was the Mozambican restaurant Khaya took us to. I don't know many places here because I locked myself in my room all year. We walked into the empty restaurant and had a seat. Immediately as I sat, I saw him. He was with his bodyguards as usual. They stood around, while he sat and did his staring thing. Does he ever eat? He stared at me and I quickly avoided his gaze.

Xolani: "This place is fancy. Do you come here often?"

Me: "Absolutely not tata. This place is expensive. I only came here once."

Xolani: "With that boy you like?" He smiled. I giggled.

Me: "And Zimmy." I looked through the menu.

Xolani: "What do you think I should eat?"

Me: "Apparently their seafood tastes nice."

Xolani: "Is that what the boy you like said?" I laughed.

Me: "You need to stop tata." The waiter came to take our orders.

Xolani: "We'll see if he has good taste or not." The waiter walked away with our orders. "He must have money if he can afford this place."

Me: "I guess so. His father owns a law firm. He's also studying law." I looked over at my staring stranger buddy.

Xolani: "That's good. That means you'll have some connections." He looked to where I was looking. "Who's that?"

Me: "I don't know tata."

Xolani: "You've been looking over at him since we sat down."

Me: "He's a Prince. I think this is his favorite restaurant."

Xolani: "A Prince?" He looked again. "Who are those men standing near him."

Me: "Guards. I'm only seeing him a second time." I would never admit to my dad I went to a club.

Xolani: "Are they allowed to carry guns in here?"

Me: "Yep." We received our drinks.

Xolani: "Is it safe?"

Me: "Yes, they only react when someone poses a threat." He looked again. "Dad, stop staring at him."

Xolani: "Does he know you?"

Me: "Not at all." A lie. He obviously isn't looking through me. He can see me see him. I sipped my juice.

Xolani: "Why is he looking at you?"

Me: "He's not looking at me Tata. Let's forget everything else and enjoy this time together." We had a light conversation with him speaking mostly and I resisting the urge to look over at You Know Who. We received our food and had our meal, enjoying it too. "I think I'm too full for the day tata."

Xolani: "Let's put this away. Then we can go rest." I called the waiter.

Me: "Can we get take away for this and the bill please." He nodded and walked away coming back with the takeaway containers. I dished the food in them. "The bill bhuti."

Waiter: "Your bill has been settled, miss." This is a second time now.

Xolani: "By who?"

Waiter: "Uhm... I'm not allowed to say." My father looked at me then turned to look at the Prince. He was so disrespectful, he didn't even bother to look embarrassed or shy. He only leaned back in the couch he was sitting in, never removing his eyes from me.

Xolani: "Thembisa, do you know that man?"

Me: "No tata." He got up. "Tata!!" He walked over to the Prince, the bodyguards stood in front of him blocking the way. I went to pull my father away but he refused to move.

Xolani: "Let me speak to your Prince."

"Let him through." A deep voice said. My body was cold from fear. The bodyguards opened the way. I stared at the Prince and he focused on my father.

Xolani: "Good Day." He got no response. A part of me wanted to melt to the floor in embarrassment. "I have noticed that you've been staring at my daughter for the past hour and a half."

Prince: "Daughter?"

Xolani: "I didn't stutter."

Prince: "My apologies sir."

Xolani: "Well? Is there anything you want to say?"

Prince: "You have a beautiful daughter." This man? I was glad the restaurant was empty because I'd have fainted if anyone was to hear this exchange.

Me: "Tata, let's go."

Xolani: "That doesn't give you the freedom to make her uncomfortable. Do you understand me?"

Prince: "I make you uncomfortable Thembisa?" He looked at me. My heart literally stopped. He knew my name? My father looked at me and I knew that look.

Me: "Tata, let's go please."

Xolani: "You know him?"

Me: "No tata. I don't know this man." What an arrogant asshole this so called Prince was. My father looked at him then at me. Where was the shame of this guy? Why wasn't he reacting? Why can't he tell my dad he doesn't know me, he's just being weird? But then again. Zimmy did say anyone without royal blood is a peasant to him. "Tata, let's go. This isn't worth it." My father held my hand leaving the restaurant. Tata was not happy at all when we got to the guesthouse. I didn't know what to say. It was getting dark, we were full and I thought just a rest would do.

Xolani: "Thembisa, who is that man?"

Me: "Tata I told you I don't know him. I don't even know his name."

Xolani: "He knows your name."

Me: "I don't know how. I promise you."

Xolani: "Please stay away from him. That, is a very bad man."

Me: "I will tata."

I took a shower and dressed in my pajamas, making my way to bed. Dad took a shower after me and he too went to his bed.

Xolani: "Did you lock the door?" I checked the door again.

Me: "Yes tata, it's locked." He dialed mom's number, she picked up after a few rings.

Mama: "Hello."

Xolani: "Good evening my wife. How are you?"

Mama: "I'm well. What are you doing there?"

Xolani: "We're resting now. Preparing for tomorrow."

Mama: "What did you eat?"

Xolani: "We got a take away."

Mama: "What was it?"

Xolani: "Fish and chips. Nothing special. How is Zanele?"

Mama: "She's not happy. She wanted to come with you."

Xolani: "Yes but she has school and this can't wait. Getting a room at the University is very important, it must be done quickly to avoid not getting space."

Mama: "If you say so."

Xolani: "Here's Sasa, she wants to say goodnight." He gave me the phone. I spoke to my mom and briefly to Zanele who was upset. Eventually we ended the call. I sat in bed with my earphones.

Xolani: "Goodnight my child. I'm very tired now, I will probably fall asleep soon."

Me: "Goodnight Tata." He got comfortable in bed, closing his eyes to sleep. I switched off the light, because I didn't need it when I'm playing with my phone. I listened to music for about an hour before I received a message. Mystery number. <I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable. Please accept my apology.> I stared at the message, very confused. I replied: <who are you?> Sent. I waited for a response. My phone rang. I can't answer because my father was sleeping right here. He was even snoring but if I start speaking he might wake up. Another message came in: <Why aren't you answering your phone?> We're not on that level. I don't owe you an answer. I replied: <Can't talk.> I sent it. Was this... Him? <Can you get away for a second so we can talk?> I stared at the message. <I don't even know you. I'm not coming anywhere near you.> I replied. He's absolutely crazy. <How will you know who I am if you won't come near me?> Was it worth it? Should I? What did he want? Mostly I wanted to confirm if it was the actual Prince because for all we know, this is some weirdo. Why would the Prince have my number? Where would he get it? To do what with it? Surely he has better things to do with his time. Then again he did say I'm beautiful. Although, this doesn't mean the texter is him. Another message came in: <Are you considering?> I swallowed and typed: <Fine. Give me two minutes.> I sent it and slipped out of bed. My dad was still snoring away. I took my gown, wearing it, and tip toeing to the door. I quietly opened the door and stepped out. I walked down the passage of the guesthouse and called. He answered the call but didn't say a word.

Me: "Hello?"

Him: "Thembisa."

Me: "Well, I got out the room for a bit so please be quick. Who are you and what do you want from me?"

Him: "Come outside."

Me: "You're obviously insane if you think I'm stepping out in the dark of the night to meet a strange man who won't tell me his name."

Him: "I'm not a strange man. I can't come in the guesthouse, otherwise I would. I won't hurt you."

Me: "Tell me who you are."

Him: "Come outside."

Me: "I'm not coming outside."

Him: "Then I won't tell you who I am."

Me: "How did you know I'm here? What do you want from me?"

Him: "Come outside." He hung up. Judging from his voice, I was convinced it was the Prince. I knew it had to be. How does he know where I am? What the hell does he want? Only he had the answers to my questions and fuck it, I'm going. I walked out the guesthouse, I could see the black SUV parked out in the road. I walked out the gate but stood closely to it. The back door opened. I won't move. He's crazy. What if I get in the car and he drives off with me. Who would find me? He got out the car but stood next to it as well. So it was the Prince. Now how the hell am I to talk if he's on the other side of the street. He was still dressed in a black fitting suit. What does he want?

Him: "Will you come closer?" I walked up to him and stood there staring up at him. I could see his face in the dark, still no smile on his face.

Me: "Good evening."

Him: "Good evening Thembisa. You look gorgeous even when in bed."

Me: "I'm not sure what you want from me. I don't even know your name."

Him: "How can you not know my name?"

Me: "You obviously didn't tell me. How would I know? I don't have your stalker ways. Where did you get my number and name? What do you want from me?"

Him: "I'm interested in getting to know you Thembisa."

Me: "Why didn't you just come up to me and talk to me then?"

Him: "You know I can't do that."

Me: "Sir, what do you want? I'm not one of these girls that you think you can charm because of your status and get them to sleep with you. I'm not that type and will not be. Not even for you."

Him: "I know that. I don't have an agenda. I just want to know you. I find you interesting. We can have dinner sometime and I'll answer any question you have for me."

Me: "I'm not royalty. Whatever it is that you want, you're not getting. Not from me."

Him: "May you please have dinner with me?"

Me: "I just snuck out the room. I'm not getting in a car with a stranger while I'm wearing pajamas. There's taking risks and there's leaving in pajamas with strangers."

Him: "How about tomorrow then?"

Me: "How will I explain that to my father? And why were you so disrespectful? You couldn't even look shameful for a second? Who on earth do you think you are?"

Him: "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be disrespectful. If I apologize to him, would you have dinner with me?"

Me: "No."

Him: "What would it take for you to join me for dinner?"

Me: "I'll think about it. I'm going back inside. Goodnight."

Him: "Goodnight Thembisa." ...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

## Chapter 6

Registration day was tiring but I managed to complete it. I got a room finally and I could move in. It was Tuesday and dad was going home.

Me: "You know you can stay a few more days right?"

Xolani: "I wish I could my child. The animals need me at home. You know your mother's patience runs thin." I sighed.

Me: "I'm going to miss you."

Xolani: "I'll miss you too. I can't wait to see you in the holidays. Please focus on school Sasa. I'm counting on you."

Me: "I will tata. I promise."

Xolani: "Let me get going. I'll reach home before bedtime."

Me: "Okay then. Drive safely tata." I hugged him. He got in his bakkie and drove off. I went into my room to start unpacking my clothes while I texted Zimmy. I haven't told her about Prince contacting me. Soon my new roommate arrived.

Me: "Hello." I smiled. She brought in her suitcases.

She: "Hi, I'm Amahle."

Me: "I'm Thembisa." My phone buzzed as it did when receiving a message I read: <I hope you had a good day.>

Ama: "So...what are you studying?"

Me: "LLB. You?"

Ama: "B Com Accounting." My phone buzzed again. <Have you considered my dinner proposal?> I don't know. Did I trust him enough to go have dinner with him? I typed back: <Yes. Where?> I sent it. He called.

Me: "Hello."

Him: "How was your day?"

Me: "Tiring. How was yours?"

Him: "What time can I pick you up?"

Me: "Uhm. At 6 I suppose."

Him: "I'm looking forward to seeing you."

Me: "Are you?"

Him: "Yes. I'll let you know when I'm on my way."

Me: "Okay. Bye then." I hung up.

Ama: "Boyfriend?"

Me: "Uhm, no. Just a ...I don't even know what to call him. Maybe an acquaintance."

Ama: "Hmm." ... Should I tell Zimmy? I know she will obviously freak out. Maybe I needed to understand what this man wants first before I told my best friend.

## PRINCE POV\_

I stood in front of the mirror while the tailor made adjustments and wrote down the measurements.

"So... Did she agree to go out to dinner?" My advisor asks.

Prince: "Yes. I'll need you to prep me for conversation."

Advisor: "There's that. When is the dinner?"

Prince: "Picking her up at 6."

Advisor: "That's 2 hours away. The city is an hour drive away, that only gives me an hour."

Prince: "Stating the obvious will only waste more time."

Advisor: "If you want this girl to accept you, you need to be a little softer and more kind. Let's start there." I turned to look at him.

Prince: "I am the future King. I am not soft, nor am I kind. Inviting her to dinner is as polite as it gets."

Advisor: "Interesting take. Very interesting but you do understand that you can't force her to like you? What are we doing here Prince Nkosinhle? You said you wanted a wife. You identified one you could like, finally, after years of searching, now you want to chase her away?"

Prince: "This long game is exhausting."

Advisor: "You can only do this once. Okay? You need her to trust you and fall in love. Not with your royal status, You. Once a woman is in love with you, she will give her all to serve you."

Prince: "Okay. And how do I do that?" The tailor was done with my top and now measuring the bottom.

Advisor: "Little softer. More kind." I rolled my eyes. "Where will your dinner be? You do realize that you can't be in public with her?"

Prince: "I know. I'm taking her to eNtabeni."

Advisor: "Oooh. For a first date? Luxurious."

Prince: "I guess." The tailor got up.

Tailor: "I have finished Your Highness." He bowed.

Prince: "When would be the best time to mention marriage?"

Advisor: "Absolutely not today. You'll scare her. You're dismissed, Nkala." The tailor walked out. "Why couldn't you just acknowledge him at least? You're a menace." I laughed taking the drink he just poured himself.

Prince: "That's why you're my friend only you can understand me."

Advisor: "I'm your Only friend and even I can't stand you." He laughed. "Seriously Nkosi, you need to do better with this one. You've been obsessed with her for weeks. Now that you got a chance, use it wisely."

Prince: "Prep me then." He sighed.

Advisor: "Let's start with complimenting."

SASA POV\_

I wasn't going to be fancy, I promise but I saw the black dress I forgot about. It was a cowl neck with thin straps over my shoulder, fitting tight on my body with some moving around room. The perfect dinner dress. I wore my pair of black small block heels. Not sure why I wanted to impress this man but here I was. My hair was combed to it's afro. I accessorised with small hoop earrings and a clutch. It was 17:55pm when he sent a message. <I'm outside.> My heart started to race. Here

goes nothing. I walked out the building and to the gate. The big black matted out Range Rover was parked outside. I walked to the car, the guard got out the driver seat and opened the back for me. I climbed in, with much difficulty. Embarrassing things only ever happen to me. This car was quite huge and so it took great effort for a short person in a tight dress. I finally sat down.

Me: "Good evening." He looked at me.

Prince: "Hello. You look gorgeous." He was in another of his suits as he usually is. The car started and drove away.

Me: "Thank you. Where are we going?"

Prince: "We're going up to eNtabeni. I'm not supposed to be out public with people."

Me: "Is that why you're always sitting alone in restaurants?"

Prince: "I only go to one restaurant and yes."

Me: "Aren't you allowed to have friends?"

Prince: "No."

Me: "That doesn't seem nice at all."

Prince: "It's peaceful. Have you heard about eNtabeni?"

Me: "I don't know what that is. Is it a restaurant?"

Prince: "Kind of like a private villa up in the mountains." I looked at him. Something about being up in the mountains with a stranger didn't sit right with me.

Me: "I thought you're not meant to be in public."

Prince: "It's not public. Only exclusive to the royal family."

Me: "And you take all your dinner dates there?" I looked out the window.

Prince: "No. You're the first non royal to be invited."

Me: "And why is that?"

Prince: "It's a sacred place."

Me: "So why am I invited?"

Prince: "I'm trying to impress you." I laughed.

Me: "I already know you're a royal and that on its own makes me uncomfortable. Big gestures can only make me more apprehensive."

Prince: "Why do you always think bad things will happen?"

Me: "In the real world? Where us non royals live, bad things happen. Especially to us."

Prince: "Nothing will happen to you." My phone rang in my hand.

Me: "Sorry." I answered. "Hey babe."

"hey you."

Me: "Who's this now? Where's Jimmy?"

"You've forgotten about me already? That's upsetting."

Me: "Khaya? Why are you using Jimmy's phone?"

Khaya: "I missed you. I lost my phone. Are you in town? I want to come pick you up for a chill."

Me: "Uhm." I looked next to me. The prince was staring at me intensely. "I'm actually not available. I'm going to dinner."

Khaya: "Where?" If I mention where, this would be obvious.

Me: "Just out. I haven't decided yet."

Khaya: "Are you with someone?"

Me: "Yes." The line was quiet for a while. "I have to go Khaya. Goodbye." I hung up quickly and put it on silent.

Prince: "Is he your boyfriend?"

Me: "No. Just a friend."

Prince: "Seems like more."

Me: "It isn't. Khaya is only a friend." The car took drive up a road after 30 minutes getting out of the city, you couldn't really see in the dark. We made it up to a short drive way coming up to a modernly lit villa. I stared at the building which was so beautiful on its own. My door was opened and I climbed out the car. The view of the city was breathtaking. We were on the top of a cliff. I stood still, stunned, staring at the beautiful lights below.

Me: "This view is heavenly. Is it me or the air is crisp over here? Almost like it's pure."

Prince: "I've never really noticed." I looked quietly trying to recognize landmarks of the city but they were obviously way too far. "Let's go inside." I followed him into the reception area. On the right, there was the restaurant, empty of course.

Prince: "What will you drink?"

Me: "Just water for now." He pulled my chair and I sat down, he sat opposite me. The waiter came to take drink orders and left.

Prince: "I had them prepare four main meals. You can choose which one you'd like to have. For now, tell me about yourself."

Me: "You already know so much about me. We're here because you promised to answer my questions."

Prince: "Fair. Ask away."

Me: "What's your name?"

Prince: "You could've googled this."

Me: "I chose not to. I want you to tell me."

Prince: "Nkosinhle Mehluli Sikhosana."

Me: "That's a beautiful name."

Prince: "So is Thembisa."

Me: "Thank you. So how did you get my number?"

Prince: "I asked someone to look for you. I found you through your friend. The one from Kingstown. I had someone ask her for your name. From there, I used my resources to find your number."

Me: "Why didn't you then tell me it's you?"

Prince: "I couldn't be sure if you would go public with it."

Me: "I guess you finding me in the guesthouse has to do with your resources? Were you stalking me?"

Prince: "Yes I used my resources but I wasn't stalking you." The starters were brought to the table.

Me: "What do you want from me?"

Prince: "You intrigue me. I saw you once in that club and I couldn't forget your face. I want to know you, possibly build a relationship."

Me: "How will that work? You're basically untouchable. I can't be in a relationship with you."

Prince: "It will work if we both have the same goal."

Me: "And what is the goal Prince Nkosinhle?"

Prince: "We both want to settle down and start a family."

Me: "That's where you're wrong. I want to build my career before I even think about starting a family."

Prince: "Why wouldn't you build your career while starting a family?"

Me: "That wouldn't work."

Prince: "Why not?"

Me: "Marriage tends to ask a lot of sacrifice. Especially from the wife. I'm not ready to make those sacrifices yet." He stared at me quietly. His gaze was very intimidating.

Prince: "What are you studying?"

Me: "LLB."

Prince: "That's cute." He sipped his whiskey, barely reacting to the bitter taste. "So you want to be a lawyer?"

Me: "Yes." I nibbled on the starter.

Prince: "Same as your boyfriend?"

Me: "He's not my boyfriend."

Prince: "What is it then?"

Me: "Why are you so worried about him?"

Prince: "I need to be sure there's no competition while I pursue you." I smiled.

Me: "I'm not seeing anyone. Khaya is... complicated. We're not together."

Prince: "You like him."

Me: "I did. I think I do but now more as a friend."

Prince: "What happened?"

Me: "He isn't interested in a relationship."

Prince: "And you are?"

Me: "Yes. I'm not going to just casually give my body to someone who will have 20 more bodies. It's not healthy or safe."

Prince: "Relationships aren't only about sex."

Me: "That is true but I think it's time I start to explore now. University is supposed to be a time where I enjoy myself but I can still do that safely."

Prince: "I agree."

Me: "Tell me about your family."

Prince: "I don't know what I'd say about them. I have three sisters, all come after me. Two mothers, my father has two wives. I grew up in the royal palace obviously, I left the country to study in California and stayed there for a bit. I had to return about four years ago."

Me: "To take the throne?"

Prince: "Yes."

Me: "How do you feel about that?"

Prince: "It's my birth right. I don't have to feel anyway about it."

Me: "Do you want to do it?" He looked at me for a while.

Prince: "Yes."

Me: "When is your coronation?"

Prince: "Few months from now."

Me: "Is that why you're fishing for a wife?" He smiled.

Prince: "No."

Me: "Shouldn't you be choosing from another royal family at least?"

Prince: "That was my only condition to return. I marry who I want. No, I don't have to choose royal blood."

Me: "So what happens when you become King?"

Prince: "I rule. That's kind of it."

Me: "Sounds boring."

Prince: "It is." He smiled.

Me: "What do you do for fun? I saw you in the club but you obviously weren't enjoying yourself."

Prince: "I was, until someone moved their seat."

Me: "I tried to smile at you and you didn't bother to smile back."

Prince: "I don't smile in public."

Me: "Why on earth not?"

Prince: "What would I be smiling at? I'd look crazy."

Me: "Okay, so what do you do for enjoyment?"

Prince: "I don't do enjoyment."

Me: "I do not envy your life. Not even a little bit."

Prince: "You kinda get used to it."

Me: "If you weren't a Prince, what would you do?" He looked thoughtful.

Prince: "I'm not sure. I only know how to be a Prince, being groomed to be King."

Me: "What were you studying?"

Prince: "Architecture."

Me: "You want to be an architect?"

Prince: "Wanted."

Me: "I'm worried about you. Honestly."

Prince: "Don't be. I'm doing quite well. I'm fine with how everything has turned out. Then of course there's you."

Me: "What about me?"

Prince: "Like I said before, I find you interesting. I hope this isn't the last time you have a meal with me. I'd really like to know you better."

Me: "I would like to know you better too. Maybe we can unlock some joy in your life so that you can smile more." He smiled.

Chapter 7

The next day I woke up early as I usually did. Last night started off a little tense but as the evening progressed, I got a little more out of Nkosinhle. He was generally a quiet man. And quite handsome too. He brought me back to res just after 10pm. It was quite a sunny morning, I tidied up my side of the room. My roommate was sleeping so I tried to be quiet. My classes were only starting on Monday. I couldn't go back to sleep and so I put on my beige leggings, a tshirt and sneakers. I walked out with my phone and earphones, I'd just sit outside and soak in the sun for a short bit. Once I reached the reception area I decided to call Zimmy. Maybe she was still awake.

Me: "Babe."

Zimmy: "Hey you. What's up?"

Me: "You haven't slept, have you?"

Zimmy: "Nope. Come to my room, we're chilling here." She was in the same res building but a little further from me. I went to her room, she opened for me.

Me: "Good morning."

Zimmy: "Hey love. This is Petu, that's Fikile. Girls, this is Thembisa. Do you want something to drink babe?"

Me: "Coffee if you have. Hello everyone." They greeted me back. I sat on Zimmy's bed as she made me coffee.

Petu: "Are you also living in this residence?"

Me: "Yeah, Block A."

Zimmy: "How's your roommate?"

Me: "She's okay. I didn't get to talk to her much. She arrived while I was unpacking, she left her stuff. I went out to dinner when I came back she was sleeping."

Zimmy: "Dinner? With who because Khaya was with me. Oh my God, is that why he was angry after he called?"

Me: "Angry for what? Someone invited me to dinner and I accepted. Khaya doesn't know what he wants."

Zimmy: "Just give him time please. Who's this guy who took you out?"  
She handed me coffee.

Me: "Who said it's a guy?"

Zimmy: "Please, who is it?"

Me: "I can't say yet." I giggled, taking a sip.

Zimmy: "You were in Mthinomkhulu for two months. Where would this man come from?"

Me: "Around. Tell me about your night." I laughed.

Zimmy: "I wonder who this mystery guy is. Anyway, we went to this other chisanyama in eMoyeni. We had some meat and drinks but you know Khaya, he gets uncomfortable in the hood so we came back. We went to club Phoenix and giiiiirrrrl." They laughed. My phone beeped and I checked the message. <Good morning Thembisa. I had a lovely dinner with you last night. I have something for you to show my appreciation for gifting me your company. When can I have it delivered?> I smiled trying to keep my composure.

Zimmy: "And then?"

Me: "Nothing." I typed: <Good morning. You know you don't have to, right? I'll be at res all morning. I too enjoyed my evening with you.> Sent. Zimmy was reading the messages until I caught her.

Zimmy: "Who is this?" I had saved his number as Inhle just in case I lose my phone and someone gets hold of it. I finally understand why he didn't just text me his name and rather told me face to face.

Me: "Just a friend I met yesterday."

Zimmy: "Inhle? I've never heard of an Inhle. What does she study?"

Me: "Haibo. Why the investigation?" New message: <Delivery will be made before 9am. I'm looking forward to knowing more about you.>

Zimmy: "This is a man. This is a man!! Unless you're lesbian my friend. Tell me about Inhle!"

Me: "Stop reading my messages." I laughed. She shook her head, Petu managed to switch the subject. Thank goodness.

Around 8, I went back to my room. My roommate was still fast asleep? Maybe she had a long night and day. I went to shower, dressing in my navy maxi. Suddenly I was quite nervous and just as I was thinking about him and what this delivery was, I received a message: <I have your delivery waiting outside.> I walked to my door but when I opened, Jimmy was knocking.

Jimmy: "Babe, I need tampons. Do you have any?" She walked in.

Me: "Uhm, I have pads in my bag.."

Jimmy: "Okay?"

Me: "Jimmy you know where my toiletries are though." I took the toiletry bag, taking out a pad, I gave it to her.

Jimmy: "I can't just go through your things, you know that, we've lived together. Are you going somewhere?"

Me: "I'm taking a walk."

Jimmy: "Oh okay." We walked out of my room. "Let me just khapha you to the gate. I'm tired but I can't sleep." Oh no. This can't happen. She can't walk me out.

Me: "You need to rest Jimmy. You've been partying for days on end. Your body is probably confused. Just lay in bed and close your eyes."

Jimmy: "Why did you stop walking?"

Me: "No reason."

Jimmy: "Who are you going to?"

Me: "No one." My phone rang.

Jimmy: "He's outside, isn't he?"

Me: "Friend you know I want to tell you but I can't. Not yet."

Jimmy: "Why? Is he married?"

Me: "No.. I have to go."

Zimmy: "Okay." She walked back to her room and I know she was upset with me. I'd deal with that later. I went out the gate answering the phone.

Me: "Hey."

Nkosi: "Hey. I thought you changed your mind."

Me: "I'm about to reach your car."

Nkosi: "Okay. I'm not there. I can't get away from this meeting. Please enjoy your gift."

Me: "Okay."

Nkosi: "What's wrong?"

Me: "I hate lying to my friend. She knows I'm hiding something and I can't confide in her because of who you are."

Nkosi: "Is there anything to confide yet?"

Me: "Not really. We just met and getting to know each other. Maybe we won't even date. I wouldn't want the I told you so's that come from that." I reached the car, the driver got out the car.

Nkosi: "I won't disappoint you Thembisa. Ndiyathembisa." I giggled. The driver opened the backseat and handed me a takeaway paper bag. It had the Mozambican restaurant sticker to close it. Then He gave me a bouquet of red roses.

Me: "What is this. Thank you sir." He nodded and got on his way.

Nkosi: "I hope you haven't had breakfast. I've seen you twice in my favorite place and so I thought I should send you my favorite meal for you to enjoy."

Me: "That's so sweet Nkosi. I've never received flowers before." I walked back to my room.

Nkosi: "There's a note I left in there for you. When can I see you again?"

Me: "We can make a plan when you're available. My classes start on Monday."

Nkosi: "Okay. Enjoy your breakfast then. We'll talk soon."

Me: "Thank you Nkosi. This was really sweet of you."

Nkosi: "You're welcome. Goodbye Thembisa." He hung up. I made it to my room with this bouquet and takeaway. I wanted to share my food with my friend obviously but does she want to? I checked the note in the roses. "A dozen red roses for a beautiful woman who intrigues me. You are perfection. - Nkosi" I placed my flowers on my bed and walked to Zimmy. My heart almost floating, I felt so very confused. I hope her friends were gone now, I was not in the mood for company. After knocking for a bit, she opened.

Me: "Are you alone?" I whispered.

Zimmy: "Yes. Why?"

Me: "Open up." I walked in with the food.

Zimmy: "From mystery man?" She rolled her eyes.

Me: "Zimasa."

Zimmy: "Thembisa, do you know how dangerous this is? If you're dating a mystery person and go missing, who will find you? How will we know?"

Me: "I won't go missing. Let's eat."

Zimmy: "I love you my friend but you're very inexperienced when it comes to men. I don't want you to get swindled out of your virginity."

Me: "I won't get swindled. I understand you're nervous but, we aren't even official. Maybe it won't even get to a relationship. He's very different from me. I doubt this will last but that doesn't mean I can't enjoy myself."

Zimmy: "Don't sleep with him. Reserve it for someone who will love you."

Me: "Yes mommy. Now let's eat." We sat on her bed, while I opened the bag taking out the food. She looked at me with a sly smile.

Zimmy: "This is from Amelia's. The restaurant."

Me: "Yes." I opened it to look at the food. "His favorite from there." I took a chip and tossed it in my mouth.

Zimmy: "You need to taste the prawns too this time. No shying away."

Me: "Okay fine. I'll try one."

Zimmy: "Here let me help you." She showed me how to separate the meat from the shell, I ate the prawn meat which had a creamy garlic sauce.

Me: "This is actually nice."

Zimmy: "Everything else is easy. Let's dig in." ...

It was a warm Friday and I was going to have a beach picnic with Zimasa, Petu and Fiks. My roommate, Amahle was a very strange character. I tried making conversation a few times but she was very distant but still polite at least. I've decided to leave her be. I wore my black one piece swimming costume, a white knee length loose shirt on top. I had sunglasses and sun screen aside. Zimmy knocked on my door. I knew it was her because she's the only one who did. My roommate didn't have visitors. Okay, I'm worried about her. I opened the door for Zimmy.

Me: "baby."

Zimmy: "Hey love. I know you don't have a beach bag so it's either we use one or I can give you the second one?"

Me: "Give me the second, that way we'll have more space."

Zimmy: "Ugh, I was hoping you'd want to carry my one."

Me: "You're a child. I'm done with everything. We're getting pizza and drinks on the way right?"

Zimmy: "Absolutely. Your towel?"

Me: "Almost forgot. Okay let's go." Amahle walked in. "Hey."

Ama: "Hello."

Me: "Are you okay?" She sighed.

Ama: "I'm fine." Zimmy walked out the room.

Me: "We're having a picnic at the beach. I too don't have many friends, Zimmy was my roommate last year. Why don't you join us?"

Ama: "What makes you think I don't have friends?" Alright then. I'm out.

Me: "Sorry." I walked out the room.

Zimmy: "I don't know why you bother."

Me: "I was that person just last year."

Zimmy: "Yeah well, maybe give her time." We reached Petu and Fikile.

Petu: "The cab is almost here."

Me: "Hi guys." I smiled.

Petu: "Hey babe."

Fikile: "Hi." The car arrived that would take us to buy two boxes of pizza, some can ciders and snacks. We made it to the beach, lay our fleeces down and finally relaxed. I started with some pizza slices before drinking.

Zimmy: "Ladies, do we have plans for tonight?"

Fikile: "I'm visiting Khaya. He invited me over to his place." That was new.

Zimmy: "Khaya doesn't stay in on Fridays babe. I'm talking about late in the night, what are we doing? I got some money from my parents, it will be enough to buy us a bottle and mixers."

Petu: "Yoh friend, I emptied my pocket money on registration this week."

Zimmy: "I didn't ask for your money. I said I've got the drinks. We can eat before we leave. Sasa?"

Me: "Babe. You know how I feel about clubs."

Zimmy: "Okay fine then."

Petu: "Okay, where were you thinking we go?" Zimmy's face lit up like a child as she usually did.

Zimmy: "I'm not sure, Phoenix maybe?" I didn't like this. I know I don't like clubbing but now Zimmy is going to sideline me for Petu. I was being petty, I know but she was quite literally my only friend. I just didn't like clubs and I couldn't compromise on that. Maybe once?

Petu: "Absolutely love that idea. Plus I know the promoter maybe they can smuggle us into VIP."

Zimmy: "So you're coming?"

Fikile: "I'd choose dick any day over a crowded club."

Zimmy: "Okay. Sasa?"

Me: "We'll see." I checked my phone finding a new message. <Good morning Thembisa. I hope you slept well, I'm sorry I disappeared yesterday. I was preparing for an important meeting. I'm about to go in

right now. May your day be as beautiful as you are.> I smiled. I've been waiting since last night for a message from him. We've only been texting for a few days but I couldn't go a day without sending him a message. I don't know if I liked him yet. I replied: <Hello. I wish you the best of luck for your meeting. I'm having a picnic with friends. We'll talk later.>

Zimmy: "Okay. No more phones. Girl talk only." She took my phone, putting it aside.

Petu: "Girl talk? About what?"

Zimmy: "I don't know. Maybe we could give each other advice on stuff, tips and tricks."

Petu: "Okay, I'll start. How the hell do I balance school and my social life? I suck at it. I almost failed last year, I have a supp. My dad is breathing down my neck."

Me: "I think managing your time better. Give yourself hours for fun. And hours for studying. Obviously you're in university, the reason you're here is to study and so studying hours need to be much more than the fun ones."

Zimmy: "Or just don't sleep."

Me: "That is very unhealthy for you."

Zimmy: "I'm joking. Sasa is right. A bit. But also you need to understand your study style. I thrive on pressure so I do all my assignments at the last minute because it drives me. However, I don't study last minute because I need to understand the information therefore, I come to my room after class, go over what I've learnt make notes from my notes then I go drink. Balanced." We laughed.

Me: "You're a robot. You barely sleep."

Zimmy: "I hate sleeping. Fikile, what do you do?"

Fikile: "I just wing it honestly." Her phone rang.

Zimmy: "I said no phones!"

Fikile: "it's Khaya. Hey baby." She answered."Yeah I'm with Zimmy, we're having a picn- Uhm she's kinda busy right now. What time are you picking me up baby? Oh okay. I'm at the beach. Okay." She hung up.

Zimmy: "Don't even."

Fikile: "Hayi Zimmy, if my man calls, I'm not keeping him waiting."

Petu: "But we're having a girl's day."

Fikile: "Next time, single ladies. Bye." She grabbed her bag and walked up.

Petu: "Why don't you warn her about Khaya?"

Zimmy: "She's an adult who can make her own decisions."

Petu: "Khaya will toss her aside by next week if not today. You know him. A girl is only exciting to him before he sleeps with her. That's why he fucks all your friends."

Me: "Is that so?"

Zimmy: "It's not like that, Sasa. Yes Khaya is a bit of a whore but I know he really likes you."

Petu: "I'd stay away from him if I were you, Sasa. And I'm not being bitter or anything. Just watch how the Fikile scenario unfolds." ...

## PRINCE POV\_

I sat in my office, going through some papers that were kind of irrelevant, they belonged in the garbage. Its been a horrible day. Usually, at this time, I'd go to Amelia's and have one drink enjoying the sea breeze. How likely am I to bump into her? My advisor walked in.

Advisor: "How's it going?"

Nkosi: "With what?"

Advisor: "Your pursuit of happiness." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "Mock me. It's fine I guess."

Advisor: "Have you spoken to her today?"

Nkosi: "Sent a message in the morning before the meeting."

Advisor: "And... A follow up?"

Nkosi: "That's not gonna happen. Can't I just enjoy alone time in my office?"

Advisor: "No. She texts you back, she's interested in your days, the very least you can do is spend time with her."

Nkosi: "I'm trying to relax in my office alone. Why can't I do that?"

Advisor: "Nkosinhle. You're acting like a tyrant. You chose her because you like her-"

Nkosi: "I liked her face."

Advisor: "Yeah, and the previous one smelt nice. You're not a child anymore. I'm tired of this."

Nkosi: "Don't you think I'm tired of this? You think I enjoy being on my phone texting? I've got a kingdom to run. I'm not a teenager. I don't want to write notes and send flowers. I've got enough on my plate, I shouldn't have to be begging."

Advisor: "Then ask your father to arrange a wife for you because I'm not going through this again. No, I'm tired. You're the most difficult person on this planet."

Nkosi: "I don't want an arranged wife."

Advisor: "Then do the work, Nkosinhle. You're sitting there, bored as hell when there's a gorgeous woman out there who may want to do nice things to you." I sighed in frustration.

Nkosi: "I can't keep doing the dinner thing."

Advisor: "Send her a message that You need her, you had a horrible day."

Nkosi: "I'm not about to tell her about my uneventful day. She already thinks I'm boring."

Advisor: "You don't have to. You're a Prince, your meetings are confidential. The message is a sense of urgency and a need of comfort. You'll take her up to eNtabeni. Maybe a night together might spark a little bit of feeling in you." I took my phone. "You need to be closer. Send the message when you're 15 minutes away from her. You'll ask to see her and she'll agree. Once she comes into the car, put on your saddest face, exactly the one you have on right now. When she asks what happened, tell her you had a bad day. She'll feel sorry, let her hug you. Then ask if it's okay to go to eNtabeni for bit of peace away from the city and it's troubles."

Nkosi: "Why do you think my life is a romance movie and you can direct it anyhow you like?"

Advisor: "This will work. I'll have them prepare your suite." I got up from my seat. "I know you like her Nkosinhle, somehow, you feel something. You just won't acknowledge it."

Nkosi: "You're also a seer now?" I walked out.

## SASA POV\_

After our beach day, we went back to our rooms. I took a shower to get the sand off me, slipping into a black floor length dress that held my body tight. I went to Jimmy's room to chill because Amahle was in ours and sleeping, again. I didn't want to disturb her.

Jimmy: "Borrow me this ass for tonight please?"

Me: "Take it, I won't be using it anyway." She laughed. I lay on her bed while she sat on the floor. Fikile walked in. I wasn't expecting her back so soon.

Jimmy: "Hey, you're back?"

Fikile: "Yeah, I felt bad about leaving you guys."

Jimmy: "So you're going out with us?"

Fikile: "Yes, I just need a nap. Khaya's dick is such a ride."

Jimmy: "Not something I was interested in knowing but okay."

Fikile: "At least Sasa knows right?"

Me: "Oh I've never slept with Khaya. I know nothing about that."

Fikile: "Oh, I thought you did. Judging from the way you get sour when I mention his name."

Me: "Sour?"

Fikile: "Yes. Sour."

Me: "I have absolutely no reason to be. Khaya is and has only been my friend."

Zimmy: "I can confirm. So Sasa, are you going to give it up to mystery man?" She giggled.

Me: "You told me not to."

Zimmy: "Yeah but I don't expect you to listen to me."

Me: "I don't know. He'd probably be the perfect guy to give my virginity too."

Zimmy: "That quick? What about him is so perfect?"

Me: "I can't say. I'd be okay with it. I think. If you had a chance, would you sleep with a sort of celebrity?"

Fikile: "A celebrity? Hahaha!! Is that who you're dating? Come on, Thembisa. You're cute but you have a rural thing about you. No celebrity wants someone like that." She laughed.

Zimmy: "Is that because you've slept with all the celebrities? Is that what they told you? Because you're not dating one, so I can only assume that's why they don't want you?"

Me: "Zimmy!"

Zimmy: "There's honestly no need to be nasty. If you are, then I can be too. Thembisa is not cute, she's fucking gorgeous. Let's not be bitches to each other please Fikile. Sasa doesn't have a problem with you, she's never been with Khaya, there's no need to show animosity. Even if she did fuck him, why would you be nasty to her? You only met him last week? Please man. Yoh. I hate drama and mean girl bullshit. We're not in high school, we're adults." Fikile rolled her eyes, getting on her bed. My phone rang. I didn't hesitate to answer.

Me: "Hey. I was worried. You haven't answered my text."

Nkosi: "I'm sorry. I'm just having a really bad day. I need to see you Thembisa, can I please come to you? Even if it's just 5 minutes, I need something positive in my life right now."

Me: "Absolutely. I'm at res now. You can come."

Nkosi: "I'll be there in 10 minutes." He hung up. I got up.

Zimmy: "And then?"

Me: "Uhm. I'm sorry friend, I'm going to see...him. He's having a really tough day." Petu walked in.

Zimmy: "And what will you do with his tough day."

Me: "Mxim. You bore me." I walked out chuckling. I didn't need to take anything because he only needs me for a few minutes. I walked to the gate and waited there. In a few minutes, the Range parked in front of me. As usual, the driver got out to open the door for me and closed it, standing outside.

Me: "Hey."

Nkosi: "Hi." He didn't look okay. His eyes were a little red.

Me: "What's going on?"

Nkosi: "Meeting went badly. The work that I'd been preparing for the past few years has kind of gone down the drain." My heart broke for him.

Me: "I'm so sorry."

Nkosi: "It's life. Tell me about your day."

Me: "That feels a little insensitive now. I was having fun all day."

Nkosi: "That's good. You're supposed to be having fun." He sighed.

Me: "What can I do to make you feel better?"

Nkosi: "I don't know." He smiled.

Me: "Come." I hugged him. "It won't erase your day but hopefully some of my happy energy can pass on to you."

Nkosi: "Thank you." I pulled away from him, with difficult restraint because he just smells so damn good. "Do you have plans for the night?"

Me: "No. The girls wanted to go out. I'm not in the mood."

Nkosi: "Why?"

Me: "I'm not really a club person. That night you saw me was my first night."

Nkosi: "I see."

Me: "What are your plans for the night? Secret royal duties?" He smiled.

Nkosi: "No. I think I'm just going up to eNtabeni for the night. I need the peace."

Me: "Okay." he stared at me with his usual intimidating gaze.

Nkosi: "Would you like to come with me?"

Me: "I don't know." I blushed.

Nkosi: "Why don't you know?"

Me: "For the whole night? Isn't that...not allowed.?"

Nkosi: "Again, you'd be invited. Would you like to come?"

Me: "Yes. I would." I don't know where that confidence came from but I was so nervous about this.

Nkosi: "Would you like to grab some changing clothes?"

Me: "Yeah." I opened the door.

Nkosi: "Please don't change the dress. You look beautiful." I nodded, climbing out the car. What did this mean? Was I dating the Prince? Would I be sleeping with him? But if I'm being honest, I wouldn't mind letting him. Not because of who he was but he was so attractive. He hardly spoke, and he had this stare that was making me hot. I don't know what was going on. Jimmy opened the door for me.

Me: "Babe. I need you to borrow me your weekend bag."

Jimmy: "That sounds suspicious. Don't tell me you're sleeping over at his place?"

Me: "i won't tell you then-" she screamed.

Jimmy: "Thembisa! Who is this guy?!"

Me: "Please don't make a big deal out of this. I just need the bag."

Jimmy: "Only if you promise me to tell me the juicy details when you're back. And I mean JUICY okay?"

Me: "I doubt there'd be juicy details. He's a really quiet guy."

Jimmy: "I don't care, find something juicy to provoke out of him." She gave me her weekend bag. "Good luck sis." She smiled.

Me: "You're crazy. I'm not going to war." I laughed walking to my room to pack a few outfits.

The drive to eNtabeni was quiet on my end because Nkosi was on the phone. Like I said, he doesn't talk much. Just a "hm" "yes" "ok" every

now and again. When we arrived at eNtabeni, I climbed out the car. The driver took my bag out of the boot. I went to stand in my spot on the edge of the cliff, staring at the glorious view. It felt like I was in God's living room. "Ma'am." I turned around to the male voice. Our driver.

Me: "Yes?"

Him: "The Prince may be a while. Can I show you inside to your suite? Or bring you a beverage?"

Me: "Sure, please show me inside." I followed him in. "What is your name?" He looked at me.

Him: "Mongezi ma'am."

Me: "Okay. I'm Thembisa." He nodded, focused on our way. At the end of the passage we reached a door. He opened, walking in first, placing my bag on the chair.

Mongezi: "There's a phone next to the bed, you can call if you need anything. Can I get you a beverage?"

Me: "Just a juice please. Mango." He nodded, walking away. I entered the room looking around in awe. Subtle luxury is what it looked like. Decorated with white and hints of blue. That is the biggest bed I've ever seen. The room had a lounge area with a large TV and what looked like the softest couch in the world. I walked out the sliding door, on to the deck. The infinity pool glistened, right in the corner of the deck was a lounge bed. The view was spectacular. Instead of the city, this side was the mountains and I could see a small waterfall. What in the heavens is this place. I heard a knock on the door so I went back inside to open. A young woman dressed in black rolling a tray came in..

She: "Good afternoon ma'am, I have your juice and some snacks." She seemed quite bored or possibly annoyed. I can't be sure.

Me: "Thank you, you can leave them just in the lounge." She unloaded the snacks on the table and walked away without another word. I wonder what her deal is. I drink my juice, sitting outside.

Nkosi: "Hey." He walked onto the deck.

Me: "Hey." I smiled. He sat on the lounge bed.

Nkosi: "Thank you for coming."

Me: "Thank you for inviting me. This place is beautiful but in order to relax, you need to take this off." I took off his blazer. "And lie down on your back." I pushed him on his back, taking each leg putting it on the bed. "and take these off." I took off his shoes. "There. Don't you feel better? Watch the mountains. Let me put these inside." I took his jacket and shoes into the room, coming back out to him to lay next to him, facing him.

Nkosi: "Thank you."

Me: "You're welcome."

Nkosi: "I think I'm going to need another hug. Maybe longer." I giggled.

Me: "Come get it." He pulled me to him, hugging me but then lifted himself up on his elbow. He was now on top of me, staring into my eyes. His cologne captured me but his gaze is what kept me hostage. I couldn't look away from his beautiful eyes, and so I reached in to kiss him on the lips. His lips were soft and cold, he bit my lower lip sucking on it. I pulled away again, a little shy.

Nkosi: "Did I hurt you?"

Me: "No." I smiled, holding him closer. He placed his head on my chest. I wanted so badly to ask what this meant, but I didn't want to look desperate. I massaged his head, staring at the waterfall. This was bad. I'm starting to like him. At first I wasn't sure but now? Something is developing. I'd promised my father I'd stay away from him. I wanted to, truly I did but my curiosity got the better of me. Now he's cuddling on top of me, in his private villa suite while I watch the sun set on top of majestic mountains. This obviously won't last long, that much is clear. He's a Prince. I'm a random girl from a village. I'll only live once and how many times will I get the chance to reminisce my first time was with an actual Royal Prince? Even if this ends in two weeks or whenever he's tired of me, I'd have the memories. At least he is kind and sweet. That's worth remembering. I looked down at him, he looked comfortable. He was fast asleep, snoring lightly.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 8

## PRINCE POV\_

I woke up from a deep sleep. It was very dark outside and I was on top of a woman. I'm not a person who gets drunk nor do I make stupid decisions so I must know her. My thoughts came rushing back in time. Thembisa. She hypnotized me to sleep. I got up, she was still asleep, turning to a fetal position clearly comfortable. What did she do to me? I walked into the room, in my socks, taking out my phone to dial my advisor.

Nkosi: "Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Ahh. And he's alive. I'm driving in right this moment. I thought something happened to you."

Nkosi: "And you waited until it got dark?"

Mthunzi: "I thought you got busy. Then 3 hours passed and I got worried. Wait, I'll be there in a minute." I hung up. Thembisa was still asleep. Mthunzi knocked on my door. I let him in.

Nkosi: "You waited 3 hours to find me?"

Mthunzi: "You're not lost. The staff said you were in your suite. What were you doing? You never disappear for that long."

Nkosi: "I fell asleep."

Mthunzi: "Asleep? During the day? It's 8 in the evening. You'd never sleep at 5."

Nkosi: "I don't know. She undressed me and I lay on top of her. She started playing with my head. Next thing it's dark. Do you think she put a spell on me?"

Mthunzi: "Don't be crazy. You haven't slept in days, you're tired. Obviously you'll pass out when you lay your head on boobs. It's nature." It's never happened to me before. "Let her take care of you. Rest. This is your time to get to know her. I ordered dinner, just in case."

Nkosi: "I'm uncomfortable with how my body just betrayed me."

Mthunzi: "Tomorrow, take her hiking up the mountain. The Dlozi trail. If she comes back alive then she's a good woman. You know they don't play."

Nkosi: "I'm not ready to find that out Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Then I don't know. I on the other hand, have places to be. Remember to be soft, caring. If she's comfortable with touch, hold her."

Nkosi: "Thank you for the unnecessary reminder."

Mthunzi: "Very necessary. That's why you have me." he looked behind me. I looked at the sliding door, Thembisa was walking in rubbing her eyes.

Thembisa: "Nkosi?" She opened her eyes. Pure shock and fear showed on her face, she quickly bowed her head. "Good evening Your Highness." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "So you bow to my advisor and not me?"

Thembisa: "oh. I thought he was... because he's dressed in...regal attire."

Mthunzi: "it's lovely to meet you Miss."

Thembisa: "Hello sir. I'm Thembisa." She offered her hand respectfully. Mthunzi kissed her knuckles.

Mthunzi: "Please call me Mthunzi."

Nkosi: "Okay. I thought you had somewhere to be."

Mthunzi: "Yes My Prince. Your dinner is ready as well. Enjoy your evening." I rolled my eyes as he walked out.

Nkosi: "Did we wake you?"

Thembi: "No. Just felt a bit of a breeze and an empty space." She hugged her arms around my torso, resting her head on my chest. "You're still warm." She was a whole head shorter than me. Her puffy afro reaching my chin. I enveloped her in my arms.

Nkosi: "You too. Do you want to eat in the restaurant or rather have them bring it here?"

Thembisa: "Here. There's a nice table we can sit on. Then we can watch a movie." She pulled away from me to look up at my face.

Nkosi: "I don't watch movies."

Thembisa: "Too bad because we're doing it. Is there anything better you would rather do?" Plenty of things. Watching the mountains is at the top of my list that's why I come here.

Nkosi: "No." She reached up to kiss my chin. I kissed her lips, sucking her lower lip more gently this time. She tasted sweet and it was damn near driving me crazy because I just couldn't figure out what it was and so I kissed deeper, I held her tighter, losing myself in her embrace. We reached the bed, climbing on it and me on her. I leaned on one elbow, still kissing her lips, I wanted to hold her body. This dress clung on to her curves, drawing her beautiful body. Thoughts of her, walking towards me, away from me, holding me, and she was now under me. My whole body shivered in hunger. She stopped and I snapped out of my trance. What was wrong? Did I bite her?

Nkosi: "Too fast?"

Thembisa: "No. Yes... Uhm.."

Nkosi: "What's wrong?" I searched her eyes, but they were filled with fear. Something was definitely wrong.

Thembisa: "Nothing."

Nkosi: "You need to be honest with me, am I going too fast? Did I hurt you?"

Thembisa: "You didn't hurt me." Someone knocked on the door. I got up walking to the door. It was our dinner. Good because I almost got that one in my bed pregnant. We needed the distraction.

SASA POV\_

Oh hell. I was so turned on, I could feel my panty soaked. I know I was ready, I wanted him but I was so scared. I couldn't tell him I'm a virgin because what if he pushes me away too? He looked like he was ready to eat me alive. What if he was rough? What if it hurt? I was overthinking this way too much and now I'm stressed. The lady set our table nicely before she walked out. I kept staring at Nkosi who had his eye on me.

His erection was almost tearing through his pants so he put his hands in his pockets.

Nkosi: "Let's have dinner baby." He pulled a chair for me and I sat down. Why was he so calm? He settled opposite me. I uncovered my plate. It was a stew and vegetables. I tasted the meat first. Lamb. My taste buds danced with joy. Whoever cooked this was amazing. I had my vegetables and then finished with the stew. I couldn't get halfway through it because I was now full. Nkosi had cleaned his plate, now drinking a glass of water.

Me: "That was amazing. I'm so full."

Nkosi: "Then let's get you to lie down, we can settle on the couch and watch a movie." Why did it seem like he was pulling away again? I followed him to the lounge, a little disappointed. The couch was an L shape. He sat right at the corner, resting his legs. I sat next to him on the other couch to rest mine.

Me: "What do you want to watch?"

Nkosi: "Anything you like. I wouldn't know where to begin to choose. I don't watch TV."

Me: "You've never watched TV?"

Nkosi: "I have, but there's always something better for me to do. I don't think I've been in front of a TV in years. I watch the news on my tablet."

Me: "Okay, I'll choose something." He pulled me closer to him until my head was on his chest. I must admit, that felt really good. I found us a decent movie to watch together. Okay, it was a romance movie. Halfway through, I noticed his hand was caressing my breast. He's probably bored out of his mind. I looked up at him. He looked down at me.

Me: "Are you bored?"

Nkosi: "By what?"

Me: "The movie."

Nkosi: "No. It's interesting."

Me: "Really? What is it about?"

Nkosi: "The woman with short hair is in love with the man but doesn't know how to tell him because he's married to her friend." I giggled.

Me: "Okay."

Nkosi: "Something tragic is obviously going to happen."

Me: "I don't think so."

Nkosi: "One of them will die."

Me: "That's unlikely."

Nkosi: "Hm.." I carried on watching the movie comfortably and he was right. The man died. How did...

Me: "Have you watched it before?"

Nkosi: "No. Movies are predictable."

Me: "No they're not."

Nkosi: "I can predict quite a lot of things."

Me: "Really? Predict something about me."

Nkosi: "You are going to be my wife." He looked at me. I laughed.

Me: "That's not going to happen."

Nkosi: "We'll circle back to this conversation in a year. You'll see." I don't know what game he was playing. There is no way a non royal person can marry royalty. And I know I'm very non royal. I've met my parents families and nothing about their history even hints at royalty.

Me: "Do you want to watch another movie?"

Nkosi: "Yes." I can't believe he stayed awake to even finish the first.

I woke up in the morning, in an empty bed. I thought I was an early riser but Nkosinhle woke up even earlier. The time was just after 5am. I got out of bed, walking to the open sliding door. It was hot already outside, the sun peaking from the mountains. Nkosi was in the swimming pool doing what I would suspect is swimming. I couldn't swim and I didn't even try to be near water. He got out the pool.

Nkosi: "Did I wake you?" I shook my head, smiling. Always so concerned about my sleep. I gave him the towel to dry himself off. His body was toned and so defined.

Me: "I wake up around this time every day. I couldn't even hear the water until I got up."

Nkosi: "Did you sleep well?"

Me: "Yes." He stared at me, looking confused.

Nkosi: "You didn't." My heart slowed. How would he know? Did I scream in my sleep?

Me: "Just a bit of a nightmare."

Nkosi: "Please don't lie to me ever again." I nodded, slightly embarrassed. Maybe I struggled while sleeping? How else would he know? "What did you dream about?"

Me: "Uhm.. I was in the woods. Lost. Two lions came to attack me but a snake appeared, slithering around me. I'm scared of snakes. And lions. But snakes more. Did I scream in my sleep?"

Nkosi: "No." He folded the wet towel, placing it on the floor. "I'm going on a bit of a hike. It's beautiful this time of the morning before it's too hot. Please come with me?"

Me: "I've never been hiking."

Nkosi: "it's easy, you just walk." I laughed.

Me: "let me change." I went to brush my teeth and wash my face. In the mornings before my shower I usually pull on leggings and a t-shirt. I've packed them, with some sneakers. The way I always pack has to fit every possible occasion. A dress for dinner and shoes to match, a dress for afternoon because I like wearing my Maxi's during the day with sandals. Jeans and a warm long sleeve in case it gets cold. Something to relax in water and pajamas. Nothing can catch me off guard. I wore my black leggings with a t-shirt and my sneakers. My afro was in four cornrows that I plaited before I slept. I went to the bedroom area, Nkosi was dressed in shorts, sneakers and a vest. He also had a bracelet on his left wrist.

Me: "I'm ready." He opened the bar fridge taking out two bottles of water.

Nkosi: "Let's go." We walked out of the room to main area. Instead of the entrance we came in on our right, we took a left. The staff was out, cleaning, there was probably about four or five of them. I smiled at them, they only just stared back with a strange scared look on their faces.

What was going on with the people here? We walked out the building, up a garden path. Different types of flowers were on either side of me. I stared at this mesmerizing blue flower, slowing down.

Nkosi: "Don't touch it."

Me: "What is it?"

Nkosi: "Mkhambi. My ancestors flower."

Me: "Is it poisonous?"

Nkosi: "To non royals, yes. Let's go." I walked away with him. The flower garden came to an end. We entered another path, with trees lemons were being picked from by workers. I looked at them and smiled. Same look as before. I don't know anymore. Maybe they're not allowed to talk to me? This side was much bigger. It had huge trees that bear fruit.

Me: "Apples!" I sprinted to the apple tree.

Nkosi: "You like apples?"

Me: "I like fruit." I couldn't possibly reach the branch that hung the delicious green apple so I jumped trying to grab it. Nkosi reached up to take one off. "Thank you. Can I eat it?"

Nkosi: "Yes. It's fruit." I washed off the apple and took a bite. Glorious.

Me: "Do you want some?"

Nkosi: "No thank you. Let's keep moving." We walked further into the garden. I finished my apple before we reached the end. "You can throw the core in there." I threw away the finished apple in the bin. He opened a gate, we walked through climbing down a flight of stairs. Now we were in the wild. The villa wasn't exactly at the bottom of the mountain. It didn't seem a long distance to the top from where we were.

Me: "Will we pass the waterfall?"

Nkosi: "You can't go to the waterfall. You'll fall in."

Me: "Don't have to tell me twice, I can't swim."

Nkosi: "Why can't you swim?"

Me: "I come from a small village. I've got strict parents that never let me near the lake. I had no way of learning to swim which is good because alot of children have drowned in my village. So much that no one goes

near the lake anymore. Except of course for the dare devil's. Like Aphiwe." I laughed. "He thinks he's invincible."

Nkosi: "Who is Aphiwe?"

Me: "One of the neighbors sons. He and my sister hate each other. They go to school together and everything yet they don't like each other. Strange."

Nkosi: "What makes you think they don't like each other?"

Me: "My sister told me he's an..." I looked around "a-hole." He smiled.

Nkosi: "It's fine, you can swear. We haven't reached the top."

Me: "I would rather not. Anyway, at school he's a menace but when he goes home, acts like an angel. Everyone in the village except his parents know he's a menace. Which poses a problem of course. They always defend his behavior if not downright refuse to acknowledge it."

Nkosi: "That's bad. He's going to kill them." I stopped to look at him and burst out laughing.

Me: "You are funny. He's a teenager. Teenage boys are like that. He'll grow out of it. Most of them do. My dad got lucky with two daughters. He says it all the time. I don't know though because sometimes I feel like he's trying to turn me into his son. He taught me how to start a fire this December." I smiled, thinking about Christmas. What a bitter sweet day.

Nkosi: "That's a good skill to have. Never know when you might need it. What else does he teach you?"

Me: "Cars and Alot about animals. We have goats at home, I think I know more about goats than a vet would. I know how to feed them, help them give birth, diagnose their illness. Things like that."

Nkosi: "So your father has a farm?"

Me: "I guess you could call it that. We have about 54 goats currently, a few gave birth some days ago so it's probably more. We also have 400 chickens."

Nkosi: "That's alot of chickens."

Me: "Not even. But they do work. He sells them and sells eggs."

Nkosi: "Does he grow his own? I don't know, how do you make a chicken." I sat down and laughed long and hard.

Me: "Chickens lay eggs, those eggs are either edible for breakfast or hatch chicks." We continued walking.

Nkosi: "Hmm. That's interesting. Does your father only have goats? No other animals?"

Me: "Yeah. I thought he would expand to sheep but he says he's fine with goats. His friend has sheep and they refer business to each other."

Nkosi: "That's smart and kind."

Me: "My father is very kind."

Nkosi: "You don't talk much about your mother. I would think a girl's best friend is first their mother."

Me: "Not really. My dad is my best friend. My mom is a bit... Difficult."

Nkosi: "Most mothers are."

Me: "Even yours?"

Nkosi: "I have two. So yes."

Me: "How is that like? Having two mothers?"

Nkosi: "I don't know. Normal to me I suppose, I don't know what to compare it to. I do remember having one mother, my dad married again when I was about 7."

Me: "And you're the only son?"

Nkosi: "One and only." He sighed.

Me: "Do you hate that? That you're the only one?"

Nkosi: "Not at all. My advisor fills the space of what I'd hope my brother would be like if I had one."

Me: "Aww that's so sweet. So you tell him everything?"

Nkosi: "I don't have a choice."

Me: "Did you tell him about me?"

Nkosi: "Yes. He met you last night remember?"

Me: "Yes but did you talk about me before?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Me: "Hmm. I don't know what I'm going to tell Zimmy. She's my best friend. We talk about alot, well mostly her because she does the outgoing stuff. She has never kept anything back. I feel like I'm betraying her a little but I also don't want her to know yet."

Nkosi: "Do you think she would tell the public?"

Me: "Why do you call people 'the public'. It's so strange."

Nkosi: "What should I call them?"

Me: "People. Unless you don't recognize them as people because they don't have your blood."

Nkosi: "If everyone could choose to be born royal, I can assure you they would choose to be royal because on the outside it looks nice. But at least they'd have a choice. I can't look down on people just because they didnt get that choice." I looked at him.

Me: "You're not as bad as you look when you're sitting alone in a restaurant, you know."

Nkosi: "I look bad when I'm minding my business?"

Me: "You look like you hate people. You just sit there frowning and staring." He smiled.

Nkosi: "I only stare at you."

Me: "Tell me, do you always pay my bill at Amelia's? Both times I've been there, I was told it's settled."

Nkosi: "I've put you on my tab, yes."

Me: "Won't that be suspicious? As in the staff leaking the information that I'm on a tab that's paid by you?"

Nkosi: "They won't leak the information. The entire restaurant staff is on NDA's, valid until they die."

Me: "Why do you pay for me?"

Nkosi: "I want you to enjoy yourself."

Me: "Thank you but it's suspicious because my friends will know something is up."

Nkosi: "And what will they do about it?" I smiled.

Me: "Nothing." We finally reached the top. Not the exact top because that would be the peak and no one can properly stand there. This was close enough and we could sit. We sat down on the ground.

Me: "This is beautiful. I can't get over how heavenly the place looks." The city was in full view, the sea too.

Nkosi: "I like to come here to destress. It helps me think clearly. And my decisions are always decided when I reach here." He looked at me. I looked at him smiling. I heard a movement around me, when I looked in the direction, my heart stopped. "Don't panic."

Me: "It's a snake." When my heart started beating again, it was literally banging on my chest violently.

Nkosi: "It's not going to harm you."

Me: "it's a snake." I repeated.

Nkosi: "I know. Please calm down. Close your eyes."

Me: "There's one behind me, isn't there?" He didn't respond. "Nkosinhle Mehluli Sikhosana. Get me away from the snake. Please."

Nkosi: "Close your eyes. It's not here to harm you."

Me: "I'm going to pee myself right now."

Nkosi: "No you won't." He touched my hand. Another one appeared from his side and I got dizzy. "Thembisa." I closed my eyes, my ears were ringing. I was going to die on a mountain bitten by snakes. SNAKES. He touched my waist and I jumped screaming. "They're gone." I was crying by now. My body had goosebumps all over. When I opened my eyes, they were really gone. I looked all around me.

Me: "What if they come back?"

Nkosi: "They won't come back a second time."

Me: "How would you know?"

Nkosi: "I've come here for years. I know they won't harm you, and they won't come back again. I won't let anything happen to you."

Me: "Okay but we can go now."

Nkosi: "Already? I thought we'd watch the city for a bit-"

Me: "Oh I think not sir, I think absolutely not." I got up from the ground, my body still shaking. I kept looking around me. He held my hand, walking me back down. I was still shaky from the scene up in the mountain. This was not the juicy details I was hoping to tell Jimmy.

PRINCE POV\_

We got back to the villa. I could see Thembisa was livid. The walk was only 20 minutes going up and another going down but she almost ran back.

Nkosi: "Do you want a massage? There's a spa availabl-"

Thembisa: "I don't want anyone to touch me!" From laughing and smiles to full blown hostility. I did not like that at all. Taking her up the mountain was obviously a bad idea but very necessary. At least now I know the ancestors were happy with her. Not a single one of them wanted to harm her. However, it may have ruined my chance to be with her. How could I fix this? She entered the suite, going straight to the bathroom. The door shut closed and I could hear water running in the bath. I took my phone off the night stand to make a call.

Mthunzi: "My Prince."

Nkosi: "That was a bad idea."

Mthunzi: "What was?"

Nkosi: "The Dlozi trail. She's terrified of snakes."

Mthunzi: "But she made it back. That's good."

Nkosi: "And also not talking to me."

Mthunzi: "Then talk to her."

Nkosi: "And say what? She almost bit my head off when I asked if she wanted to go to the spa."

Mthunzi: "Then massage her yourself."

Nkosi: "What is on my agenda today?"

Mthunzi: "I cleared your diary for the weekend. You're off."

Nkosi: "Why the hell would you do that?"

Mthunzi: "You need to rest. You've barely had sleep in days and you were stressed. Now that the deal is aside, you have some time to yourself."

Nkosi: "What am I supposed to do all weekend? It's Saturday morning. Not even 7 yet."

Mthunzi: "Have breakfast and go back to bed. You have a delicate flower with you. I'm sure you can find something to teach her."

Nkosi: "Delicate flower? What are you on about?"

Mthunzi: "Apparently she's untouched. I found her boyfriend, who isn't really her boyfriend. He spilled all of his secrets." So she's a virgin. That's why she was so scared last night.

Nkosi: "What did you do?"

Mthunzi: "Nothing. We had a few drinks and bonded over some hobbies. You know I can blend in much better than you."

Nkosi: "Are you going to talk or should I cut the call?"

Mthunzi: "He could be your competition. He expressed how he regrets his decision to not be intimate with her. He likes her. This could pose a problem for you. Do you want me to do anything about it?"

Nkosi: "No. His father will irritate me to no end and he's the only one I trust for my business deals. I need to think."

Mthunzi: "Okay. I ordered breakfast. Different from what you know but please try not to act like a Prince. It's what she eats when she's home with family. I can imagine she must miss them every once in a while. Acknowledge that."

Nkosi: "Right. And for the rest of the day? I do what? Stare at her?"

Mthunzi: "Just relax, My Prince. You might enjoy it." He hung up. Bloody Mthunzi. How can I spend two days alone with a woman who's convinced I tried to offer her as a sacrifice to snakes? I wish she could understand I would never harm her, or put her in harm's way. I only needed to be sure she was the right person. My wife would be the closest person to me for the rest of my life, the only person in the world who could kill me. I just needed to be sure.

## TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

### Chapter 9

#### SASA POV\_

The bath at least relaxed me. I felt quite a bit better but my heart hadn't returned to its normal pace. I got out the bath, grabbing a towel to dry before I washed the bath and let the water out. I walked out the bathroom to the bedroom. Nkosi wasn't in the room. I took my bag, taking out my light blue dress. I lotioned my body, wearing my underwear. I needed to be dressed before this man walked back in here. The dress was body hugging and pooled at my feet. It held my breasts comfortably. Perfect for this warm weather. I closed my bag as the door opened. Nkosihle walked in, leaving the door open. A lady pushing a trolley walked in behind him. She set up the table again with bowls. The room had been cleaned while we were out I suppose because when we'd come back, the bed was made and everything else was tidied away. The lady made her way out after bowing to Nkosi, he closed the door behind her.

Nkosi: "You look beautiful."

Me: "Thank you."

Nkosi: "Breakfast is served. I was advised that it would be your favorite." He pulled a chair for me to sit. I sat down.

Me: "What is it?" I lifted the cover. Porridge. A slow smile formed on my lips.

Nkosi: "Good to see you smile again." He sat down.

Me: "You tried to feed me to snakes."

Nkosi: "I did no such thing baby. So how do you eat this. I guess a spoon is involved, do you just..put it in your mouth?" I stared at him.

Me: "You've never had porridge?"

Nkosi: "I have. I think. Must have."

Me: "You think? Taste it." He tasted a spoon of porridge.

Nkosi: "It's tasteless. You like this?"

Me: "You're supposed to add sugar, butter and anything else you like."

Nkosi: "Oh. I didn't know."

Me: "Let me help you." I poured two spoons of sugar in his bowl.

Nkosi: "That's a lot of sugar."

Me: "Relax. Close your eyes. It's not going to harm you." He chuckled. I added some butter.

Nkosi: "I wouldn't let anything harm you. You need to trust me Thembisa." I stirred his porridge.

Me: "Taste it now." He had a spoon of porridge. "Can't believe you've never had porridge."

Nkosi: "In my younger years, I might have. This is nice. And sweet."

Me: "It will get you ready for breakfast later. Porridge tends to disappear from your stomach in two hours."

Nkosi: "That's not possible. This is maize, it's supposed to be filling."

Me: "Temporarily." We finished the porridge and had some tea. "So who told you about this?"

Nkosi: "My advisor. Did you enjoy it?"

Me: "Very much." My phone rang. "That's probably my dad." I answered. "Hello Tata."

Xolani: "Hello my child. How are you?"

Me: "I'm fine. How are you?"

Xolani: "I'm well. How was your week?"

Me: "Quite relaxing. I prepped for school mostly. My classes start on Monday."

Xolani: "Okay. Hopefully you got some rest."

Me: "I did Tata. How is everything at home?"

Xolani: "Fine for now. Your mother says hello, she's doing laundry."

Me: "Tell her I said hello. Where's Nele?"

Xolani: "Sleeping, you know her. What will you be doing today?"

Me: "Nothing much. Probably be in my room reading." I looked at Nkosi who was smiling at me.

Xolani: "Please go outside. It's hot. Where's the boy you like? And your friends?"

Me: "Tata. I don't like him. You told me to stay away remember?"

Xolani: "As if you'd listen. Why don't you like him anymore? Is there someone else?"

Me: "Uhm, no. I'm just preparing for school. Plus the book I'm reading is interesting."

Xolani: "Who are you with?"

Me: "Dad."

Xolani: "I hope you're safe my child. You're precious, do you understand that? You need to preserve yourself."

Me: "Tata please."

Xolani: "I'm just saying, be careful. Boys in cities tend to be very charming but they're not good people. I trust you to make me proud."

Me: "I will tata."

Xolani: "Good. I love you."

Me: "I love you too tata. Bye." I hung up.

Nkosi: "There's a boy you like?" He finished his tea.

Me: "Khaya. I don't even like him like that anymore."

Nkosi: "You told your dad about him."

Me: "And I also took his advice about staying away from him."

Nkosi: "And me?"

Me: "What about you?"

Nkosi: "Did he tell you to stay away from me?" I contemplated my answer but I decided to be honest.

Me: "Yes but to be honest my dad just believes all boys are bad for me. You didn't help your case by disrespecting him."

Nkosi: "I'm not sure how I disrespected him. Before anyone greets me, they must bow. It's the law. He didn't. I let him speak to me simply because he's your father and I want you."

Me: "I never bowed to you."

Nkosi: "You're my interest, I'm pursuing you. I call you to me everytime." I tried to hide my smile. "Come. You need to rest. The bed will be more comfortable." I climbed on the bed and he next to me. I truly felt comfortable with him and I don't know why.

I woke up some time later, finding Nkosi next to me in bed staring as usual. His arm was locked around me protectively.

Me: "Hi."

Nkosi: "Hello."

Me: "How long have you been staring at me?"

Nkosi: "3 hours and 4 minutes. You snore."

Me: "That's a lie. I don't snore."

Nkosi: "I don't lie. Are you hungry?"

Me: "Yes actually. You didn't fall asleep?"

Nkosi: "No. Let's go outside for some breakfast."

Me: "Okay but you have to move for me to get up."

Nkosi: "Okay." He didn't move.

Me: "I can't get up, if you're holding me tight."

Nkosi: "I know." I moved closer, kissing his lips slowly then looked at him. He got up then. Why didn't he just say he wants a kiss? I got up, starting in the bathroom to freshen up. I then made my way out the deck.

Nkosi: "Breakfast is on its way."

Me: "How do they know when to come? You never call."

Nkosi: "There's a button I press that notifies them I'm ready. The meals are prepared every two hours, so I can eat fresh."

Me: "So you're always here?"

Nkosi: "No." I sat on the lounge bed with him. "Do you want to learn how to swim?"

Me: "Not today."

Nkosi: "It's a perfect day."

Me: "You just want me to be naked."

Nkosi: "I do but I also want you to know how to swim."

Me: "Maybe after breakfast then, we can give it a try."

Nkosi: "Good." I needed to ask. I couldn't stand by anymore and be confused. We're kissing, we're sleeping in the same bed over night. What was going on?

Me: "Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "Thembisa."

Me: "What's going on between us? I don't want to assume I'm your woman or you want to be with me. So I'd rather just know and manage my expectations."

Nkosi: "We're getting to know one another, I want to be in a relationship with you. I was hoping by spending time together, you could somehow feel the same."

Me: "How will you know when I feel the same?"

Nkosi: "I just will."

Me: "Well, I'm just a bit concerned because this can't go very far. You're royalty, and not just any royalty, you're next on the throne which is in the next couple of months. You'll be king. What will that mean for me to be in a relationship with the king? I'm just a concubine?" He smiled.

Nkosi: "You're no where near being my concubine. I don't have those."

Me: "I can't even declare my status with you, so it's obviously going to be a secret relationship. That sounds very concubine'ish."

Nkosi: "What makes you think this will not last? And you'll be kept a secret? Do you know why I'm not allowed in public with... Uhm, people who aren't royalty?" I wonder what he was going to say because it was definitely not that.

Me: "Why?"

Nkosi: "When they want to make me react, they will harm you and your family."

Me: "Why would anyone want you to react?"

Nkosi: "To weaken my reign. If I'm hurt I'll make rash decisions that can be to the kingdom's detriment. I can't have that."

Me: "I don't know Nkosinhle." I moved away from him, no longer sure if I wanted to start this relationship.

Nkosi: "Can we just work it through? For a few weeks at least and see where it takes us?"

Me: "I'm the one that's going to end up hurt. And alone." Why did I have to like him? If I ripped the bandage off now, I might get over him by the end of the semester. My first boyfriend is a Prince that I have to hide and meet in secret? Wow.

Nkosi: "I'm not letting that happen. I asked you to please trust me." ...

Monday I made it to my first day in second year on time. My weekend with Nkosinhle was so relaxed. We spent most of the time watching the mountains while I spoke because he just doesn't talk much, we kissed so much but not as intense. It felt as though he was holding back this time. It didn't get to almost sex, it was just intimate and comfortable. I loved being in his arms so much and he indulged me with that. We took walks in the garden probably three more times because it was huge and quite incredibly beautiful. Throughout today I've been staring at nothingness and daydreaming about my man. Yes, he was my man even though we hadn't fully agreed on a relationship. It was finally the end of my first day and I made it back to res already sending him a message. I last heard from him in the morning before my first lecture. <Hey baby. Done with my first day. How was your day?> I sent it giggling to myself because I felt it was strange that I call him Baby. Usually, I say Nkosi to his face. This was so exciting. I unlocked my door, walking in the room. A pungent smell slapped me in the face. What was that? Amahle was kneeled on the side of her bed, shaking.

Me: "Amahle?" She looked up at me, there was no life in her eyes but she was definitely alive. I felt a shiver down my spine just by looking at her. I dropped my bag on the floor and rushed to her.

Amahle: "No-"

Me: "You're sick. You need help." Her nose bled through this process, she kept wiping it with the sleeve of her top. The smell that was strong was vomit. All over her bed. "Don't move. I'll be back." I took the bucket I had and went to pour some water and also filled a bottle with water to drink, bringing it back to the room. I undressed her top, tossing it on her bed. Also taking off her bottoms. She had line scars on her arms which was probably why she only wore long sleeves. I took her wash cloth, dipping it in water smearing some soap. I washed off her body while she was still shaking staring at nothing. Once she was dry, I got her clothes from her bag to wear.

Me: "Climb on my bed for now, drink some water first. Here." She accepted the water, gulping it down before curling into a ball on my bed. I wonder what happened to her? At least the nose bleeding had stopped. I removed all her bedding before scrubbing the mattress with little water and soap then turning it over. God, I hope that dries. I opened all the windows, lighting up some incense. The smell was slowly evaporating. There was a laundry room, in the basement of the building but it was usually full. I mean, people aren't washing their things on Monday afternoon on the first week of school right? I balled up the sheet and everything making my way downstairs. I paid the R5, it was only one load anyway and I sat down while waiting. You can't leave your stuff here, you might return to it gone and so I sat the 2 hours, washing and drying, watching the TV in the corner because I'd forgotten my phone in the room. When the laundry was dry, I took it out the machine, back up to the room. Amahle was still in the same position I'd left her in. Something is wrong here. I don't know what but it's something. I checked my phone finding 4 messages from Nkosi and a missed call. I called him back right then without even reading the texts.

Nkosi: "Thembisa."

Me: "Hey."

Nkosi: "Were you busy? I couldn't get hold of you."

Me: "Kind of. My roommate is violently sick. I was just helping her."

Nkosi: "What's wrong with her?" I stepped out of the room.

Me: "I'm not sure. I found her, shaking, nose bleeding and vomiting. Right now she's asleep. I left her to do laundry two hours ago and she's still in the same position." He kept quiet. "I think I should call an ambulance-"

Nkosi: "That won't be necessary. Please wake her and ask what's wrong?"

Me: "Okay. I'm just really worried."

Nkosi: "Wake her up."

Me: "Okay. I'll call you bac-"

Nkosi: "Don't hang up. Just wake her." I went back inside, touching Amahle's shoulder.

Me: "Amahle? Babe? How are you feeling? Amahle?" She didn't move. "She's not moving." He hung up. I was starting to panic now, I can't believe I let her sleep! What was I thinking? Okay, I need to focus. Where's her phone? Ambulance first. Wait, security. I ran to security by the lobby.

Me: "My roommate, she's unresponsive, please call an ambulance." The lady jumped first, running after me back to the room. I tried shaking her again, still no moving. She talked in her walkie talkie.

Security: "Nkabi, biza abakhaya lapho. Kuyaphuthuma." I searched for her phone, I could've sworn she has one or was I imagining it? She must have one. In just minutes the second security walked in with two men behind him. They weren't part of our residence security.

Security 2: "I called her next of kin. They're sent to pick her up."

Me: "Next of kin? Within 7 minutes? There's no way of that!! Not at all! Did they show any identification?? You just let people into our home building to take learners? If they touch her, I will scream this building to the ground I swear!!! What the hell do you think you're doing!!" I shouted, grabbing one of the men while he tried to pick her up. The security pulled me away with difficulty, the men they carried her out. I screamed.

Security: "They're her family. They showed identification!! I have it on record." She shouted. I looked at her, still unsure of what she means.

"She's high priority care. That's why I had to call them, they are on standby." I calmed down, finally.

Me: "I'm reporting this to the Resident Leader. She must know about this."

Security: "Then do that." I marched out my room. A crowd was gathering outside of it, I made my way upstairs to the Leader, knocking on the door respectfully. She opened the door.

Me: "Good evening, sis Linda. My roommate was sick, not responding to me. I tried to tell the security and two men, came in to take her. The security says that she's high priority care and those men are next of kin and are on standby hence they took her. What do you know about that?" I breathed.

Linda: "Come inside." I walked in her room. Hers was a studio apartment much bigger than our pigeon holes. "Your roommate is Amahle?"

Me: "Yes."

Linda: "Yes she is High Priority Care."

Me: "What does that mean?"

Linda: "It means she needs to be watched, closely. She's not well."

Me: "And you didn't think I needed to know this AT ALL? As the person who sleeps next to her everyday?? What if she's dead!! I left her for two hours!!!" I screamed. "How irresponsible is that to not let me know that she's sick!!!"

Linda: "I'm sure she's fin-"

Me: "Did you not hear me say not responding!!!"

Linda: "Thembisa, I need you to calm down."

Me: "Oh my God, I let her die. You made me let her die." I cried.

Linda: "This is not your fault. I'm sure she will be fine. Don't worry about anything."

Me: "Why are the High Priority Care people placed here with unknowing roommates? How many people are High Priority?"

Linda: "You know the University does not discriminate. It has a policy that supports mental health and those that suffer from it. There's

currently 30 students who are under HPC in the building. I know you're a good girl Thembisa, but please do not discuss this with the other residents."

Me: "They have the right to know!! Their roommates have the right to know!!"

Linda: "If you had an illness would you want it to be disclosed to everyone around you without your consent?"

Me: "No! But Sis Linda this is dangerous. How are we to help the High Priority Care students if we don't know what's wrong? For example, I left her for two hours unattended because I thought she just had a tummy ache!! Now, there's a range of possibilities to what must have happened!!"

Linda: "And I understand your concern. However, you're also a student here Thembisa. It's not your responsibility to take care of another grown adult. Helping a friend with a tummy ache is as far as it goes but they need to feel their independence as well. They won't have that if you want everyone to play mommy. Your only responsibility? Is call security. You've done that, now leave it be." She opened the door for me, clearly dismissing me. My heart was so heavy when I walked out. I made it back to my room. Zimmy was there sitting on my bed. I placed my phone on the dresser and flopped next to her.

Zimmy: "People are saying that you tried to kill Amahle. She was taken away unconscious."

Me: "They may be right."

Zimmy: "Thembisa!!"

Me: "I walked in here from school and she was on the floor, shaking. Vomit all over the bed. I helped her up and let her sleep while I took her linen to get washed. You know the wash and dry takes two hours and so by the time I came up, and she was still sleeping, I was concerned. I was on the phone with...and telling him about this, he told me to wake her up. So I did, she just didn't respond."

Zimmy: "Oh my God!"

Me: "I don't know if she's still alive. Why didn't I try to keep her awake? Or even tell someone? I just let her sleep."

Zimmy: "Thembisa this isn't your fault. You couldn't have known. So what happened then?"

Me: "I told security, she came to check and radioed her partner, in a few minutes he walked in with these two men who they say are her next of kin. Isn't that strange? That the next of kin is contacted and arrives within literal minutes? No more than 7? Like they were waiting at the gate."

Zimmy: "What the fuck are you saying? Men walked in here minutes after you called for help to take a student? Why didn't they call an ambulance instead?"

Me: "You need to keep this a secret Zimmy. Please."

Zimmy: "I won't tell a soul."

Me: "Linda says we have High Priority Care students among us."

Zimmy: "What is that?"

Me: "Apparently people struggling with mental health. Now, I don't see this as a problem, my concern is how do we help if we do not know? Is it fair that I must walk into my room and find a person violently sick or possibly dying? How is that okay?"

Zimmy: "What are we going to do?"

Me: "Nothing. We can't do anything Zimasa."

Zimmy: "Thembisa do you understand the words High, Priority and Care? That doesn't seem like a phrase to describe people who can continue normal daily living unattended. It sounds bad. It sounds very much emergency."

Me: "Everyday, we live with each other in this building but out of an ordinary day, coming back from anywhere, you might come back to a suicide victim right next to your bed and there's nothing we can do to prevent it." I wiped my teary eyes, crawling into bed. She lay next to me quietly.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 10

## SASA POV\_

I woke up the next morning. Zimmy had slept in my room. How we both fit on my little bed was a mystery. I stared at Amahle's empty bed. I hadn't even had the chance to make it, her linen still sat on top of it, clean. We had fallen asleep, Zimmy and I, not one of us even eating supper. I think this is the longest she's slept actually. I got up to make Amahle's bed. God, I hope she's okay.

Zimmy: "Hey. Is it morning?"

Me: "Yes babe." She sat up.

Zimmy: "My body feels stiff, I shouldn't have slept that much in one go." She yawned. "What are you doing?"

Me: "Just putting back the sheets and stuff." I finished. "I'm going to shower."

Zimmy: "I should get going."

Me: "Thank you for keeping me company, Zimmy."

Zimmy: "You don't have to thank me. You're my friend. Also, I think you shouldn't say anything about the high priority students. It would cause a panic for everyone else. We need to keep it to ourselves. For now at least."

Me: "True. Linda also asked me to not say anything."

Zimmy: "I'm sure they have a handle on this right? This was just a scary incident. That's all."

Me: "Right. I think so too." She nodded, walking out. I went to take my shower, coming back to dress up. I didn't feel like being in a cute dress as I usually did everyday so I slipped into some jeans an old baggy t-shirt and my sneakers. In our building, we had a dining area where you could get food. Breakfast started at 6:45 and ended at 7:45. Lunch was provided as a 2 sliced sandwich, a juice box and a fruit in a zipper plastic bag for you to take with. Then dinner was from 6 to 8 at night. Our res was truly amazing. Getting food from the residence dining was not a necessity, it was there for those who didn't have food but included in our fees they say. The laundry room only had the R5 charge for every load.

This is wash and dry. There were short courses provided for free, only for the building. You can apply and do the course over 3 weeks, choosing between cleaning the machines in the laundry room and keeping it tidy, or working in the kitchen, helping with meal preparation or general maintenance such as fixing door locks, plumbing and outside maintenance. Once you complete the course you're put on schedule and you earn a little pocket money. Although, this was mostly reserved for students on scholarship. I found it quite thoughtful and genius because I don't know how many times people lock themselves out in the middle of the night here or drains getting blocked. It never takes more than a few minutes to get someone to fix it because they're right inside the building. I got to the kitchen exactly when it opened. Usually I came at 7 but I didn't want to be in my room alone. I greeted Mrs Winston.

Winston: "You're quite early." She was not a polite person so our conversation was short clipped words and to the point.

Me: "I'm always early."

Winston: "Didn't get dinner?"

Me: "Wasn't hungry." She scoffed and walked back into the kitchen. I looked at my phone finding dozens of missed calls from my father, some from my mother. I had 3 from Nkosi. I dialed my father first. He picked up immediately.

Xolani: "Thembisa!! Where are you?!"

Me: "I'm at Res tata-"

Xolani: "I've been calling all night! I've been worried sick! Were you partying and drinking Thembisa? Tell me the truth!?"

Me: "I wasn't Tata. I was here, I slept early."

Xolani: "Why then weren't you answering your phone?"

Me: "I switched it off. My roommate got sick. She was taken away. I..."

Xolani: "Sasa? What happened?"

Me: "Tata I don't know if she's still alive." I whispered with a shaky voice, fresh tears filling my eyes. "She was unresponsive, I tried to wake her. I had to call security. She was taken by her next of kin." I cried into my elbow to avoid making a noise.

Xolani: "Oh mntanam. What does your leader say?"

Me: "She wants me to keep quiet Tata. I can't tell anyone what happened."

Xolani: "Let me speak to your mother my child. I'll call you soon."

Me: "Okay." I hung up, wiping my tears.

Winston: "Breakfast." She yelled from behind the counter. I went up to fetch the food but it was a bowl instead. We never ate porridge. This was not a thing that happened. Ever. It was always toast eggs some sausage and tomato. The alternative being cereal. Vegetarians had their own meals as well but my point is, porridge has never been the option. I looked at Mrs Winston.

Winston: "If you don't want it just say so, and get something else. Stop staring at me like I'm an alien." I added my sugar and butter walking to my seat to eat. My phone was ringing once again. Mother. I started shaking immediately.

Me: "Mama?"

Mama: "Mama?? Where were you!!!" She shouted.

Me: "I was sleeping mama."

Mama: "Sleeping with who Thembisa!!!"

Me: "I was here at Res, in my room."

Mama: "Hey!! Do you think I'm stupid?? I'm not your father mna! Uyandiva? Uyandiva Thembisa!! Today you'll know me." She hung up. I stared at the porridge unable to get a spoon in. I might as well go to school because I'm obviously not going to eat. If you need to know anything about my mother, her shouting always ruins my appetite. I can never finish my food when she starts. I took a bottle of water, walking out the hall.

Winston: "You ungrateful wasteful little child!!!" She screamed. I walked to school, which was not too long a distance away from the res building. I only took the shuttle when it was raining or cold. Today was warm still, I honestly needed the walk. It took only 10 minutes to get there, I checked in making my way to my first class. I switched off my phone, sitting in my desk, going over my notes. It was something I always did, arrive early and prepare my brain but today I was just stuck. Was Amahle still alive? Did this make me a killer? What if her family thinks I killed her?

"Hey stranger." I jumped up, hitting my knee on my desk so painfully it stung. "Oh my God. I didn't mean to scare you." It was Khaya. My knee was shattered for sure. All I could do was wince in pain. "Let me see."

Me: "I'm fine."

Khaya: "You're crying."

Me: "It just stings, it'll subside in a minute."

Khaya: "Let me at least get you some pain killers. The nurse office is not too far." He sprinted out of the lecture hall. Hell, I might be limping for a bit. Why can't I just have a normal day? Why? Khaya made it back 10 minutes later with a bottle of pain killers. Was he trying to kill me? He gave me two, and I downed it with a bottle of water.

Me: "Thank you."

Khaya: "I'm sorry I scared you. Why are you here so early?"

Me: "I'm always early."

Khaya: "It's 7:10 in the morning. You're supposed to be having breakfast."

Me: "Oh I skipped it. I wasn't hungry. What are you doing here?"

Khaya: "I missed you. Thought I'd come say hi." He smiled his boyish smile.

Me: "Oh. Well. Hi."

Khaya: "Can we talk? Let's go somewhere for the day. You're injured, you can't focus or get to your next lecture on time with a sore knee."

Me: "I'm not bunking school Khaya. I'll be fine. The pain is already starting to go away."

Khaya: "Okay, well can I at least drive you home when you're ready? At any time."

Me: "Okay." His phone rang.

Khaya: "Fucks sake. Why do people think it's okay to call before 9am. Where do they live? Hello?" He answered. "Oh it's you. What do you want? It's 7 in the morning." He listened. "I'm already on campus, why don't you catch the shuttle?" He paused. "Let's not do that. I'm not about

to inconvenience myself Fikile. Have a blessed day." He hung up. "How are you?"

Me: "So you and Fikile huh? She your type? Not too innocent." I swear I didn't mean to sound this bitter, it just rolled off my tongue.

Khaya: "What are you talking about baby?"

Me: "Why are you calling me baby? I'm not your baby."

Khaya: "Come on Sasa, not this again."

Me: "Just leave me alone Khaya."

Khaya: "I'm not going to fucking leave you alone! What is it that you want from me? Why can't you understand I just don't want to hurt you? I'm not gentle. I want to be, to you. I can't just flip a switch and make it happen."

Me: "And in the meantime I must just wait and make you comfortable while you fuck the world? Please Khaya. Let's respect each other. I wish I could say I still like you but I don't so please leave."

Khaya: "I don't want us to be hostile Thembisa, we're friends for goodness sake. We're in the same circle of people."

Me: "I'm not hostile but if you're going to be my friend, you will not call me Mrs and act like my husband."

Khaya: "I can't help that. Do you know why I call you Mrs? You look like what I wish my future would. You're perfect. You have all the qualities I would really love. I just don't want to hurt you and I know I will. I know my lifestyle is unstable. I know I can't be trusted. You don't need that in your life Thembisa and I'm not going to burden you with it."

Me: "And if I meet someone? What then?"

Khaya: "Let's not be hasty."

Me: "You know you're a selfish human being?" He smiled.

Khaya: "I know I'm not going to like him. That's for sure."

Me: "Yeah, I bet." Other students started filing in. The class only started at 8 but there were a few early birds like myself as well.

Khaya: "Okay, it's time for me to go. Remember I'm taking you home." He walked out.

## PRINCE POV\_

I held my stress ball in my hand, squeezing it a little bit every few minutes. I had a meeting with the council at 9. I had another one with my father, directly after that. I needed to meet with a chief of a nearby village and that might take a while because I know how much they put into theatrics to show me developments I care nothing about, it almost irritated me and today was not a good day. Neither was yesterday. I was supposed to be used to this but since this weekend, I've been feeling quite despondent. The weekend was good days. I hate to admit it and no one will ever hear me saying it out loud. My advisor walked in, taking a seat opposite me.

Mthunzi: "You've been quiet."

Nkosi: "I'm always quiet."

Mthunzi: "More than the usual. You've barely said a word since you came back from eNtabeni. Did something happen?"

Nkosi: "No."

Mthunzi: "Okay? What's going on?"

Nkosi: "With what?"

Mthunzi: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "What must I say when I have nothing to say? You want me to act out like a clown?"

Mthunzi: "There's no need for that or this rudeness. It's not you. I mean it is, but not to me. You're about to burst that stress ba-" the ball tore into rubber pieces in my hand. "That was the strongest one I had made for you. This is not healthy Nkosi. What happened." I let the pieces of the ball fall on the floor.

Nkosi: "Nothing. I need to get ready for my meeting."

Mthunzi: "Have you spoken to Thembisa?"

Nkosi: "Called her 3 times last night. She didn't pick up."

Mthunzi: "Try her again."

Nkosi: "I called 3 times. If she wanted to speak to me, she would call me back. She didn't."

Mthunzi: "And you're not going to just check on her? Send a message? She's probably traumatized."

Nkosi: "And how does this suddenly become my problem? I told you placing Amahle in there with her will be a bad idea. What did you say?"

Mthunzi: "I know I said they'll get acquainted and we'll have someone keep an eye on her-"

Nkosi: "Right. She didn't. Instead she tried to overdose. Again."

Mthunzi: "Amahle is going through a hard time."

Nkosi: "All of us are going through a hard time Mthunzi. All of us were born with that same blood she keeps pouring out on the floor. All of us had to sacrifice our lives and dreams. She knows she can't die. Instead of bucking up and getting it together, she keeps trying. What kind of stupid shit is that? Please, if it was possible, I'd kill her myself."

Mthunzi: "Nkosinhle!"

Nkosi: "No. I'm not the asshole here. Don't even try to make me one." He sighed. I opened my drawer looking for another ball to squeeze in my hand but I'd run out. "I'm going for a run." I got up, walking out the office.

SASA POV\_

When I was done with school for the day, I walked out. Just outside Khaya was waiting.

Khaya: "Hey baby. Still sore?"

Me: "Not really, only when I like step too hard."

Khaya: "What if you broke something? We need to check this out."

Me: "There's no need for that. I need to lie down." He opened the passenger door, I climbed in and he drove to my res.

Khaya: "How was your day?" Possibly blank. I didn't hear a word from my classes.

Me: "Good."

Khaya: "Mine was good too."

Me: "I'm sorry. I'm just dizzy."

Khaya: "Don't worry about it. Let's get you in bed." He parked, I got out the car with much difficulty. He helped me, by letting me hold his arm. We walked to my room avoiding the stares. The girls here probably know Khaya and that also annoyed me but what can I do?

Khaya: "Why are you wearing jeans today? If you were in a dress, I'd be able to check your knee." I opened my door.

Me: "Why would you need to check it, you're not a doctor." I walked in my room.

Khaya: "I know but what if it's bruised? We can't see now, otherwise I'd put ice on it." My father was sitting on my bed, livid. My mother standing.

Mama: "I knew it!! You see Xolani!?! You like to think I'm stupid!"

Me: "Hello mama. I didn't know you guys were coming."

Xolani: "Who is this? Who are you mfana?"

Khaya: "Uhm. My name is Khaya Solinga, sir. I'm Thembisa's friend."

Xolani: "What are you doing in her room? We were told this building is only for girls!! Why are you here?"

Khaya: "I'm only helping her inside sir. I've never come in here before. She may have broken her knee at school."

Xolani: "Listen to me, I don't want you near my daughter. Do you understand me?"

Me: "Tata-"

Xolani: "I'm coming to you young lady! You, leave." Khaya looked at me.

Me: "Thanks Khaya."

Mama: "Thanks yantoni? Get out!!" He walked out the room. My father shut the door. "You have a boyfriend now Thembisa? You're sleeping out?" She took off her shoe.

Me: "Mama please."

Xolani: "Ntombenhle, you cannot beat the child here. What's wrong with you?"

Mama: "Why must I wait? She's a child!! She has boyfriends. Who knows how many?? I must be the laughing stock of the village because she's loose? What happens when she comes home pregnant?!"

Me: "Mama, Khaya is not my boyfriend."

Mama: "Shut up!! What was he doing here?! Why did you not answer your phone the whole night?!"

Me: "Someone could've died here mama. My roommate was sick." I cried.

Mama: "Xolani, this child of yours? She's going to give me a stroke. When did you become a liar?! We asked with security. They say there's no information of anyone being sick here!!" My heart stopped. Does that mean she's gone? My whole body was shaking.

Me: "Mama I swear you can ask any student here."

Mama: "All you do is lie. Maybe you're not even going to school you're just sleeping with boys here while we pay these big fees! Give me your phone!"

Me: "My phone is off mama, I'm going to put it in the charger so I can switch it on."

Mama: "Do it now!" I went to my desk, pretending to plug my charger, switching on the phone. I quickly deleted all messages from Nkosi, his calls and numbers. At least he will call. He always does. I handed the phone over. Mama was searching through it. I wish I was in a different province. My parents being so near was starting to get to me. Now I was sure, I don't want to be home during holidays. I have to endure this woman even when I'm away from her?

Xolani: "What's on the phone? Show me?"

Mama: "I'm looking man! She probably deleted things, this devil child of yours."

Xolani: "Don't call her that. She just needs to be spoken to and disciplined. Name calling is not necessary. Thembisa, I didn't teach you to lie to us. What is going on?" The door opened. I was having difficulty

breathing and was in no mood to look who else had come in to witness my parents giving me a hiding.

Linda: "What's going on here?"

Mama: "And who are you!"

Linda: "I'm Linda, this building's manager and the students Resident leader. You are?"

Mama: "I am this one's mother!"

Linda: "Parents are not allowed inside the rooms unless there's an active emergency."

Mama: "Uthetha ukunya! We pay alot of money to be here!! We have the right to see our child whenever we want to!"

Linda: "Hey." She touched my shoulder.

Me: "Is she dead?"

Linda: "Thembisa everyone is worried about you. You didn't have dinner, locked yourself in this room until you left for breakfast and you still left it unattended without taking your lunch. I called the school. All your lectures say you looked out of it. This is why I didn't want to tell you. This is why we don't disclose the High Priorities. Look how it's affecting you."

Me: "Please tell me Sis Linda."

Linda: "Amahle is alive. She received medical care. She's taken care of. But now, you need to rest. Dinner is a long time from now but I'm worried, you need to eat. I'll have the kitchen prepare a sandwich at least, then you sleep. Tomorrow, I need you to do better at school. Don't worry about Amahle. She's fine now." She hugged me. At this point, my tears came full force. She may have saved me from a beating but I was not too convinced as of yet. Anything is possible with my parents. I pulled away from Linda and sat on the bed. Linda: "Please follow me to my office." She walked out. My parents followed her.

Linda opened her office, allowing the parents inside before she closed and locked the door.

Linda: "Parents are not allowed inside the premises unless there's an active emergency."

Xolani: "I have the right to go in that room and check my child."

Linda: "And I have the responsibility of calling our child protection lawyers." She sat down looking at them.

Mama: "You will not intimidate us-"

Linda: "I am not intimidating you. I am warning you. As you may know, since you're paying for the fees. The only person who matters in this institution is the student. Not you. You bring her to us so that we care for them, we give them an education. If I notice she's being intimidated or abused, I will involve authorities."

Xolani: "You're not going to tell me how to raise my child."

Linda: "I won't. The court will." She clicked on her computer. "Now, is there any reason you came to see Thembisa?"

Mama: "Why wasn't she here yesterday? We couldn't get hold of her."

Linda: "Were you here yesterday?"

Mama: "Hehe. Weh sisi? Let's not disrespect each other."

Linda: "I am asking if you were here, perhaps you know something I don't? Thembisa was here. She came back from school and went to her room."

Xolani: "She says her roommate was sick but the security say nothing of the sort."

Linda: "Her roommate was sick. She was taken by her family yesterday. Thembisa was worried about her. She's been in her room since, only going to school in the morning to come back now. Watch." She turned her screen to them. From getting into the room, to leave the room for the laundry, coming back, being on the phone and fetching the security until the morning.

Linda: "Thembisa is a good girl. She has been well behaved since she first came to Mountain Peak. I've never had complaints, she's always in her room studying, shows everyone respect and does well in her studies. You know the child you've raised. This is very disappointing. I'm not going to put this on record only for her sake but let this please be the last time you disturb our home building." ...

## SASA POV\_

I sat in my bed, unsure of what was going on in that office. I took out my books placing them on the desk to start studying. My door opened as I sat in my chair.

Xolani: "Sasa." I looked at him. "Please come sit with me my child." I sat on the bed next to him. "I'm sorry I didn't believe you. This is a very dangerous place. We're only trying to protect you. It's good that there's people here who look after you. I'm sorry mntanam."

Me: "You were going to hit me because I fell asleep after a stressful day."

Xolani: "It's not that Sasa, I misunderstood-"

Me: "You said I'm a liar."

Xolani: "I didn't know. The security said nothing can be disclosed."

Me: "So it means I'm lying?"

Xolani: "Please forgive me. I am sorry Thembisa."

Me: "I understand uMama because she hates me but you?"

Xolani: "Your mother doesn't hate you."

Me: "Is that why she's not here to apologize for shouting and accusing me?" I heard a knock on the door before the handle turned. Jimmy walked in.

Zimmy: "Hey Sasa. I was called, they told me to bring this to you. Hello Tata, I'm Zimmy"

Xolani: "Hello Zimmy."

Me: "Thanks."

Zimmy: "I'll be in my room when you need me." She walked out.

Xolani: "You didn't introduce me to your friend."

Me: "The one I'm not allowed to have according to the mother who loves me?"

Xolani: "There's no need to be disrespectful Thembisa."

Me: "I'm sorry Tata. I need to study, today was not a good day at school."

Xolani: "How is your roommate?"

Me: "Sis Linda says she's fine. I wouldn't know if she's telling the truth or just protecting me. I guess I'll have to forget about it and move on."

Xolani: "Okay mntanam. Let me leave you to study. I'm sorry about today and the misunderstanding. I'll call you when we reach home."

Me: "Okay." He walked out my door. I sat in my desk and stared helplessly at my textbook. Maybe if I called Nkosi I would feel better. I scrolled through my phone and realized I had to delete his number. Great, just great.

## PRINCE POV\_

I came back to the palace just before dinner. My visit to the village was as I expected, irritating. Theatrics, children brought to dance and sing, women serving me on their knees. It was extremely tiring. Why can't I just see a village in it's true form. How the people live when there's no royal visit? The day to day activities? Why the show? I walked into the palace, heading for my office, closing the door behind me before I sat down in my desk. Still no call from Thembisa and I refuse to keep begging. I know she saw my missed calls. Women are difficult creatures. What is so hard in just saying I'm not interested? Is this still about the snakes? It can't be Amahle related because that's not my fault. I just don't get it. Mthunzi walked in. When will I ever have peace?

Nkosi: "I'm trying to relax. Don't start with your nonsense. I don't want to hear it."

Mthunzi: "I'm worried about you."

Nkosi: "If you left me alone, you wouldn't have to worry about me."

Mthunzi: "You know I'm not allowed to. Please talk to me."

Nkosi: "That's my least favorite thing to do and you know that."

Mthunzi: "Call her then."

Nkosi: "Do I look stupid Mthunzi? Is that what I look to you?"

Mthunzi: "Fine. I'm calling Linda." He took out his phone. I opened my drawer finding a new stress ball bigger than the previous. As if that will help because it will be destroyed either way.

Mthunzi: "Hi Lindz. it's Mthunzi. How are you?"

Linda: "I'm well, my Lord. How are you?"

Mthunzi: "I'm fine. I wanted to check on Thembisa. Is she well?"

Linda: "She's mostly fine my Lord. Possibly still shaken."

Mthunzi: "Why?"

Linda: "Well, yesterday's incident may have scared her. She feels directly responsible for Amahle's attempt."

Mthunzi: "Why would she feel that?"

Linda: "I looked over the footage. She came back from school, went into her room and she came out with a bucket, filled it with water and a bottle bringing it back to the room. She came out again half an hour later, with sheets, going to the laundry room. She came back about 2 hours later. I think she was trying to help. She feels guilty for leaving her alone for that long."

Mthunzi: "That's unfortunate." He looked at me. Why the hell was he looking at me? It's his very bad decision that led to this point.

Linda: "Very. Her parents were here as well. They apparently couldn't get hold of her last night and freaked out. Screamed the building down." Oh, so I wasn't the only one being ignored? That doesn't make it better but at least it's not just me.

Mthunzi: "Why would they be screaming?"

Linda: "I think they're just like that. They're from the village so they believe in beating as discipline." The new ball in my hand dissolved to pieces.

Mthunzi: "They did what?" He hissed.

Linda: "Oh it didn't get to that. I made sure to get the message across, that's not gonna happen."

Mthunzi: "Good. Thank you Linda."

Linda: "It's my pleasure sir. Blessed day." He hung up.

Mthunzi: "So-"

Nkosi: "I'm going for a run."

Mthunzi: "It's dinner ti-"

Nkosi: "Not hungry." I walked out the office to change in my room. After getting dressed for running, I took off the royal bracelet, placing it on the dresser and walked out. My guards are supposed to follow me everywhere but I too need alone time and I can take care of myself. Their presence was merely distraction. I sprinted out the courtyard straight for the woods. My run lasted all of two hours. I climbed up the tree, swinging on the strongest branch and sitting on it.

Nkosi: "No talking." I know my guide was already here.

Him: "I haven't said anything."

Nkosi: "Keep it that way please. I'm not in the mood."

Him: "You're never in the mood when you come here. The only reason you come here actually. To escape."

Nkosi: "Sounds like the talking I thought I said I don't want."

Him: "Why then did you come to me?"

Nkosi: "This is my private place. You have the entire spiritual realm to find your own."

Him: "I only appear when you need me." I growled in frustration. Just one moment of peace. Is that so difficult. "No it's not. But you do know peace doesn't mean being alone?" I closed my eyes, clearing all of my thoughts. You're not getting anything out of me.

Him: "I don't have to."

Nkosi: "Stop it!!!"

Him: "Prince Mehluli. You can defeat anything but you're holding back. Why is that?" I kept my mouth quiet and mind clear. "Okay, I'll let you be." Finally. But this branch is going to break. I stood up, climbing higher to another that can hold my weight. Now I can listen to nature and be at peace.

Guide: "This has always been your favorite tree. Since you were a little boy. You'd run out of the palace, and come hide here. This is where you

sharpened your abilities. Where you connected higher than human level. That's why you climb it like you live in it, as if it's your natural habitat."

Nkosi: "Your point?"

Him: "You couldn't always climb that high. You could barely climb up to the first branch when you started. When you did learn to climb, you sat on a branch and it broke, along with your arm. Yet you didn't give up, you learned to climb higher and find a stronger branch and you could move when you felt the branch cracking. Now you move before it even budes. You can feel it's roots and the weight it can support without it telling you. You can even time how much maximum weight it can carry and for how long. All learnt by yourself."

Nkosi: "Any person who spends enough time on something, can learn about it."

Him: "Then why won't you call her?"

Nkosi: "What does that have to do with a tree?"

Him: "You don't understand her, but you want her. The only way you can succeed is keep going, keep pursuing, keep learning. You have to keep reaching out."

Nkosi: "I think she made it clear when she didn't respond."

Him: "I don't think she did. Until she says, leave me alone, I don't think you should. Just call her." I huffed. "And now I can leave you to your peace." ...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 11

SASA POV\_

The whole week passed. I tried my best not to worry about Amahle. Also, Nkosi hadn't called me. This kind of ruined my week. I hated not being able to reach out to him and I had no way to. I did think of going to

Amelia's to wait for him there. My only plan was to obviously stare at him and smile but I chickened out. Plus I got an assignment that I wanted to start because it looked difficult. My Saturday morning was uneventful. I actually decided to stay in bed and read for once. There was no need to be bright and early all the time at least food was available all day on weekends so if I needed anything, I'd go down to the hall. By midday, I was becoming uncomfortable and so I went to shower, then got dressed. My phone rang, the way I jumped to grab it? But it was my dad. Great.

Me: "Hello Tata."

Xolani: "Hello my child. How are you?"

Me: "I'm fine thank you, how are you tata?"

Xolani: "I'm well. How was your week?"

Me: "It was fine."

Xolani: "Okay. Did you hear anything from your roommate?"

Me: "No."

Xolani: "I'm sure she will be back."

Me: "Hm."

Xolani: "So what are you doing today?"

Me: "I'm starting an assignment. I got it a few days ago. I want to start the research now."

Xolani: "Oh that's good. That's very good. It helps being on top of things and not doing last minute."

Me: "Yes tata."

Xolani: "Your mother says hello."

Me: "Tell her I say hello too."

Xolani: "I will. Uhm, I know you're still upset with me my angel. I am really sorry."

Me: "It's fine tata. I just really need to focus right now."

Xolani: "Okay then. Let me leave you to your work. Goodbye my love."

Me: "Goodbye Tata." I hung up. I hated being upset especially at my father but I couldn't get over how he handled that day. The least I owed

him was respect but forgiveness? I wasn't ready. I went to the dining hall for lunch. Today was pasta day. Just different variations of it. I chose the spaghetti and mince option because that's what I knew. Mrs Winston didn't work weekends not that it mattered. The lady behind the counter was kind Mrs Zeel.

Me: "Hello Mrs Zeel."

Zeel: "Hi Angel. How are you?"

Me: "I'm okay. How are you?"

Zeel: "I'm well. I heard about this week, sweetie are you okay?"

Me: "What did you hear Mrs Zeel?"

Zeel: "They said you and the new girl had a fight and you injured her. Now she's... Not on earth with us." So that's why I've been getting the weird stares?

Me: "I didn't fight with Amahle. She wasn't feeling well and I called the security to help. That's all."

Zeel: "I believe you my sweet. You don't have a mean bone in your body. Rumors always fly in these halls. Don't pay them any attention. Keep your head high and don't be scared to come out and eat. Apparently you're not eating."

Me: "I've just been busy with school."

Zeel: "You need to eat angel. Here you go. Take a snack from the table too." I took the spaghetti filled container from her.

Me: "Thank you Mrs Zeel, have a wonderful day."

Zeel: "You too, sweet pea." I went to take a juice then sat down in a table alone. Zimmy hardly ate here during the day. She mostly ate the dinners and so during breakfast and weekends, I eat alone or sometimes I'm joined by other girls. However today I'm the Social pariah. No one wanted to come near me. I ate my food, reading the book I'd brought and minded my business. After lunch I was back in my room. If I went to Amelia's, would I still be on his tab? Considering that it's been a week and he hasn't called me. Did he also lose my number trying to protect me from his parents? This person had moved on surely. Well, I guess that's that. But I'm bored and I want to go. He doesn't seem like someone who would get me thrown out. Should I go? Okay, I'm going. I'll

spend two hours and come back, there'll still be taxis for me to get back to res. I'll ask if I'm still on the tab, how? I don't know but I'll find a way. I can't call Zimmy to come with me. Yes, he obviously won't come to me directly but if she notices me smiling at him, she might be suspicious. So it's a solo mission. What will I do there? Just sit and pretend I'm not waiting for someone? Actually, I can do my assignment. Let's do that. I packed my backpack. Let's change this dress into a cute white floral maxi. My afro was combed and tied up, little hoop earrings. I'm done.

When I got to the restaurant, it wasn't as empty as I hoped it would be. Only a few tables were open and his one of them. My heart shriveled into a ball.

Me: "This is stupid." The manager walked to me, smiling.

Him: "Table for one?"

Me: "I... It looks full, I'll come back another time."

Him: "I have a table that is open for you."

Me: "I don't know, maybe it's best I leave."

Him: "Please miss, I insist." It seems so crass to ask if I'm on a tab paid for by someone. This man doesn't know me. He has no reason to. He's never seen me.

Me: "That is incredibly kind but I think I have to go." I turned to walk away but Khaya walks in with a group of guys. Is this the only restaurant in town? This is a very big city. How is he always here?

Khaya: "Mrs. What are you doing here?"

Me: "I came to do an assignment but it's full."

Khaya: "No it's not. There's a few tables. Come, I'll speak to the manager."

Me: "Khay-"

Khaya: "You're not about to go lock yourself in that room. Come. Len, please get her a table. A quieter one, we might be rowdy." He laughed. I sighed. "Come on baby. Is it still about mom and dad? We're way past that. Personally I understand them. I wouldn't want my daughter near a boy like me either." He chuckled. "But I'm not going to hurt you. I

promise. Come, Len is setting your table." I followed Len to a quieter area and sat down.

Me: "Thank you."

Len: "What can I get you ?"

Me: "For now, just some tea. Rooibos, with lemon and honey."

Len: "Sure." He walked away.

Khaya: "So. Which assignment are you busy with. I can help." He sat next to me.

Me: "I'll let you know when I'm stuck. I like trying before reaching out for help, it's how I learn."

Khaya: "That's sweet. How are you?"

Me: "I'm fine. How are you?"

Khaya: "I'm okay. You look beautiful today." I chuckled.

Me: "Thank you Khaya. Was I not beautiful yesterday?"

Khaya: "You're beautiful everyday."

Me: "Hm. How's Fikile?"

Khaya: "I wouldn't know."

Me: "Why is that?"

Khaya: "Come on Sasa. She's nothing to me. No girl is anything to me."

Me: "Yet you sleep with them?"

Khaya: "Please be patient with me."

Me: "No. I don't have to be anything with you. You made yourself clear and I was listening. You don't want a committed relationship. You want sex. With women who are experienced."

Khaya: "It's not that shallow."

Me: "That isn't shallow, it's honest. At least you didn't string me along and I'm grateful for that. Now, we can be good friends, you and I."

Khaya: "When I'm done with all my shit, understand that I'm coming for you. And when I do, I'm giving you my all."

Me: "It might be too late then."

Khaya: "It will never be too late for the love of your life." He stood up, brushing my cheek before he walked away. Khaya is surely on some type of drug. What woman would wait for a man while he has fun fucking women at any time right in front of her? Especially not even being with him romantically. I took out my books, pen and notepad using my phone for internet, plugging my earphones for music. Len brought my tea as I got on with my work.

I did a lot of reading, making notes here and there, writing out more information as I get it. I checked the time. Three hours had passed and I didn't even realize. So he wasn't going to arrive? I'd only had two cups of tea. I wasn't really hungry but maybe later I would be, I don't think I want to eat in the dining hall again today. Eating alone is fine but when people are actually staying away from you, it sucks. I'll just collect the dinner and have it in my room. I was too shy to order here.

Khaya: "Baby." He sat down.

Me: "Hey. I think I'm going back to res. I'm quite tired."

Khaya: "Okay, we're also about to head out. Do you want to hang out later?"

Me: "No. I just want to read in bed."

Khaya: "Tomorrow? Breakfast ice cream?"

Me: "Okay, we can do that."

Khaya: "Perfect. I'm going to the bathroom, then I'll pay the bills and we can go." He went to the bathroom. The manager came to my table again.

Len: "Refill miss?"

Me: "No thank you Len. I'm leaving now. Can I get the bill." He smiled.

Len: "The bill is settled miss. Enjoy your day further, I look forward to seeing you again."

Me: "Thank you Len." I wanted to ask him so badly if Nkosi had come here recently or does he have a schedule but that would be so weird so I watched him walk away instead. I packed my files and notepad into my backpack. Khaya went to the counter. I got up, taking my bag to the door.

Khaya: "But I didn't pay that. I'm about to."

Me: "It's okay Khaya. I already got mine."

Khaya: "Oh." He paid his and we walked out.

Me: "Thank you."

Khaya: "For what? I didn't even get to pay for you. I thought I said I'll handle it, baby."

Me: "You don't have to do that Khaya. Remember you're taking me out tomorrow? Now let's go home." We got into his car.

Khaya: "Are you sure you don't want to go out tonight? We won't be doing wild shit I promise. My friend has a sit in at his house."

Me: "Your friend's have houses?"

Khaya: "He shares it with his sister. Do you want to come?"

Me: "No thank you. I already have a more interesting plan in my bed and it involves a book." He looked at me and smiled.

Khaya: "What's this book about?"

Me: "Your least favorite topic. Romance." He laughed.

Khaya: "It's not my least favorite. It's just not my favorite."

Me: "You can't stand it."

Khaya: "Yeah, it's so corny and boring. Real life isn't always romantic."

Me: "Well, that's why I like watching and reading it. At least it's happening somewhere." He parked in front of the building.

Khaya: "I can't wait to see you tomorrow."

Me: "You don't have a choice but to. Thank you for the lift Kay."

Khaya: "What time should I come get you?"

Me: "Probably around 9. I wake up early anyway so I don't mind any time."

Khaya: "Let's do 11am. 9 is very early baby. I'll see you then."

Me: "Okay then. Enjoy your evening."

Khaya: "Think of me when you read the book." I laughed getting out the car with my bag. I went into the building , greeting some girls in reception.

June: "You do know he's only sweet before he fucks you right? You're not special. Once you give it up, he'll do to you what he does to 70% of the girls here. Toss you aside."

Me: "Okay." I walked to my room to rest.

## PRINCE POV\_

My Saturday day was no different to the week I had. It was annoyingly busy and tiring.

Mthunzi: "That was a good meeting." We were on our way back to the palace after meeting the chief of eMafini village. It was a good meeting, that I can't deny. Mostly because Chief Menzi did not pull drama to impress me. He treated me as he would a potential business partner. He was willing to listen to the ideas presented to better his community and offered his own. I stared out of the window, watching the road.

Mthunzi: "You've been quiet for days now." I'd also run out of stress balls, but I'm the problem? I wonder how different life would be if I wasn't a royal Heir, the only one, handpicked and carved by the most powerful spiritual guides. Maybe I'd still be in Cali, enjoying life as a bachelor, pursuing my dream career. I'd probably settle down later on in life, have 2 children, maybe a pet too. These thoughts won't help me in any way. Fact is, I'm who I am and I have to be who I am. I can't just delegate it to the next available candidate. My ancestors thought it would be fantastic to kill my uncles before they reached 20 years of age, only let my father survive and have one son. He of course, is jubilant at this very perfect destiny. He is the father of the Defeater.

Mthunzi: "So, Thembisa was at Amelia's today." I looked at him. "Finally. Why are you ignoring me?"

Nkosi: "I'm not ignoring you, I just don't want to talk. I thought that was clear."

Mthunzi: "It's not clear Nkosinhle. You not liking to talk is not good for you. Why can't you call Thembisa?"

Nkosi: "Why can't she call me?"

Mthunzi: "Ask her! How must I know? Now I'm being punished because she doesn't know the phone works both ways? No." I looked back out the window.

Nkosi: "What was she doing at Amelia's?"

Mthunzi: "Another question you can ask her." I looked at him again. "She came alone, Len said she looked unsure and was ready to turn around at the door."

Nkosi: "So?"

Mthunzi: "Maybe she was looking for you."

Nkosi: "Because I spend all my time relaxing in a restaurant?"

Mthunzi: "Did you want her to find the palace and come over for dinner then? You're difficult. You know that? Anyway, that Solinga boy showed up, convinced her to stay. She sat alone doing school work for 3 hours."

Nkosi: "Good for her."

Mthunzi: "She chose to go to the restaurant hoping to bump into you-"

Nkosi: "I did ask you if you're seer now? What did she expect? That I live there?"

Mthunzi: "Ok. I'm tired of you. I'm done trying. Be miserable. I don't care anymore. I have a woman, I don't need this stress and attitude." The car drove into the palace parking. I got out the car, walking inside.

Nkosi: "Good evening Father."

Sikhosana: "My Prince. You're home for dinner. I thought you were avoiding the family."

Nkosi: "I was."

Sikhosana: "Enough of that, get changed. We'll wait." I walked up the second staircase, down the long passage at the end of it, entered my quarters. I took off my jacket and checked my phone. I typed <Do you still want to-> I deleted and re-typed <I miss talking to you> I placed my phone on the dresser without sending. My shower was quick, I got dressed in another pair of pants and shirt. I deleted the message and walked down to dinner. The family was seated in the dinner table.

Sikhosana: "Here he is. Thank you for joining us, son." Did I have a choice?

Nobantu: "My son, are you well? You don't look well." My first mother always worried about my health and appearance.

Nhlanhla: "He never looks well." I stared at my sister.

Nobantu: "That's not a very nice thing to say to the future King."

Nhlanhla: "Is that why we can't eat before he sits with us? Saze salamba si-wealthy." My sisters are the only people that can get on my nerves this quickly. It's like their superpower.

Nkosi: "I'm fine mother."

Nolwazi: "We haven't seen you for days Mehluli." My second mother on the other hand, only wanted my presence.

Nkosi: "Working, mother."

Nkwenkwezi: "Excited for the day you speak full in sentences. It's like your family bores you."

Nhlanhla: "His entire life bores him." They giggled.

Sikhosana: "You two stop it."

Nkosi: "Excited for the day you get married to a mediocre man who doesn't rule an entire nation and influences decisions in plenty others. Then you'll know how much you bore me."

Nolwazi: "Mehluli."

Nobantu: "Can everyone please calm down? We're supposed to enjoy dinner together. Also, Amahle is coming home. So can we please be kind to each other?"

Nkwe: "Kind? She's basically died 29 times, it's like living with a ghost. Just ignore it." Amahle walked in.

Sikhosana: "Nkwenkwezi!!" He shouted.

Nkwe: "Sorry father." A part of me did want to arrange a marriage to get them out of this house but I'm not letting my sisters out in the world. Yes they're 23, spoilt and very mean. Those husbands will bring them back in less than a week anyway.

Amahle: "Good evening." She sat down. The drinks were served and starters shortly after.

Sikhosana: "Mehluli, have you spotted a maiden, son? You do know your coronation is coming right? You need a wife." He looked at Nkwe. "Say one word." She kept her mouth shut with whatever stupid comment she had.

Nkosi: "No father."

Sikhosana: "Are you looking?" Amahle looked at me. Why was she looking at me? I could feel her stare without even looking back at her.

Nkosi: "No."

Sikhosana: "Should I organize one for you?"

Nkosi: "No thank you father. I'm more focused on developing our land, especially the surrounding communities."

Sikhosana: "That's not important Mehluli. You are meant to find a woman, who can bear you a son to be your heir and take over from you." That sounds like another job. I don't need that.

Nkosi: "I haven't even started and I'm already being voted out?" The girls giggled.

Sikhosana: "No. Your son needs to grow with your reign. You have 30 years to rule. He needs to grow up seeing and experiencing what it is to be a leader. If you build it for him before he's here how will he value it?"

Nobantu: "My King, I think our Prince needs a celebration?" What on earth? "Maybe he's been so busy he doesn't have the time to see the maidens. A reed dance will be advantageous." To who?

Sikhosana: "That's a good idea. That's settled." This is why I avoid my family. I can't get away quick enough before the pimping starts.

Sikhosana: "So, how was your meeting with Menzi?"

Nkosi: "Fruitful." He looked at me and I looked back at him. He sighed.

Sikhosana: "I see. Amahle, how are you my child?"

Amahle: "Fine, father."

Sikhosana: "Good. I'm glad to hear that. We have reached the decision to let you only continue with home tutoring instead."

Amahle: "I'd rather live in school Father." I stared at this deranged child.

Sikhosana: "You're not safe there."

Amahle: "I'm safer there than I am anywhere else. No one knows me there-"

Nkosi: "Not since the stunt you pulled, Amahle! The entire residence is talking about it. Your roommate is being accused of killing you!! Your actions have alienated her from everyone there. Now you want to go burden her again!? Are you insane!"

Nkwe: "That sounds passionately personal." She whispered.

Amahle: "I didn't pull a stunt bhut-"

Nkosi: "Don't even try me. Don't. You're not going back there."

Amahle: "Father please-"

Nkosi: "Don't involve your father. You're going there to pull the same shitty stunt and scaring the entire building? Any more scandals surrounding your name will put you at immediate risk. If they figure out you are Amahle Sikhosana, a royal princess, that place will burn. Stop being selfish."

Nobantu: "Kodwa my prince, surely they can understand. She too, would only be trying to get an education-"

Nkosi: "She's still getting an education here at home Mother. She doesn't need to be in res. I am protecting her! It might be fine if they find out, at first, sure. Then what happens when there's public outrage? You've seen the citizen protests a few years back. If a royal is in their midst, they will take it out on her to shake us. Do you want your child laced with a burning tyre Mother?"

Nolwazi: "It's not like Amahle can die."

Nkosi: "If they find out, the royal they burn to death, doesn't die, do you really think this nation will live happily ever after? There would be instant unrest." I stood up. "I'm done. I can't do this." I walked up to my room. My family can be so detached from reality, it's sickening. How is it okay to flex your different ability to normal humans? Do they think they'll just clap for us? Why would they? I'm not trying to run a shaky kingdom. That's not going to be my legacy.

## SASA POV\_

Maybe it was time to forget about Prince Nkosinhle Mehluli Sikhosana. His beautiful face and his beautiful name. I enjoyed my time with him and now it was done I could focus back on my books. It was Sunday morning and Khaya promised to take me out for ice cream. I have already showered, today's dressed was not maxi. It was up to my knees, white in colour and off the shoulder sleeves. I let my fro free and wore my sandals. Khaya called at 11 on the dot.

Khaya: "Mrs. I'm outside."

Me: "Alright I'm coming." I took my small purse and left, finding him in the front parking.

Khaya: "Baby." He was standing outside his car.

Me: "Hello Khaya." I hugged him. He opened the door for me, I climbed it.

Khaya: "So, I know this spot eMoyeni. It's a little shop that sells the best ice cream I've ever tasted. You'll love it." He drove.

Me: "I've never been to eMoyeni. In fact, I haven't been anywhere. My first time to Ocean Arena was with my dad when he brought me for registration."

Khaya: "Don't worry. I'll show you everything beautiful in this world baby." I looked out the window watching the beautiful city I lived in. How I wished Nkosinhle wasn't who he is. I wished he was someone I could walk up to and tell to his face I miss him. I wish we could drive to ice cream parlors and eat ice cream. I wish we could go to the beach. Maybe it was just all for the best. What was I thinking, being attracted to a royal Prince about to be King? No I was crazy. Truly.

Khaya: "Baby? Are you crying? What's wrong?" He stopped the car. I quickly wiped my tear.

Me: "Nothing. Just thinking about alot of things. Amahle, my parents. It's alot."

Khaya: "I'm sorry about Amahle. Look, I know you didn't kill her. Don't mind what everyone is saying. You're a good person."

Me: "Sis Linda says she's fine."

Khaya: "I don't know babe but what I've heard is that she's gone." He continued driving trying to hold my hand.

Me: "Both hands on the steering wheel Khaya." He laughed.

Khaya: "Okay? Then you drive."

Me: "I don't like driving. I'm not really good at it." He drove into eMoyeni.

Khaya: "Why don't you think you're good?"

Me: "I'm a very nervous person on the road. I always think I'm making a mistake and I give people the way alot. Sometimes causing traffic of at least six cars." He laughed out loud.

Khaya: "That is the cutest thing I've ever heard. I'd let you drive me any day. Patient and kind people on the road intrigue me." He parked in front of a store that wasn't "little" as he described. It looked like a childhood dream.

Me: "This is really cool. If their ice cream tastes as good as they look, I'll be really impressed." We walked into the store. There was still only a few customers.

Khaya: "You'll love it." He held me close to him. His arm around my waist.

Me: "What is that?"

Khaya: "That's a candy machine. It kind of makes it while you're waiting. The guy next to it, helps you make it yourself." I smiled, extremely excited.

Me: "I love this place."

Khaya: "I've never seen you smiling so much. You look so happy. I love that."

Me: "You're silly. I'm always smiling. We're next. What do you think I should try?" He looked at me.

Khaya: "Everything baby. I will be having the vanilla and coffee swirl. It's simple, sweet and has the shock of caffeine to keep you focused."

Me: "And what do you want to focus on Mr Solinga?"

Khaya: "My future wife. You."

"That's ambitious." We both turned around to look at who the voice belonged to. Oh God. I didn't know to say hello or keep quiet.

Khaya: "I beg your pardon?"

Mthunzi: "The ice cream you described is called Ambitious. It's on the menu. Usually recommended for hangovers." He pointed at the board in front. This was Nkosi's advisor. Did he recognize me?

Khaya: "Oh. You work here?"

Me: "Khaya! That's rude."

Mthunzi: "My wife owns the shop." He smiled.

Khaya: "You look very familiar. Have we met?"

Mthunzi: "I have a common face. Enjoy." He walked up behind the counter and into the office.

Khaya: "So he's kinda creepy. Why would someone sneak up on customers like that?"

Me: "He was just trying to help. I think I'll have the strawberry swirl." I was still in shock. This was his direct person. I could go to that office now, knock on that door and ask him to call Nkosi. Yet I couldn't do it. I was a coward and also, I respected that man. He isn't my Messenger. He worked for the second highest ranking royal in the nation. I'm not about to ask for a damn thing. We were given our ice cream, Khaya led me to the tables to sit. My eyes couldn't stop staring at that office door.

Khaya: "Do you want to taste mine?"

Me: "Sure." I took a taste of his. "Oh I get it now. Simple, sweet and the taste of coffee. I love it. Taste mine."

Khaya: "No thank you baby. I don't think it tastes nice." I laughed.

Me: "It actually does."

Khaya: "Is that why you're still eating mine?"

Me: "That's not fair, I love coffee."

Khaya: "I clearly told you the ingredients before I bought it baby. You could've gotten your own."

Me: "Fine. Your ice cream is nice." I gave his back. "I'm getting another flavor though. The strawberry is nice but it's not tasting exactly like

strawberry, it's a little... What's the word ? Concocted. I wonder if they have one with actual strawberry pieces? That would be interesting. Let me see if I can get another flavor."

Khaya: "Okay babe." I went up to the counter, avoiding looking the door. Why can't he just come out and ask me a question? I'm not sure if the rules applied to him like it does Nkosi. Was I allowed to talk to Mthunzi in public?

Me: "Hello again. Can I mix my own flavors?" The beautiful lady smiled.

She: "You trying to put me out of business? Sure." I giggled. "Which flavours do you want?"

Me: "I liked how the vanilla tasted, how is the salted caramel?"

She: "It's our best seller. As you can see it's halfway and all the others are full. I filled these up last night."

Me: "I'll have that then. And a scoop of cookie crumble on the side."

She: "Ohh. I might have to try this mix myself."

Me: "Now I'm excited."

She: "How was the strawberry?"

Me: "It tasted nice, I just feel it didn't have alot going on to be a swirl. It was shy." She laughed.

She: "You're adorable. Here you go."

Me: "Thank you. How much is it?"

She: "On the house." She smiled.

Me: "See, now you really trying to go out of business? I tried to help you." She laughed.

She: "Go sit down, you silly child." I laughed walking back to my seat.

Khaya: "Yeah sure." He hung up.

Me: "Hey."

Khaya: "Hey love. What was so funny? You guys were like old pals back there."

Me: "Just talking about the strawberry swirl." I took a spoon of the salted caramel and I melted. "Oh, she didn't lie. That is glorious." I opened my eyes. He stared at me, smiling. "What?"

Khaya: "Nothing."

Me: "Taste." He took a spoon of mine.

Khaya: "Oh that's really good."

Me: "Let's see how they taste together." I scooped the two flavours and taste. "Hmmm. Yes. This is it."

Khaya: "I'm glad you love it."

Me: "I love this place. A lot."

Khaya: "Good. Then it can be our special place."

Me: "Hm." I stared at my ice cream. Did he really not even think about me? Did he move on? The office door opened, Mthunzi walked out to his wife giving her a kiss before he walked out. He might be going to Nkosi right now yet I couldn't find it in me to run out to him. It was hard but my fling with Nkosi only lasted less than a week. I needed to stop making him this important thing in my life. He wasn't even my boyfriend.

Khaya: "Are you okay?" I looked at him.

Me: "I'm okay."

Khaya: "You disappeared there for a second. Your mind seems far away."

Me: "I really appreciate this Khaya. Thank you." I ate another scoop of ice cream.

After our ice cream, I was ready to go home. I needed to prepare for my upcoming school week. Khaya drove me to the residence, parking out front again.

Me: "Thank you for today. I enjoyed myself."

Khaya: "Me too. We should do this more often. You need to experience Mountain Peak to its potential."

Me: "You're sweet. I'll see you soon."

Khaya: "Bye love." I got out the car, walking into the building. The stares again.

Me: "What's the damn problem?!" I snapped.

Petu: "Tshomi? What's wrong?" Where has she been?

Me: "I'm just tired of being stared at like I'm a criminal."

Petu: "Oh. Are you dating Khaya?"

Me: "No. Khaya is my friend. We hang out sometimes. There is nothing else happening. Why is that so wrong?"

Petu: "Good. It's good that you're only a friend. He's not a good guy for you tshomi. Every night he has a new person in his bed, it's disgusting." Trust me, I know that. Anyway, how are you?"

Me: "I'm okay. How are you?"

Petu: "I'm fine. I haven't been in res for a bit. My sister needed me at her place to babysit her kids."

Me: "Your sister lives here in Mountain Peak?"

Petu: "Yes. At Oceanview." Not that I'd know where that is.

Me: "Oh okay. I need to go prepare my school stuff. I'll go to dining hall in about an hour or so."

Petu: "We'll catch up when you're done." We parted ways, I walked to my room. Were Petunia and I friends now? What did this mean? I need to call Zimmy. I last heard from her last night. She's probably sleeping or drinking wherever she is. I opened my room, walking in and closing it behind me. When I looked up, the shock I had almost blew me back. It was like staring at a ghost.

Me: "Amahle?"

Ama: "Hello."

Me: "You're okay?"

Ama: "Yes. I'm alive."

Me: "I.. I'm glad. My god, I was so worried about you." I dropped my bag and hugged her tight. We weren't close, or even friends but I've never felt so relieved in my life.

Ama: "So I've heard." She sat on her bed. "Thanks for the other day." I sat on my bed opposite her.

Me: "Amahle, what happened?"

Ama: "I don't feel like getting into it right now."

Me: "At least tell me it won't happen again?"

Ama: "That's not something I can help." Mental health was fresh hell honestly.

Me: "What can I do to help then?"

Ama: "Nothing."

Me: "Amahle! You weren't responding, I wasn't even sure if you were alive."

Ama: "Theres nothing anyone can do to help me Thembisa. Thank you for trying though. That's new for me." She looked at my phone in my hand. "Your phone is ringing." I looked at it.

Me: "No, it's not. Are you sure you're fine?" it suddenly rang with a number on screen. I looked at her. She opened her bed cover.

Ama: "You're welcome." She climbed in bed. I answered the phone.

Me: "Hello?"

Nkosi: "Thembisa." ...

#TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 12

PRINCE POV\_

Something suspicious was happening in this house. I leave for one morning. One.

Nkosi: "Where is she?"

Nobantu: "Who are you talking about, my son?"

Nkosi: "Amahle. She left didn't she?"

Nobantu: "We can't keep her from making her own decisions Mehluli." I walked to my office. Mthunzi came in after me.

Nkosi: "You knew."

Mthunzi: "What did I know?"

Nkosi: "Amahle!! You sent her back there! After I specifically said to you not to!"

Mthunzi: "Nkosi, I-"

Nkosi: "No! You disobeyed my word Mthunzi. You disobeyed my instruction." I stormed out the office to the car. The guard drove me to the city, the residence. I'll have her dragged out kicking and screaming if I have to. What will Thembisa say when she sees her? I wouldn't know now would I? Sometimes I can really just be an asshole to my own self. As soon as we moved 10 minutes close to the city, I dialed her number without a second thought.

Thembisa: "Hello?"

Nkosi: "Thembisa." Silence swept over the phone. Instant regret started to swell in my heart.

Thembisa: "Hi."

Nkosi: "How are you?"

Thembisa: "I'm well. How are you?"

Nkosi: "Are you home?"

Thembisa: "Yes." Fuck. Chances are, she's seen Amahle. That rascal. Why couldn't she just sit still?

Nkosi: "May I please see you?" More silence. I waited.

Thembisa: "Yes."

Nkosi: "Please come outside."

Thembisa: "Okay." I hung up. The driver parked across the road, away from the entrance. I waited once more, tapping my finger on the door impatiently. What was taking so long? It took almost 10 minutes before the door opened. She climbed in next to me, closing the door. I looked at her, really glad to see her face.

Thembi: "Hello."

Nkosi: "Good afternoon." Then she kept quiet. What the hell was going on? How do you have a conversation with someone who refuses to talk to you? Okay, I sound like a hypocrite. "How was your day?"

Thembi: "It was okay. How was yours?"

Nkosi: "Horrible."

Thembi: "Sorry to hear that."

Nkosi: "Do you want to tell me why you're ignoring me?" She looked at me, confused.

Thembi: "I'm ignoring you?"

Nkosi: "That's what I said."

Thembi: "I wasn't ignoring you. You just stopped calling and sending me messages."

Nkosi: "I last spoke to you on Monday. I tried calling you that night and you ignored my calls. Didn't call me back the next day and I thought you just didn't want to talk to me."

Thembi: "Why wouldn't I want to talk to you Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "Then why aren't you calling?"

Thembi: "I had to delete your number and messages because my mother wanted to go through my phone. If she found out I even had anything to do with you our whole village would've known by sunset."

Nkosi: "Oh." Fuck I feel so stupid.

Thembisa: "You really thought I'd just cut off communication out of the blue for no reason?"

Nkosi: "I'm sorry."

Thembisa: "What if I died?"

Nkosi: "I knew you weren't hurt."

Thembisa: "I can't believe you stopped talking to me because you thought I was ignoring you."

Nkosi: "I should have called. I'm sorry." I hate that Mthunzi was right when he told me to call her. I hate it so much. "I didn't have a good week."

Thembisa: "Neither did I." Her voice quivered. What was that now?

Nkosi: "What happened?"

Thembisa: "A lot, okay? I had to find my roommate in my bed, unmoving. She was taken by men said to be her family or something. I had to confront Linda, and that wasn't fun because then I found out my roommate is actually a High Priority Care student. Something I didn't know existed until that moment. On top of that, my parents arrived the next day while I was working through the incident and they go ballistic." She sobbed in her hands. Great, Now what do I do? Touch. I hope that helps because I have nothing else after that. I pulled her to me, she almost jumped onto my chest.

Thembisa: "I missed you." She cried. "I thought you didn't want me anymore." Okay, that's a bit dramatic.

Nkosi: "That's not true." I placed her on my lap and let her cry because there's nothing else I can contribute. She eventually calmed down. "How is your roommate now?"

Thembisa: "She's fine I guess."

Nkosi: "Does she tell you what happened?"

Thembisa: "She doesn't want to. She says it's not something she can help." That fucking brat.

Nkosi: "That's not good. You can't live with someone who has the potential to commit suicide any day. That's not healthy."

Thembisa: "I want to help her-"

Nkosi: "Absolutely not. Thembisa, you're here to study not look after people who are grown."

Thembisa: "She just needs help. Everyone needs a little help. However she did do something strange-"

Nkosi: "Already? It hasn't even been an hour!!" I'm going to kill Mthunzi because I obviously won't succeed with her. Amahle is only going to be terrorizing Thembisa in this place. Why is that fine?

Thembisa: "Listen. She looked at my phone and told me it's ringing. Before it rang." I can't do this. I don't have space for this stress. Why would sh-

Nkosi: "That's truly something strange." When conversation fails, just repeat what she says. That's what Mthunzi told me.

Thembisa: "Exactly. You smell nice today." This is the same person who was crying a minute ago?

Nkosi: "Thank you. You smell nice too." She smelt sweet and I loved it so much I could bite her. "I'm going to eNtabeni. Please come with me, I'll bring you home in the evening."

Thembisa: "Okay." I knocked on the window. The driver came in and drove off. "I'm not getting off your lap."

Nkosi: "I don't want you to." I smiled.

SASA POV\_

The car drove into eNtabeni and parked in it's usual spot. The door was opened for us. Nkosi climbed out, carrying me bridal style into the villa. I felt babied and I really was enjoying it. In our suite, he laid me gently on the outside lounge bed.

Nkosi: "What do you want to drink and eat?"

Me: "Mango juice please. I'm not really hungry yet." He walked back inside to the phone. I looked at the mountains, a mist was covering the top of it and it looked like it was slow dancing. It looked mesmerizing honestly. Nkosi came back out and stared at the mountain, smiling.

Me: "What?" He got in next to me, pulling me close to him.

Nkosi: "Nothing."

Me: "You look pleased."

Nkosi: "I am pleased. I have you in my arms."

Me: "Hm. So what made you call me today?"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi told me he saw you eMoyeni."

Me: "Yes he did. I went there with Khaya for breakfast ice cream."

Nkosi: "A date."

Me: "It wasn't a date. Khaya was just being nice."

Nkosi: "He wants you."

Me: "I know but I want someone else."

Nkosi: "Have you told your someone else that you want him?"

Me: "No. Not yet."

Nkosi: "Tell him."

Me: "I don't want to now, I'm busy talking to you." He smiled.

Nkosi: "Fine. The drinks are here." He got up again, walking inside. He came back with the juice and some snacks.

Me: "Thank you." I took a long sip then put it aside. He sat back next to me, laying on the lounge bed, staring at the mountains.

Nkosi: "That's a good sign."

Me: "The mist around the mountains?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Someone feels the same way about me as I do her." He looked at me.

Me: "I wonder who someone is."

Nkosi: "You. I want to be in your life Thembisa."

Me: "You're already in my life Nkosihle."

Nkosi: "I don't want to be your friend."

Me: "I think I'm a delight to have as a friend. You'd be missing out." He smiled.

Nkosi: "I don't doubt that at all but I want more than that. I'm willing to wait however long it takes for you to be comfortable with me."

Me: "And what about your...status?"

Nkosi: "My status has nothing to do with you and I. It's my job."

Me: "Nkosi, that's not a job. That's your life. That's your entire identity."

Nkosi: "That's not all me."

Me: "Then show me all you. I don't want to see the future King. I want to see Nkosinhle." He sighed.

Nkosi: "That's difficult Thembisa." He turned on to his back, staring up at the sky.

Me: "I know that but I can't go into a relationship with a person I don't know. Being royalty can't be your personality."

Nkosi: "Things are different for me and you. I understand what you're saying. It's just. I don't know how to show you."

Me: "And why is that?"

Nkosi: "Because I myself don't know who I am. I can't figure it out. I was brought back here before I did. When I went to California I was free. No security, no royal schedule. I was a student. I've never really been big on friends but I had a few. I met a few women. Through that whole experience I held myself back because I knew it would end one day. Years went by and I graduated. My father stopped asking me about coming back. I felt free. I felt he had finally given up. I started going out more, meeting people, having fun. Two years into my new found freedom, I came back to my house from work. Black SUVs lined the street. Security everywhere. That's when I knew it was over. I kind of shut down from that point." You couldn't even feel pain in his voice, it was straight and numb. "I've never told that to anyone."

Me: "I'm sorry you had to go through that but now, how do you expect me to give up my life the way you did?"

Nkosi: "You won't have to. I won't let that happen. I know I haven't shown you how much I want to be with you. The mountain trail, not communicating an entire week. However, I'm always going to protect and take care of you. You may not see it but there's someone looking after you everywhere at all times, giving you your space and privacy but protecting you regardless." I thought of Len in the restaurant. Mthunzi and his wife at her shop.

Me: "Do you know Linda, my resident leader?"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi does, yes. She reports to him."

Me: "So you're stalking me."

Nkosi: "I'm not. I'm making sure you're fine. You have a tendency to not eat when you're stressed and so I had them add the porridge in the

breakfast menu so you can have some comfort. I'm still getting to know you, so I will know more of your favorites. Did you really think I'd just leave you alone, unattended and uncared for?" I smiled.

Me: "How is this possible?"

Nkosi: "My family owns the city, surrounding areas, the entire province. We built the university and residential for the students. It was an initiative to give back to our people and what better way to do that than offering top quality education?"

Me: "but it's expensive."

Nkosi: "No it's not." He turned on his side to face me again.

Me: "My father pays those fees. They're alot."

Nkosi: "Why does he do that?"

Me: "He's my father. I think that part is clear."

Nkosi: "No, I meant there's scholarships available for those coming from the villages in the province."

Me: "That's selective scholarships. They're given to top performing students."

Nkosi: "No. That's only one. There's three different scholarships Thembisa. I created that project, it was my favorite. The first is the academic scholarship for top performers, yes. The second is for anyone who grew in the villages inside the province, they only need their high school report until matric. The third scholarship is for disadvantaged individuals. This one is still on the roll out. We're working the finer details but I wanted it to be focused on teenage mothers, young boys raised by single mothers and child headed families. I'm having it finalized next month, so it can be available for second semester." I stared at him, absolutely shocked.

Me: "I've never...heard of this. I didn't know."

Nkosi: "Then we'll have to do a better job at spreading the word. I think my visits to the villages need to include high school visits."

Me: "Do you do public speeches?"

Nkosi: "Absolutely not. I don't do speaking at all. I have a speaker who does those."

Me: "So you just sit there while he's speaking?"

Nkosi: "She. Yes."

Me: "Is she pretty?"

Nkosi: "Yes." I giggled. "What?"

Me: "I expected you to lie and say no or avoid the question."

Nkosi: "I don't lie."

Me: "But do you know that if you want to make more of an impact to your people, they'll feel more important to you? I know you don't like talking but...people like being spoken to. Being acknowledged. That's how they begin to like you, then love you. Then give their life for you." I looked down, avoiding his eyes.

Nkosi: "I am not a good speaker but I will take this into consideration."

Me: "How are your sisters?" I changed the topic, opening the snacks to eat.

Nkosi: "I don't know. I don't like them much."

Me: "Why is that?"

Nkosi: "They're mean spirited people. I only accept having them around because they're family and having them around makes my parents happy."

Me: "How are they mean?"

Nkosi: "They're selfish. All three of them. They think of no one else but themselves. They have negative remarks about everything and everyone. Royal or not. Nothing they say or do affects me. I ignore them because I don't harm women."

Me: "They'd be best friends with my mother."

Nkosi: "Is she like that too?"

Me: "Sometimes. A lot of the time, yes but other times she's fine. She's very confusing. You'd swear she hates you at times but then the next day she bakes you a cake and rubs your shoulders. Lately though... We've only been butting heads."

Nkosi: "She's jealous of you."

Me: "Why on earth would she be? I can't be my dad's wife."

Nkosi: "You're his first girl. He is crazy about you. He probably didn't notice but perhaps when you were born, he focused on you and did everything he could for you. You changed the dynamic of their lives. His first priority became you."

Me: "That's not true."

Nkosi: "Your father drove you to school for registration. Took you out to a nice restaurant, protected you from the man that was staring at you for an hour and a half, stayed until you got your room. Need I continue?"

Me: "That's standard dad stuff. He does the same for Nele. If anything, she has more of him than I do."

Nkosi: "She's not his first love. He knows it and your mother knows it. I have no doubt in my mind that your father loves both his children and his wife. A lot. You're just different Thembisa. You're his peace." Now I missed him.

Me: "I hear you. How's your relationship with your dad?"

Nkosi: "Fair."

Me: "What does that mean?"

Nkosi: "My father likes me because I am his only heir."

Me: "He likes you because you're his son, what's wrong with that?"

Nkosi: "No, he likes me because I'm his heir. If there was another candidate, he wouldn't care. My father's treasure is his last born. My youngest sister. She's...fragile."

Me: "How old is she?"

Nkosi: "19 this year."

Me: "What's wrong with her?"

Nkosi: "You'll meet her and see for yourself."

Me: "Is she like you? Quiet?" I finished my juice.

Nkosi: "Yes actually. If you want to see a person more quiet than I am, it's her." He closed his eyes. "Let's go inside, it's going to rain." He got up.

Me: "The skies are clear."

Nkosi: "Okay then, I want you in bed. Come." He pulled me up. I took the chips packet following him inside. A crackle of thunder erupted in the sky so loud I got a fright.

Me: "That's strange. How did you know that?"

Nkosi: "I told you I can predict things." He closed the sliding door. "I don't know if you can go home tonight." I climbed on the bed, not entirely caring if I do go back. He can take me in the morning. "Thembisa?"

Me: "Hm?"

Nkosi: "Are you okay with that? The roads will be slippery, we're on a cliff."

Me: "Please come to bed Nkosi, I missed you." He just stood and stared at me. "Yes I'm okay with it." He smiled, taking off his shoes.

## PRINCE POV\_

Having Thembisa in my arms felt good. She got herself comfortable and dozed off. I spent a while staring at her beautiful face. What a gorgeous human, she almost looked ethereal. Her skin was silk smooth, in the colour of chocolate. She smells sweet, not in an in overwhelming sense, but in a juicy fresh i-need-it-in-my-mouth sense. I loved kissing her but everytime I did, I lost myself in her. The thought itself was making me dizzy. I held her close to my body on the curve of her back, trying the best I can to ignore the mountainous hump behind her. I cannot deal with another erection from her, it hurts for hours. My body literally craves for her yet it hasn't been inside her. I wanted to stay in this bed and just stare at her forever but Mthunzi was outside. Carefully, I placed a pillow under her head and got up. I carried my shoes out the door, I didn't want to wake her. Mthunzi was waiting in the restaurant bar.

Nkosi: "Yes?" He smiled at me. "What is it now?"

Mthunzi: "What do you say?"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Thank you perhaps but I see why that would be difficult for you. Anyway, it's raining."

Nkosi: "I'm well aware."

Mthunzi: "Your people are happy."

Nkosi: "Yes they are."

Mthunzi: "And you? Are you happy?"

Nkosi: "I'm fine. Let's get on with the meeting."

Mthunzi: "Alright. Tomorrow morning, we have to be eMandulu. Regular visit. They're also installing their new water pump so it will be great to have you be there."

Nkosi: "For a water pump?"

Mthunzi: "Don't start."

Nkosi: "How big is this water pump? Will it be accessible to everyone? Will it be enough for everyone?"

Mthunzi: "Nkosi, there's not much I can do okay? This is the schedule the current King, your father, has approved. For now, we can't complain. We can't have royal conflict so soon before you're crowned. Let's wait this out."

Nkosi: "Fine. What else."

Mthunzi: "The new res is almost finished. You do know your father hates this right?"

Nkosi: "Yes. He only accepted it because it was part of my conditions."

Mthunzi: "You really played that well. Anyway, this residence will have a day care, health center and -"

Nkosi: "Stop right there. That would be enough." He sighed.

Mthunzi: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "The new res has plenty of years to be developed Mthunzi. Stop the project with only those two additional amenities. Meanwhile, we can go back to renovate the old residences to bring them to the standard of the new one."

Mthunzi: "We can't renovate a building that has people living in it Nkosi."

Nkosi: "We'll do it during December holidays."

Mthunzi: "Fine." He wrote down on his book. "Next village to visit is Mthinomkhulu." He looked at me.

Nkosi: "When?"

Mthunzi: "Thursday. It's our furthest village. You might have to sleep there. It's a four hour drive."

Nkosi: "I also need to do something apart from work." A slow smile formed on his face.

Mthunzi: "What?"

Nkosi: "I want to visit Thembisa's father's farm."

Mthunzi: "Trying to butter him up?"

Nkosi: "No. To apologize. Thembisa feels I was disrespectful toward him when he approached me in the restaurant."

Mthunzi: "And you don't feel that you were disrespectful?"

Nkosi: "Of course not. Who was right or wrong doesn't matter. I don't want to be in his bad books. Thembisa loves her dad, if he doesn't accept my plea to marry his daughter, I might just lose her."

Mthunzi: "Wait... You came up with that all your own?"

Nkosi: "I'm not stupid Mthunzi but I do need your help in talking to him. He doesn't need money or gifts. He pays his daughters fees and housing fully. I need a way to connect to him personally."

Mthunzi: "I'll prepare that." He wrote down.

Nkosi: "Please also add a school visit."

Mthunzi: "You've never done that."

Nkosi: "Well, I think it will be good. A lot of families struggle with sending their kids to school. They don't know there's options. I'd like the speaker to talk to communities more about that." He stared at me.

Mthunzi: "Who are you?"

Nkosi: "What are you on about?" He got up, still staring. "Can you calm down?"

Mthunzi: "This is not the Nkosihle I know-"

Nkosi: "Just sit down and do as I tell you to. I am not interested in sitting with you all day."

Mthunzi: "Oh there he is." He sat down. "Anyway, that's your schedule for the week."

Nkosi: "Nicely done. I have some free time. Finally."

Mthunzi: "You're welcome. Oh, last thing. Tomorrow afternoon you're meeting with Mpendulo Solinga. He has a few papers for you to go through."

Nkosi: "Okay. We're done?"

Mthunzi: "Done. So what have yo-" I got up and walked back to my suite. Mthunzi is trying to turn my life into his romance story and I don't have time for it. I'll see him in the morning. I have a lovely woman in my bed, I want to make my wife.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 13

SASA POV\_

I woke up, stretching my body a little, when I opened my eyes I found Nkosi staring at me.

Me: "Good morning baby."

Nkosi: "Hello." I stretched some more. Last night, we had our dinner and watched a movie then went to bed. I slept in a t-shirt of his, in his arms. "How did you sleep?"

Me: "Very well." He smiled.

Nkosi: "I'm glad to hear that. Do you know what time it is?"

Me: "Probably 6." I pulled him closer.

Nkosi: "It's 9 am." I jumped out of bed.

Me: "Why didn't you wake me up?"

Nkosi: "I did. You simply curled into my arm."

Me: "Nkosihle I'm late for school! I never bunk school."

Nkosi: "I cannot summon you awake. That would be very rude. The rain has cleared, we can try drive down for you to attend your next class." I ran to the bathroom, stressed. A quick shower and wore my dress again. When I went back to the bedroom. Nkosi was still in bed.

Me: "Are you serious?"

Nkosi: "You still have to eat-"

Me: "I am not hungry Nkosi. I am late. Please, let's go."

Nkosi: "Fine." He got out of bed, pulling on pants and a shirt. I was so scared as if someone was going to give me a hiding for being late. I'm never late. How did I over sleep? Nkosi was staring at me.

Me: "What?"

Nkosi: "Maybe you should have some clothes here. It's cold outside and you have nothing to wear."

Me: "I'll be okay. Let's go." He didn't move. Oh my God. I went over to kiss his lips.

Nkosi: "Morning to you too. Baby." He smiled, holding my hand. "Let's take you to school." We walked out the suite. Outside the building, the ground was still wet and I was wearing sandals. I'll have to hop to the car I guess. Nkosi pulled me back, scooping me up in his arms effortlessly and walked me to the car. "Why do you want to step on cold water?" I giggled. We entered the car, driving back to the city.

Me: "What will you be doing today?"

Nkosi: "I'm going to eMandulu. Then I'm meeting Mpendulo my lawyer. You want to come see me?"

Me: "Not during school days. Look at how late I am. This can't happen again."

Nkosi: "Do you want me to summon you awake the next time?"

Me: "Because you can creep into my dreams?" I chuckled. He pulled me on to his lap.

Nkosi: "And what if I can?" I kissed his lips.

Me: "Then do it."

Nkosi: "Don't complain when I do. When am I seeing you again?"

Me: "Friday."

Nkosi: "I can't survive that again. I'm free tomorrow, when you miss me tell me so I can come and see you." I smiled.

Me: "We'll see." He kissed my lips, biting my lower lip. The car stopped. "I have to go."

Nkosi: "I'm taking you to school. Go change. Your shuttle has long left and it's still cold."

Me: "Okay. Luckily I already showered." I got out the car running inside the res. Obviously no one was around. Even Amahle wasn't here. Her bed was unmade but her school bag was gone. I changed into jeans, sneakers, a warm top and jacket. Grabbed my school bag and ran back out to the car. This was embarrassing. Thank goodness no one was around to see my shameful act of arriving very late in the morning. The car drove to the school building.

Nkosi: "How is your assignment going?"

Me: "Not too bad for now. I managed to get through the most of it on Saturday. It's a good thing you decided not to pitch up." He smiled.

Nkosi: "You went to Amelia's for me?"

Me: "It's the only place I know where to find you." He kissed my hand.

Nkosi: "This won't happen again. If it does, go to Linda and tell her to call Mthunzi for you. I'll never ignore you. I'll never not want to be with you."

Me: "Thank you." The car stopped in front of the school gate. "Okay bye now." I kissed him one last time and got off the car, running to class.

PRINCE POV\_

I sat in the car watching her go into the school building. What an amazing night. Is that what it will always be like? I was quickly losing interest in sleeping alone. Thembisa was so easy to be around and

goofy too. On top of that, what a pleasure to look at. The door opened again and she climbed in.

Nkosi: "What the hell is wrong with you?"

Amahle: "Morning to you too."

Nkosi: "I specifically said don't go back there and what do you do?"

Amahle: "You looked miserable."

Nkosi: "What does this have to do with me man Amahle!?"

Amahle: "If I didn't go back to my res room, where you feel I'm threatening your girlfriend's peace, you wouldn't have called her to make sure she's okay."

Nkosi: "You better stay the fuck away from Thembisa. And the next time you want to kill yourself, do it away from her!"

Amahle: "Fine. Can I go now?" I looked out the window.

Nkosi: "I was going to call her."

Amahle: "And one day I might die. Since we telling each other lies."

Nkosi: "Why Amahle? Why do you do this? Do you know how this affects our parents?"

Amahle: "You think I can help it? You try it sometime and see where you end up."

Nkosi: "Say that again." I hissed.

Amahle: "It's hard Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Away from her. I'm not above making your life hell."

Amahle: "it already is." She whispered, getting off the car. My driver drove off, first stop being the palace. I really don't know what to do about Amahle at this stage. It wasn't fair on anyone, it would be better if she was just at home so her mothers can look after her. Instead she just wants to traumatize people who won't understand her. Knowing Thembisa, if this happens again, she will fall apart.

We reached the palace, I walked in. I've never looked more forward to tomorrow. I checked my phone, a new message. <Made it to second

class. Thinking about you.> I smiled, typing back. <Thinking about you too. I can't wait to see you again.>

Sikhosana: "My Prince." I looked up at him. "Are you...smiling?"

Nkosi: "Good morning father." I straightened my face.

Sikhosana: "Good morning? You've never not once said it was a good morning. What's changed?"

Nkosi: "Nothing."

Sikhosana: "It's a woman, isn't it?"

Nkosi: "Father-"

Sikhosana: "I've never seen that look on your face. It has to be a woman."

Nkosi: "I need to get ready for my meeting."

Sikhosana: "Mehluli."

Nkosi: "Father."

Sikhosana: "You know who you are. You can't let this weakness get in the way of your destiny."

Nkosi: "I know father." I walked up to my room, taking a shower and getting dressed. The regal attire was required for village visits and I hated it but I was in no mood to have a go with father today especially because he's looking for a fight. I made it back downstairs. Mthunzi was waiting for me.

Mthunzi: "My Prince." I walked out the house to the car, he followed after me. The car drove off. For once Mthunzi was quiet, not probing and leaving me the hell alone. The one time I actually want to talk.

Nkosi: "Stop the car." The driver pulled to the side of the car. "Get out." He hopped out, closing the door behind him. I sighed. "I don't want to lose her. My family is going to ruin what I have with her. She's the only person that treats me like a human being. The only one that makes me happy."

Mthunzi: "We can work around this. Your father already accepted that you can marry anyone you choose. We don't have to tell them who she is. We just plan a wedding."

Nkosi: "Do you think we can pull that off?"

Mthunzi: "There's little to nothing I won't do for you. We will pull it off."

Nkosi: "What's the little that you wouldn't do for me?"

Mthunzi: "I wouldn't get into bed with you, that's for sure." I smiled.

Nkosi: "My bed is reserved for my woman so you wouldn't be welcome anyway."

Mthunzi: "This is good Nkosi. You're feeling. I don't even need to prep you anymore. You just flew out of here to her in an effort to protect her. You're falling in love."

Nkosi: "Okay, that's just dramatic. I didn't fly out, I was driven. I can't fall in love. We're still in our early stages. I only feel protective of her."

Mthunzi: "That's love Nkosi. You wouldn't protect someone you don't like."

Nkosi: "Wouldn't I?"

Mthunzi: "You know what I mean. Have you told her how you feel?"

Nkosi: "No."

Mthunzi: "Tell her then. We already know she feels the same but it would do you a world of good if she said it herself back to you."

Nkosi: "How will I tell her... What I really am."

Mthunzi: "We'll figure it out as we go." I knocked on the window. The driver came back inside, driving to our destination.

SASA POV\_

I came back from school in the afternoon and it seemed like the rains would be starting again. I didn't do much at school, the two classes I did attend weren't quite what I was expecting. I sat in my desk, taking out my books. Before I began studying. I texted Nkosi: <I'm home from school baby. How was eMandulu?> I put it aside and did my work. In an hour, Amahle walked in.

Ama: "Hi."

Me: "Hello." I focused on my books quietly. Actually I was avoiding her. She knows I slept out last night and wasn't back on time for school so I didn't want her to judge me.

Ama: "Associate has become a boyfriend I assume."

Me: "Uhm.. I don't know what you're talking about."

Ama: "When we first met. You said you weren't sure if he was a boyfriend, you called him an associate."

Me: "oh. Yeah." I chuckled nervously.

Ama: "Is he treating you well?"

Me: "Yes."

Ama: "Do you think he loves you?" I looked at her. She stood strangely in the middle of the room. Body straight, arms on her side but her head was slightly tilted. Very slightly.

Me: "It's still too early to tell." I swallowed.

Ama: "Do your friends know about him?" Why was she asking me all these questions?

Me: "I haven't told anyone about him. I just want to keep it to myself for now. Hope you understand."

Ama: "Good. Keep it to yourself. No one will be happy for you. Not even the ones you think you can count on. Have you watched Game of Kings?"

Me: "I uhm... No. I don't know what that is."

Ama: "When you're done with your work, we can use my laptop to watch it. I think you'll enjoy it." She put her bag down. Okay, Amahle was beginning to creep me out. I so wish Jimmy could barge in here and steal me. Why is Nkosi not responding to my message? I stared at my assignment, re-writing things I didn't need to but I couldn't hold off after another hour passed. Not any longer.

Ama: "I'm getting snacks." She walked out the room. I took my phone dialing Jimmy. Her phone was on voicemail. Was I over reacting? Amahle was finally reaching out, trying to make a friend, why was I scared? It's not like she asked to be ill, maybe she just needs a friend

who will understand her. There's no need to be skeptical. She came back with some snacks and cold drinks.

Ama: "My bed or yours?" She chuckled.

Me: "Yours is fine." I smiled. She opened her laptop, placing it at the foot of the bed. She climbed on her bed and I next to her, laying on our bellies. "What is it about?"

Ama: "A generation of kings that have incredible super powers. Fascinating how they make these things up, don't you think?"

Me: "Right." I laughed nervously. "As if there's such a thing. Good entertainment though." She laughed.

Ama: "Ya. Good entertainment." We watched the first episode quietly. The series was about a royal family. A king, his queen and their family. Their children were still young. Two boys and 1 girl. The only problem was that the king was evil. I could tell that from the very first episode. Towards the end of the first episode, he married a second wife. His first was shattered of course but could do nothing about it.

Ama: "Pretty sad, right."

Me: "Yeah. But it's fiction, so."

Ama: "Yeah but all kings usually have more than one wife."

Me: "Not all kings. Surely."

Ama: "All of them." I looked at her.

Me: "Why would you be so sure?"

Ama: "I just am. Second episode?"

Me: "Yeah." We watched two more episodes before I decided to get dinner. This series was heart wrenching. The king was a ruthless man. His wives were more like his slaves than partners. He had no time for his kids and on top of it all, his kingdom was suffering while he lived lavishly.

Me: "Do you want to get dinner?"

Ama: "I don't really like being outside."

Me: "Right, but you have to eat."

Ama: "I can just have them deliver mine."

Me: "Come Amahle. You can't be couped up in here all the time. Let's go." We got up, leaving for dinner. She always had a hoodie on, no matter how hot it was, and now she had the hood over her head. "Today is grilled chicken and veggies."

Ama: "hm."

Me: "You're not vegetarian right?"

Ama: "I'm vegan." We ordered our meals. Everyone in the dining hall stared at us. It was so uncomfortable. "I'm going back to the room."

Me: "They'll mind their business eventually."

Ama: "I'm not waiting till then." She got her food, grabbing a water bottle and left for the room. I took my food and juice, sitting down on the table. I checked my phone, there was one message from Nkosi. <Hey baby. I had a long day. How are you?> Then a second one: <are you busy?> I responded to him: <no, just having dinner. Was watching a series with Amahle.> Sent. My phone rang almost immediately.

Me: "Hey baby."

Nkosi: "Hey."

Me: "How was your day?"

Nkosi: "It was fine. How was yours?"

Me: "Good. Just... I don't know. I think there's something off about my roommate, Amahle."

Nkosi: "What did she do now."

Me: "Nothing. She's just...strange. The way she looks at me sometimes, like she's watching me. If that makes sense." He sighed.

Nkosi: "Can I come see you?"

Me: "Yes, but I can't sleep out tonight baby."

Nkosi: "I know. You probably won't want to either. I'll be there soon." He hung up. Now what was that about? Was he mad that I didn't want to go home with him? That would be stupid because we're not married. I took my food to the bedroom. When I walked in, Amahle was in her bed, another girl sat next to her. I don't think I've seen her before.

Me: "Hey." They both looked at me.

Ama: "This is my roommate, Thembisa. Thembisa this is Nothando."

Me: "Hi." I smiled.

Notha: "Hi." She looked back at Amahle and continued their conversation. Ouch, okay. I placed my food on the small bar fridge. Then went to fix my hair.

Ama: "Second night in a row. He must be quite entertaining." I looked at her.

Me: "What?"

Ama: "You're going to your man again?"

Me: "Only for a bit. I won't be long."

Ama: "I know." I think I can go wait for Nkosi in Zimmy's room.

Me: "Okay. I'm out." I took my phone, walking out the room toward Zimmy's room. I quickly knocked on her door. She opened.

Zimmy: "Sasa."

Me: "Hey." I walked in. Fikile was in bed, on her phone.

Zimmy: "What's up?"

Me: "My roommate is creeping me out."

Zimmy: "Why do you say that?"

Me: "I don't know how to even explain it. Like just now. The guy I'm seeing had called while I was in the dining hall, he said he wants to see me. So I got to my room to put down my food and get ready. Suddenly she just asked if I'm going to my man. When I told her only for a few minutes she said, 'I know.' Can you believe that?"

Zimmy: "What I find more hard to believe is that she knows about your man and I don't. Yet I thought I was your friend."

Me: "Zimmy, I told you I can't say as of yet-"

Zimmy: "And why is that Thembisa? You can't be dating a married man, are you? Alot of girls here say they've seen you getting into a black SUV. And apparently you didn't even sleep here last night. What's that about?"

Me: "Why are you acting like this now?"

Zimmy: "I tell you everything about my life and when something this important, like this being your first boyfriend, you can't even tell me. So I don't know, Thembisa."

Me: "I will tell you Zimasa. Just, please be patient? We're still getting to know each other."

Zimmy: "If you say so." My phone rang.

Me: "I have to go." She opened the door for me. I walked out the room, out the building. It was dark outside, with only a few students coming in from school or the library. I climbed into the car.

Me: "Hey." He held out his hand. I put mine in his. He held it so softly but firmly.

Nkosi: "Can I hold you for a bit?"

Me: "Yes." I sat on top of him. He hugged me. "Is everything okay?"

Nkosi: "Mostly, yes. I'm off tomorrow."

Me: "I remember you told me."

Nkosi: "I would really like to spend some time with you."

Me: "And you will. You're fortunate my Tuesday classes are only till 1pm. But I will have to bring my assignment, I want to properly finish it this week so I'm dedicating one hour to it everyday." I kissed his nose.

Nkosi: "I have something important to tell you."

Me: "I have something I want to tell you too."

Nkosi: "Okay. You start."

Me: "I want to be with you. Officially. Not just getting to know you, but being your girlfriend. I really like you."

Nkosi: "I really like you too. I'm glad you want to be my woman. I don't know what happens next, do we shake hands or something?" I laughed.

Me: "You're silly. No. We're on the same page though? We're in a relationship?"

Nkosi: "Definitely yes." He kissed me slowly.

Me: "Okay. Your turn." He sighed, looking out the window.

Nkosi: "I haven't been completely open with you. Your roommate wasn't placed with you by coincidence."

Me: "What do you mean?"

Nkosi: "Amahle wanted to be independent. Escape home life. So she chose to go to the residence." Well, since his family owns the university, Linda obviously told him about her.

Me: "Okay?"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi placed her with you, thinking it would be a good idea if she gets closer to you and you to her."

Me: "So... She is your spy?"

Nkosi: "No. She doesn't spy on anything. The reason why she's there is so that there's no uncontrollable outside sources in your space." I got off his lap, sitting next to him. "We didn't want some random girl who would be snooping in your things and figuring our relationship then... Selling the information or sent to harm you. It would be dangerous for you."

Me: "So you got Amahle? Why her?"

Nkosi: "Amahle is my father's last born child. She's my sister." I went cold.

Me: "You placed your sister in my room, then didn't bother to tell me anything about it but it wasn't spying?"

Nkosi: "I have no reason to spy-"

Me: "You also have no reason to violate my privacy and choice! You manipulated the system to fit your agenda! It's all about you. Did you ever think about me while you planned this? Isn't it weird to you that I lived with your sister and didn't know at all? She knows we're together, doesn't she? That's why she keeps asking about my boyfriend all the time. It's because she knows it's her brother!"

Nkosi: "I'm sorry."

Me: "No you're not Nkosi. If you were, you wouldn't have done this." I got out the car walking back to my room.

#TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

## Chapter 14

### SASA POV\_

I got to my room, Amahle was still with her friend. I took my school bag, packing the books on my desk.

Amahle: "And then?"

Me: "And then what Amahle?"

Ama: "Okay? What's that for?"

Me: "What's what for?" I looked at her. She stayed here. She stayed with me here knowing fully well who she is.

Ama: "Notha, please give us a minute."

Me: "She doesn't have to. I'm leaving." I turned back to zip my bag closed. Nothando walked out the room.

Ama: "Why are you angry?"

Me: "When would you have told me that you're royalty?"

Ama: "Why would I tell you?" I stared at her for a very long time, shocked as hell. I took out my suitcase. "You're being unnecessary Thembisa, where will you go? You can't leave the res-"

Me: "Amahle. You don't owe me anything. I don't owe you anything. I'm getting the hell away from you is what I'm doing."

Ama: "Don't. I'll move out tomorrow morning. You have no where to go. I have the entire city." I wanted to scream in her face just for that stupid sentence. Did she have to brag? I grabbed my school bag and walked out the room. I knocked on Jimmy's door.

Jimmy: "Come in." I opened, walking in.

Me: "Hey."

Jimmy: "What's that?"

Me: "I can't be in that room with her. Can I stay here for the night?"

Zimmy: "Why? Did she threaten your relationship?"

Me: "Zimmy all I asked for was support and patience. I don't get why you're so angry that you don't know my boyfriend-"

Zimmy: "Why would I be angry Thembisa? Oh wait, it's not because we made a promise to be best friends, nor is it the fact that you barely have time for me or, or the fact that your new bestie knows more about you than me!"

Me: "I'm not doing this with you."

Zimmy: "Of course, that's why you're doing it with Amahle!" I walked out of her room, pissed. Petu bumped into me in the passage, I didn't even see her.

Petu: "Hey. What's wrong?"

Me: "Nothing. I just need to go to Linda, I need an open room."

Petu: "Do you want to come to my room? I don't have a roommate."

Me: "Are you sure? It's only for one night."

Petu: "Yeah. Let's go." We went up to her room which was on the next two floors. She opened the door and we walked in. Her room was identical to mine but very much customized. She had a vision board hung on the wall and some paintings. The second bed was empty.

Petu: "I've got some extra linen. I didn't make it because I thought I'd get assigned someone maybe next week and they'd obviously bring their own things." She took out pink linen from her bag.

Me: "Thank you." She made the bed for while I sat on the chair.

Petu: "Were you going to see Zimmy?"

Me: "Yeah."

Petu: "She's not there? That's strange. I could've sworn I saw her come in."

Me: "She's there. She's with Fikile."

Petu: "Thembisa, did something happen?"

Me: "My roommate is weird and she's supposed to move out tomorrow. I just found out something about her that made me uncomfortable. When I went to Zimmy she was angry, claiming that I'm shutting her out of the

important parts of my life, specifically not telling her about my boyfriend. She doesn't understand why she has to be patient."

Petu: "Because he's royal?" My heart sank.

Me: "Not you too."

Petu: "Not me what?"

Me: "How did you know that?"

Petu: "I saw the car drop you off and another time pick you up. Only Royals are driven in bullet proof cars. Then when Fikile said this other time when we were chilling you're lying about dating a celebrity. That's when I knew."

Me: "Why didn't you tell Zimmy?"

Petu: "It's not my business to tell. If you want her to know, you'll tell her yourself."

Me: "Oh my Goodness. How many people know this?"

Petu: "That you're dating a royal? Possibly anyone who knows the cars are bulletproof. Don't worry though, not many do." She laughed.

Me: "And how do you know?"

Petu: "Don't Tell anyone about this Thembisa, promise me?"

Thembisa: "I promise."

Petu: "My dad is part of the team that services the cars. No one can know because somehow Royals are always beefing and one is always trying to over throw the other, they buy people to fault the cars at times, threatening their families too."

Me: "But surely if there's a team, they're already known."

Petu: "No. My dad's team is specifically for the Biyela's and Sikhosana's."

Me: "How many royal families are there?"

Petu: "Here in the city, there's these two. The others are all over the nation, I think there's 7 in total. So, who's yours? Is it one of the Biyela's? Thembisa!"

Me: "Why would that be your first guess?"

Petu: "Please don't take this the wrong way, friend. The future King is unattainable. No one has ever heard him speak. He does go out in public but he's always surrounded by at least 8 bodyguards. All military trained. There is no getting to that man. Biyela's are all over the place. Please don't tell me you're dating Mngqobi, I'd literally evaporate." I laughed.

Me: "Fortunately for you, it's not him. Why? Do you like him?"

Petu: "I've had a crush on him for years. He's so sexy and dreamy." She blushed.

Me: "Where did you see him Petu?"

Petu: "Sis, they're everywhere. Just with less guards. Mngqobi goes to our school even. He's so relaxed." She smiled. I was so entertained by her crush.

Me: "I need to see this Mngqobi."

Petu: "Absolutely. Let me show you."

Me: "Don't tell me you take sneak pictures of him."

Petu: "No that's illegal but he does have a social media. Here he is." I looked at the picture.

Me: "Oh, he's hot."

Petu: "Exactly. As long as you're not with him then I can relax."

Me: "So if he goes to school, the body guards wait outside?"

Petu: "Kind of outside the classroom." We laughed.

Me: "This is so crazy right?"

Petu: "Very."

Me: "Have you tried to talk to him?"

Petu: "Hell no."

Me: "Why? You're not allowed to?"

Petu: "I'm just scared. I don't think I'm his type."

Me: "Why would you think that?"

Petu: "He's more of the slender girls type."

Me: "Did he say that?"

Petu: "Trust me, they're always around him."

Me: "That means nothing. Say hi to him the next time you see him." She laughed.

Petu: "Is that how you met yours? Just saying hi?"

Me: "Not really. We first saw each other at the club."

Petu: "It's definitely Sibonelo. He LOVES going out." She giggled. I wouldn't utter a word.

Me: "how does this whole thing work? If there's many royal families, why is there only one king." I needed more information about this. From someone who is neutral.

Petu: "Well, my father explained it like this. It's like a board of directors running a company, but there needs to be a chairman who will lead them. That's who the Sikhosana family is, the chairman. They're a very weird bunch. Isolated and cold. When the princesses go to the mall, it has to be cleared out and closed off until they're done. They act like gods, it's so weird."

Me: "What happens if the Sikhosana prince doesn't become king?"

Petu: "Oh he doesn't have a choice. No one else can do it. That's why he's so protected. They can't risk him dying because he's the only heir." I remembered what he told me. How he was fetched from the States and he knew the minute he saw the escorts that his life was over.

Me: "Do you think he'll get married?"

Petu: "Yeah. When he becomes a King, he will need to have a wife. I wonder how he's going to talk to her because he obviously can't." If I asked anymore questions about him, she would be suspicious. What have I gotten myself into? If I continue dating Nkosinhle, my life will change drastically. Was I ready for that?

PRINCE POV\_

I really didn't want to go to the palace. I suddenly hated going to eNtabeni without Thembisa. While I just sat and thought, the driver cruised around the city. My phone rang. Mthunzi.

Nkosi: "What?"

Mthunzi: "Where are you?"

Nkosi: "The city."

Mthunzi: "What's going on?"

Nkosi: "I don't feel like being in the palace and I don't want to be alone."

Mthunzi: "Okay. Then meet me up in the mountain for a drink."

Nkosi: "You don't have to babysit me."

Mthunzi: "Unfortunately, that's my job. You'll find me there." He hung up. "eNtabeni."

Driver: "Yes, Your Highness." He took a turn and drove the way.

Mthunzi was waiting for me at the restaurant bar when I arrived. I sat next to him.

Mthunzi: "What are you having?"

Nkosi: "Whatever you're drinking." He went behind the bar to pour me a drink.

Mthunzi: "What happened?"

Nkosi: "I told Sasa about Amahle."

Mthunzi: "Why?"

Nkosi: "She would find out eventually. In case you forgot, I want to marry her, she'd see her because she'd have to come to my family."

Mthunzi: "That's all you told her right?"

Nkosi: "For now-"

Mthunzi: "No. Nkosi, you'll have to wait. You don't want to push Thembisa away."

Nkosi: "So I must wait until when? We have kids?"

Mthunzi: "Ideally yes."

Nkosi: "No Mthunzi. I'm not a liar."

Mthunzi: "No one said lie. You're just protecting her until she's ready."

Nkosi: "Our child will come out of her womb with super natural abilities. I need to prepare her."

Mthunzi: "I'm saying not now. Not while she's still falling in love. You're not harmful Nkosi. Your abilities have never harmed others. You're a protector. She's not in danger with you, if she was, I'd suggest telling her. How did she react to Amahle being your sister?"

Nkosi: "She was livid."

Mthunzi: "Exactly. I know you hate this, I know you hate not being open and honest but I promise, Nkosinhle, you'll be so hurt when you lose this girl. Everytime you're not with her, you act like someone is trying to kill you."

Nkosi: "Mxim." This was disgustingly uncomfortable for me. I've never felt this much conflict in my heart. I didn't want to lose her but I wasn't willing to keep the truth from her. Mthunzi's phone rang.

Mthunzi: "Yes?"

Caller: "My Lord, it's Linda."

Mthunzi: "What do you need Linda." He placed the phone on loud speaker.

Linda: "Amahle wants a different room. Hers only." I nodded. Mthunzi shook his head.

Mthunzi: "Why? What happened?"

Linda: "Uhm...I think there may have been a disagreement between the girls. Thembisa left the room." Left the room?? Where to?

Mthunzi: "Where did she go?"

Linda: "Well, she's currently in another girl's room. Petunia Sizakele Nyanda. I've checked her background, she's fine."

Mthunzi: "How fine, is fine? What's her father's name?"

Linda: "Bhekokwakhe Nyanda. Her mother is deceased. She has an older sister who lives in Oceanview. Sizani. Married to a man called, Jackson Le Roza."

Mthunzi: "Is Thembisa safe with her?"

Linda: "Yes sir."

Mthunzi: "Okay. Thank you Linda." He hung up.

Nkosi: "Amahle is a fucking brat. And it's because of you."

Mthunzi: "Why is it my fau-"

Nkosi: "You give in to everything she wants."

Mthunzi: "That's not true. She can't get a single room."

Nkosi: "She needs one. Thembisa needs her space. Problem solved."

Mthunzi: "Fine."

Nkosi: "And don't put anyone else in there. I know you want to protect her but you need to calm it down. This is kind of why she's mad at me."

Mthunzi: "She's my future queen, of course I'm going to protect her. Have you told her why these measures are in place?"

Nkosi: "kind of."

Mthunzi: "What did you say?"

Nkosi: "People will harm her to get to me." He stared at me.

Mthunzi: "You're foolish. You know that?"

Nkosi: "Insulting your future King?" He laughed.

Mthunzi: "I'm insulting my friend. So, I was thinking, about your visit to Mthinomkhulu. I spoke to the chief to let him know we're visiting. I also, asked him to nominate the businesses in the village. I'll have the list tomorrow, I didn't mention we'll visit them. I know how you hate a show."

Nkosi: "I will snap if I have to watch one more song and dance." He laughed.

Mthunzi: "What will you do then at the reed dance? Your mothers are planning it right now."

Nkosi: "Oh I'm not going to be there. I'm taking that weekend off. Maybe Sasa and I can go up to Golden Crown to relax in a different city."

Mthunzi: "Nkosinhle. You're not doing that. I know you can't stand them but this will reflect badly on Sasa if they find out."

Nkosi: "You're right. Then she'll have to attend, I guess." He laughed, shaking his head.

Mthunzi: "You are something else." ...

SASA POV\_

The next morning, I woke up. Petu and I had stayed up, chatting about our childhoods. She was a nice girl. I enjoyed her company alot. I checked my phone finding a message from Nkosi. <I'm sorry. Please talk to me Thembisa. You can't ignore me again.> I replied: <Good morning. I'm still mad at you.> I sent it, getting up, quickly made the bed. I needed to go to my room. Petu was still sleeping. It was just after 6 but I didn't want to wake her. I left her room, going to mine, carrying my schoolbag. I hope Amahle is asleep as she usually is at this time. I opened the door but it was locked. Fortunately I had my key in my bag, after a thorough search I unlocked and walked in, closing the door. When I turned to put my bag next to my bed, I saw her on the floor. My heart stopped.

Me: "Amahle?" Her eyes were staring at the ceiling unblinking, blood traced from her nose down her cheek. Dried vomit down her neck. My whole body shivered. "Amahle." I was stuck where I was standing. The blood on her cheek was cracked and dry too. Which means she'd been laying there, unmoving for a while. I knelt next to her, feeling for a pulse but there was none. I was too late. I stepped back, turning to walk to the door, with tears rolling down my cheeks. My shaky hand reached the door handle, opening it. I heard deep gasp behind me, before she coughed out loud. I spun around in shock. She sat up, breathing in air before she opened her eyes and looked at me. What. The. Fuck.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 15

SASA POV\_

Amahle got herself up from the floor and sat on the bed. What the hell was happening?

Me: "You were dead. I felt your pulse. You didn't have a pulse."

Amahle: "I'm fine." Her body was still shaking.

Me: "Fine?? FINE AMAHLE!!"

Amahle: "Please don't yell-"

Me: "How can I not? I found you dead on the floor and now you're alive. Explain that!"

Amahle: "I can't. It's nothing you can understand, so please Thembisa, get out of my business. I'm leaving your room so you don't have to worry about me anymore." She got up, going to the bathroom. I was in severe shock. There was no pulse. She was cold. I felt for a pulse and there wasn't one. She came back with a wet cloth, wiping the floor that had her vomit. I went to shower, coming back to dress. By then she was in bed, covered. I finished getting ready.

Me: "Amahle."

Ama: "I'll be out before you come back Thembisa."

Me: "That's not why I'm calling you. Please tell me what's wrong?"

Ama: "I don't know what's wrong."

Me: "Do you want me to call someone?"

Ama: "Your boyfriend already doesn't want me here. I'll be out of your hair, don't worry."

Me: "And where will you go? To a room where you'll shock another student like this? Then what?"

Ama: "What do you want from me?"

Me: "Just tell me what's wrong so I can help you!!"

Ama: "I don't need your help Thembisa. No one can help me. Please let this go."

Me: "I'm not letting you go. You're not leaving this room. What type of person can throw out someone who's clearly going through a rough time?" She sat up, angrily.

Ama: "Do you think I did this for your pity?"

Me: "That would be very dramatic but no, I think you're hiding something else. Like what you're going through. I'm no psychologist but damn Amahle, I'm here, you have your brother who I'm sure cares for you-" she laughed.

Ama: "Nkosi does not care about me. You're a good person, but this is above you."

Me: "Then I guess I'll just have to sit here all day with you."

Ama: "What the hell's wrong with you." I sat down and looked at her. "Thembisa I don't know what you expect me to say. I don't know what you want from me."

Me: "Have you tried seeing a psychiatrist?" She laughed.

Ama: "I've been to 12 different psychiatrists."

Me: "Maybe then that's not the problem. What if you're having seizures? Did you drink any pills? I've never seen pills here."

Ama: "Thembisa."

Me: "Amahle, this isn't normal. Let's try, okay? Let's go to Mountain Peak General."

Ama: "Hell no. Absolutely not."

Me: "Then where? I thought it was the private hospital of the city?"

Ama: "It is. For citizens."

Me: "Oh. So where do you go?"

Ama: "We have medical staff that comes to us. But if there's an emergency, then we're taken to The Oceans medical facility." She got out of bed.

Me: "What happened to your arms?"

Ama: "I cut myself. It used to help. When I didn't want to die. Until it didn't matter anymore."

Me: "Does it hurt?"

Ama: "Dying? Only for a minute." She smiled, sitting next to me. "It's scary. When the black lace blinds your vision and everything shuts

down. You wonder for a second, a split second, are the people you leave behind going to be hurt? Then it switches off. It's still. Well, at least the first three times. Then the next time it happens, you realize you don't really care because your family is just a bunch of conceited, self righteous god-imitating people." I touched the slashes on her arms. The texture of the rough cuts against her smooth skin was so contrasting.

Me: "When last?"

Ama: "A year ago."

Me: "They were bleeding. Last week."

Ama: "They do that sometimes."

Me: "Do you think if we put tissue oil, they'll get less irritated?" She looked up at me. "I have some in my toiletry bag." I got up to fetch the bottle, sitting down next to her again. "Maybe you scratched yourself that's why it bled." I applied some oil on her arms.

Ama: "That does feel better, thank you but it's time for you to go to school."

Me: "You too. Go shower so we can have breakfast." She went to the bathroom. I checked my phone, seeing a new message: <I know baby. I'll make it up to you. Do you have plans this weekend?> I replied: <No I don't. What were you planning?> Sent. He responded immediately: <My parents are trying to sell me to the highest bidder and I need you to bid for me please. Thanks.> I laughed. <No I want to see how you behave on auction.> I sent it laughing. He called.

Me: "Hello?"

Nkosi: "Please forgive me."

Me: "I have forgiven you. I still want to see you model out on stage."

Nkosi: "You're about to be very entertained. I do a sexy walk to my chair when it starts." I giggled. "Are you at breakfast?"

Me: "No. I'm waiting for Amahle to finish showering so we can go." He kept quiet. "We spoke. We're fine."

Nkosi: "As long as she's not starting her nonsense."

Me: "She's not."

Nkosi: "Okay, send me a message when you get to school."

Me: "Okay. Bye."

Nkosi: "Goodbye baby." I hung up. Amahle came back wrapped in her towel.

Me: "I'll give you some privacy, I'm going to be at the dining hall."

Ama: "Okay." I took my school bag, walking out the room starting at Petu's room. I knocked on her door. She opened, smiling.

Petu: "Hey."

Me: "Morning. I didn't want to wake you. Thank you for last night."

Petu: "You helped me, I was kind of lonely before you came. Let me grab my bag." She took her bag and we walked to the dining hall. "So, what's the situation with your roommate?"

Me: "Actually she's not a bad person. Maybe a bit cold but we spoke. I think I can give her another chance." We got out breakfast and went to sit at a table together.

Petu: "That's good. So where is she? Is she coming?"

Me: "Yeah. I left her getting dressed. Anyway, what time do you have lunch?"

Petu: "Any time between 1 and 3."

Me: "Me too, give me your number so we can find out what we're doing." She dialed her number on my phone and buzzed herself. Amahle walked in the dining hall. As usual dressed in a sweater and jeans. She had the hoodie over her head, walking to fetch her breakfast.

Winston: "I can't hear you!" I stood up walking to the counter. "Not you again."

Me: "Yes me again Mrs Winston. She wants the vegan option."

Winston: "She doesn't have a mouth?"

Me: "You don't have ears?" Everyone gasped. "I'm sorry." I just went into defense mode there and lashed out. That has never happened before. Mrs Winston took the vegan option and gave it to Amahle. I walked to my seat.

Ama: "You didn't have to do that."

Me: "I know, I feel bad already." She chuckled and ate her food. "This is Petu. P, this is Amahle."

Petu: "Hello."

Ama: "Hi." We all ate our breakfast comfortably.

Petu: "Maybe if we're lucky I can show you Mngqobi."

Me: "Oh definitely. But you're going to go say hi if we see him right?"

Petu: "Absolutely not." She laughed.

Me: "Come on, why?"

Petu: "I'm scared Thembisa."

Me: "What's the worse that can happen?"

Petu: "He might ignore me. He might laugh. He might even tell his bodyguards to get me away from him."

Ama: "None of those."

Petu: "Huh?" Amahle looked up behind me, since she was sitting opposite me. I looked back. Her friend Nothando walked to the table.

Notha: "Golden Eye."

Ama: "Not here."

Notha: "Why are you here."

Ama: "Having breakfast."

Notha: "You never sit out here." She looked at me.

Ama: "Needed a change of scenery." She continued eating. Nothando walked away. Strangest people in this building. Petu looked at me.

Me: "Amahle, what did you mean when you said none of those?"

Amahle: "He's nice."

Petu: "You know him?"

Amahle: "Yes. Please don't mention my name to him."

Petu: "That's if I talk to him. I still need to gather strength."

Me: "If Amahle says he's nice then I think he's very nice. Amahle doesn't like people." Amahle chuckled.

Amahle: "Can we go to school now?" We got out lunches and left the res building walking to school.

## PRINCE POV\_

My morning was off to a tricky start. I needed something to do. This never used to be a problem before I met Thembisa. Now I needed a distraction especially after the dream I just had. It left a very hard situation in my nether regions and it was not going away. I stood in the shower, for 10 minutes with cold water on blast but it didn't help. This was a problem. A big problem. I dressed for a run. Maybe that will help. Downstairs, my family were having breakfast.

Sikhosana: "My Prince, are you joining us for breakfast?"

Nkosi: "No father. I just need a quick run." I made my way out immediately before he could respond. I sprinted to the woods, all the way down to the river stream. I stood on the bank of the river watching the water. Much better. I chuckled to myself. This was crazy. I felt a presence behind me, ruining my mood instantly. My father's guard was around.

Him: "My prince."

Nkosi: "What do you want?"

Him: "Nothing my prince, I was only in the area." I turned to look at him. He had no weapons which wouldn't have mattered even if he did. He was sent because my father is interested in knowing who I'm seeing. I ran back to the palace with the same speed. My family was still having breakfast.

Nobantu: "My son, please join us. We hardly see you for breakfast." I sat down at the table, a server brought a bowl of warm water, cloth and soap for me to wash my hands.

Sikhosana: "Your mothers are planning the dance for this weekend. Maybe there you can find yourself a wife." He watched me closely hoping for a reaction.

Nkosi: "Looking forward to it." I grinned. He looked so confused. This was much more fun than I thought it would be.

Nhlanhla: "Okay, that's new."

Sikhosana: "What's going on with you?"

Nkosi: "What do you mean father?"

Sikhosana: "There's something different."

Nkosi: "Looking forward to be King, that's all." I ate my breakfast. He looked at my mother, who looked at me.

Nobantu: "What will you be doing today?"

Nkosi: "I've got a meeting with Mthunzi. He has to brief me on the Res project and planning my next village visit."

Nobantu: "That's all?"

Nkosi: "Yes." I drank my juice. "Have to go." I got up, walking up to my room for another shower.

I arrived at eNtabeni. Mthunzi drove in shortly after me. He walked in the restaurant where I was sitting.

Mthunzi: "Your Highness."

Nkosi: "I need something to do."

Mthunzi: "I thought you wanted a day off."

Nkosi: "Not until 1pm."

Mthunzi: "What's happening at 1pm?"

Nkosi: "Thembisa finishes with her classes."

Mthunzi: "Ahh. I see. Okay. Don't you want to plan an outdoor picnic?"

Nkosi: "When have you ever seen me do either planning or a picnic? Where would I even begin? And why do you think that would interest me?" He held in laughter.

Mthunzi: "For Thembisa. When you bring her here later. Instead of being in the bedroom, you can be out in the garden, laying on the grass."

Nkosi: "What happens in a picnic Mthunzi?" He smiled brightly.

Mthunzi: "Food, snacks, wine and kissing, all in beautiful scenery. She'll love it. You have to put an order in the kitchen for food. Gather her

favorite snacks, a good wine you think she might enjoy and set it up." Is Mthunzi sane as a person?

Nkosi: "Why do you think I can 'set it up'. What am I setting up Mthunzi? I need you to be serious. We have staff."

Mthunzi: "Your hands on effort is what would make it 10 times more special. I can help but you need to be open-"

Nkosi: "See, when you say that, I know it's just going to be downhill."

Mthunzi: "When have I let you down? Let's start with food. You'll need something that isn't too filling but enough. The chef will have some options for you to choose from surely. Which wine do you suggest?"

Nkosi: "The Cunning. I think she'll love it. It's sweet and crisp. Just like her."

Mthunzi: "Hmm." He smiled. "I'll have the housekeeper bring out the display cushions and a blanket to lay on the grass. The gardener will handpick the roses, red-"

Nkosi: "Pink. Pink rose petals, make the blanket white, sprinkle the petals on the blanket. The last movie we watched, she said it was beautiful."

Mthunzi: "I've never been so happy. My Prince? Is this you?"

Nkosi: "And get everyone out of here by then."

Mthunzi: "Done. I'll have security at all perimeters, the workers will be in their quarters. What do you think about getting a gift?"

Nkosi: "No, that would be too much. The focus should be on spending time. I want to reserve gift giving a bit. Thembisa is more interested in my attention than my money."

Mthunzi: "How do you know that?"

Nkosi: "She cries when she misses me."

Mthunzi: "You don't need me anymore."

Nkosi: "I'll always need you. For example you need to prep the staff and give out the instructions." He laughed.

Mthunzi: "And dessert? The wife says she loved a few flavours of ice cream."

Nkosi: "She shares that with Khaya. It would be weird of me to try take that away from her experience."

Mthunzi: "You do know that he wants her right?"

Nkosi: "Yes. But Thembisa recognizes him as a friend and I trust her."

Mthunzi: "Alright. They named you the good king for a reason. I would've shot him dead near my wife." He got up walking to the kitchen. I smiled, shaking my head. I can't harm Khaya, he's not a threat to me. Not to mention it would be ridiculously unfair because he doesn't have my strength. Besides, I was sure about Thembisa and how she feels about me. However after what's going to happen today, I don't know how she'll feel about me.

SASA POV\_

My classes finally came to an end. I walked out the classroom, dialing on my phone. Petu answered her phone.

Petu: "Hi Sasa."

Me: "Hey. Where are you?"

Petu: "I'm out by the sport stands, watching soccer."

Me: "Okay I'm coming." I walked to the sporting grounds which were on the other side of campus. While walking I sent a message to Nkosi. <Hey baby. I'm finished for the day. How is your day going?> I sent it. He responded: <It's been a very boring day but productive. How was yours?> I replied: <Great. My lecturer helped a bit in regards to our assignment. I have a different perspective I want to lay it out in. I'm excited.> I sent it, reaching the stands. Petu was sitting at the bottom stands, reading a book.

Me: "Hey."

Petu: "Hi."

Me: "Did you come out early?"

Petu: "No. I have another class at 2." She rolled her eyes.

Me: "Why are you sitting here?"

Petu: "Watching the boys playing." She giggled. I looked on the grounds and saw two bodyguards standing on the sidelines. I couldn't help but laugh. "Which one is he?"

Petu: "Number 5." I looked on the field and saw him running around, chasing a ball. I wonder if Nkosi has ever played sport? It would be hilarious seeing him playing soccer. I couldn't stop laughing. "What?"

Me: "It's just funny, I cannot imagine my boyfriend playing soccer."

Petu: "Sibonelo is a bit stuck up so I get your point." I laughed harder, with her joining me. Problem is, I've never even met poor Sibonelo who is now my apparent boyfriend. Amahle walked toward us. "Your friend is quite odd, isn't she?"

Me: "She's just different."

Petu: "And polite. I didn't think she would be but she's nice." Amahle reached us finally.

Ama: "Hello."

Me: "Hey. How did you know where we are?"

Ama: "I followed you. Do you mind?"

Me: "Not at all. Sit. We're watching soccer." She sat down, finally pulling the hoodie off her head.

Petu: "Jesus."

Me: "What?" I looked at her.

Petu: "Why do you wear these heavy hoodies with beautiful eyes like that? I would never hide my face if I were you."

Me: "Same. She's gorgeous." Amahle shook her head looking at the field.

Ama: "Thanks." It was true that her eyes were beautiful. A burnt orange brown colour and cat shaped. She had an intense gaze just like her brother. Oh my God. That must be a Sikhosana family thing. Although, the two members I've met are quite nice, maybe Petu wasn't accurate when she said they act like gods. They're probably just misunderstood. "Fucks sake." She hissed. I looked up, seeing jersey number 5 coming towards us. Yes, there's plenty of people sitting here but I knew he was

coming to us. His bodyguards fell behind his step with the same pace. So his walk behind him? He stood in front of us. Mngqobi Biyela.

Mngqobi: "Amahle."

Amahle: "Mngqobi." He smiled.

Mngqobi: "I didn't think I'd see you here. With people."

Ama: "People grow."

Mngqobi: "That's good. Who are your friends?"

Ama: "Ask them." I giggled. This girl.

Mngqobi: "Ladies. Good afternoon."

Me: "Hello."

Petu: "Hi." She blushed. I couldn't help smiling to prevent myself from laughing. She was so cute.

Mngqobi: "I'm Mngqobi. I haven't seen you around, do you study here?"

Me: "Yes. I'm Thembisa, this is Petu."

Mngqobi: "Lovely to meet you both. What are you studying?" He sat on the grass facing us. This was a Prince? I looked at Petu to respond but she was staring blankly at him.

Me: "Petu is doing Agricultural Science."

Mngqobi: "Really? That's interesting. And you?"

Me: "Law."

Mngqobi: "Me too. I'm in third year."

Me: "Second."

Mngqobi: "And you Petu? What year are you doing?"

Petu: "Uhm.. second."

Mngqobi: "Nice. How are you finding your course? Are you enjoying it?"

Petu: "Very much."

Mngqobi: "That's good. Whew, what a hot day. Let me go freshen up. It was lovely meeting you, Thembisa and Petu. What is your full name?"

Petu: "Petunia."

Mnqobi: "Beautiful Flower. That's a lovely name. Have a lovely day guys. Amahle."

Ama: "Mnqobi." He got up and walked away, followed by his guards.

Petu: "Oh. My. God. That didn't just happen."

Ama: "Told you he's nice."

Petu: "Are you guys together? Or have history?"

Ama: "Nope. My father and his are in business together."

Petu: "Oh okay. This has made my week!" My phone rang. My boo.

Me: "Hi baby." I answered.

Nkosi: "Hello. How are you?"

Me: "I'm fine. How are you?"

Nkosi: "Good."

Me: "Okay."

Nkosi: "Hm.."

Me: "Do you want to fetch me?"

Nkosi: "Yes please." I giggled.

Me: "Okay baby. Let me go to my room and change. I'll tell you when I'm ready."

Nkosi: "Okay." I hung up.

Me: "Ladies. I have to go."

Ama: "Let me walk you. Petu, your last class is cancelled. Are you coming?"

Petu: "No it's not."

Ama: "Okay. Are you sure?" Petu giggled.

Petu: "Of course I'm sure. I would've received a messa-" her phone vibrated. She checked her message and looked at Amahle. "Okay, how did you know that?"

Ama: "I just do."

Petu: "Do you think you can help me with powerball numbers?" I laughed.

Ama: "Only small amounts. Nothing above 10 grand." Petu gasped.

Me: "Wait, are you serious?"

Ama: "Yes. Exorbitant amounts of money have a pattern to turn people into something they aren't. Against those that love them, or those they love against them. It's almost always laced with addiction or evil." Petu hooked her arm around Amahle's arm.

Petu: "I have a new best friend. Let's play the Powerball for a new pair of shoes then." We laughed, walking out to our res. Amahle was actually really cool but what was this thing of hers always knowing what's going to happen? I'm yet to see the Powerball thing play out. Maybe she's just joking, I don't know. What if she isn't? What if Amahle has a gift? But why does she keep trying to escape? Was she committing suicide? Or was she really dying without being able to control it?

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 16

PRINCE POV\_

I was waiting for Thembisa to tell me to come pick her up. I couldn't wait to see her face. More especially when she sees the set up eNtabeni. I didn't do much but I did lay a blanket on the grass and place petals on it. One by one. I didn't want a mess. Mthunzi brought a small low table, so I can place the food on it. The wine was in an ice bucket. I placed the pillows neatly on the blanket. It was perfect.

Mthunzi: "She's going to love it."

Nkosi: "I hope so. It looks pretty. This cushion is skew." I moved it a bit.

Mthunzi: "Everything is perfect, leave it alone."

Nkosi: "Okay. Now you can leave."

Mthunzi: "I'm not going anywhere. I will be in my suite when she arrives."

Nkosi: "Okay. Good."

Mthunzi: "Don't be nervous."

Nkosi: "I don't get nervous." There was an extra petal. I picked it up.

Mthunzi: "Nkosi. Go fetch her."

Nkosi: "I can't go wait for her at the gate, she'll think I'm crazy. Distract me Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Okay. Let's go have a drink in the bar."

Nkosi: "And leave this set up by itself?"

Mthunzi: "It's not going to disappear. Let's go." I looked at the picnic set up. It was my first creation. I know I did a good job. Oh fuck, that petal wasn't extra, I miscalculated. I placed it back in its spot.

Nkosi: "Okay, let's have a drink." I followed him into the bar.

Mthunzi: "How do you feel?"

Nkosi: "Like I'm going to explode."

Mthunzi: "You mean excited." He handed me a glass with two shots of whiskey.

Nkosi: "Sure. If that's what you want to call it." I gulped it down.

Mthunzi: "You did alot today."

Nkosi: "Barely. I put a blanket on grass. That's it."

Mthunzi: "And decorated it. Although you could've finished much quicker if you didn't place the petals one by one. Why that method? Why not just throw them on there? That's how it's done."

Nkosi: "That seems aggressive Mthunzi. Thembisa is going to be sitting on the blanket, it needs to have a soft energy around it so that she's comfortable. Why would you throw?" He looked at me.

Mthunzi: "What are you planning Nkosi."

Nkosi: "This is not your business."

Mthunzi: "It kind of is but I'm trusting that you'll know what is good for you. Thembisa is good for you."

Nkosi: "She is. Have you heard from Amahle? Did she move out the room?"

Mthunzi: "Actually, I haven't heard anything." My phone rang.

Nkosi: "Thembisa."

Thembisa: "Hi baby. I'm ready."

Nkosi: "Okay I'm coming."

Thembisa: "See you soon." I hung up

Nkosi: "Keep an eye on the garden."

Mthunzi: "Again, it won't disappear." I walked out going to the car.

SASA POV\_

I was dressed in my brown maxi dress that was the same as the black one Nkosi liked. It hugged my body comfortably and pooled at my feet covering them. I sprayed my little perfume and combed my hair out, tying a floral headband, holding my hair back. My usual small hoop earrings and a bit of lip gloss.

Me: "Okay. I'll see you guys later."

Ama: "Good luck." She smiled. I chuckled.

Petu: "Yeah, he's going to have a heart attack. Love that for him." I laughed.

Me: "You two are crazy." My phone rang. "Hi baby."

Nkosi: "I'm outside baby."

Me: "Okay, I'm coming." I hung up, taking my school bag. "I'll be late. Don't go anywhere Amahle. You're staying in this room, okay?"

Ama: "Okay." I walked out the room to reception. Zimmy walked in seeing me.

Me: "Hey."

Zimmy: "Hi."

Me: "Are you still mad at me?"

Zimmy: "Are you still keeping secrets from me?"

Me: "Yes."

Zimmy: "Then yes, I'm still mad at you."

Me: "You're putting me in a very difficult position Zimmy."

Zimmy: "I wouldn't want to do that. Your boyfriend's car is outside." I walked out the building to the car. The driver opened for me, I climbed inside.

Me: "Hey."

Nkosi: "Hello." I leaned over to kiss him. "What's wrong?"

Me: "How do you always know, something is wrong."

Nkosi: "You look sad." He held my hand. I sighed.

Me: "Zimmy has been my person for a year, you know. She's always been so open and caring for me. Now she thinks I've replaced her with Amahle and no longer have time for her."

Nkosi: "Why would she think that?"

Me: "She believes Amahle knows about my boyfriend and she doesn't. She obviously wouldn't know that Amahle knows because it's her brother. Amahle said something, she said not everyone will be happy for me when they find out who my boyfriend is. I'm worried what if she means Zimmy?"

Nkosi: "What do you want to do?"

Me: "I'm not ready to disclose my relationship. I think between us and Amahle is fine." He kissed my hand.

Nkosi: "Whichever makes you comfortable."

Me: "At least I have Petu. She knows I'm dating a royal prince but she thinks it's Sibonelo."

Nkosi: "Biyela? You'd hate him."

Me: "I met his brother."

Nkosi: "Which one?"

Me: "Mnqobi. He goes to our school."

Nkosi: "Oh."

Me: "I didn't even know there were other royal families."

Nkosi: "There's seven in total."

Me: "I heard. Petu told me."

Nkosi: "How does Petu know you're dating a royal?"

Me: "She recognized the car. Apparently only Royals travel in bulletproof cars."

Nkosi: "How would she know the car is bulletproof?"

Me: "Her father services them."

Nkosi: "Hm."

Me: "What were you doing today?"

Nkosi: "Not much. Thinking about you mostly." He kissed my lips. His lips tasting of liquor.

Me: "And drinking."

Nkosi: "A bit, yes." The car drove into eNtabeni finally.

Me: "Were you at Amelia's?"

Nkosi: "No. I was here eNtabeni, waiting for you." We parked. "I have a surprise for you."

Me: "What is it?"

Nkosi: "Come see." The door opened, I climbed out the car. Nkosi held my hand walking me inside.

Me: "Where's everyone."

Nkosi: "Gave them the day off. I wanted us to be alone. Only security is around."

Me: "Okay." I looked at him, smiling. We walked out to the garden area, the path curved to the left, on the grass I could see a set up of a picnic. I couldn't hide the big smile I had. "Is this for me?"

Nkosi: "Yes." We reached the picnic.

Me: "This is beautiful Nkosi. Did you...?"

Nkosi: "It was Mthunzi's idea. I lay down a blanket and put petals."

Me: "I love it." I hugged him, kissing his chin. "It's beautiful."

Nkosi: "I'm glad you love it." He stared into my eyes, brushing my skin with his fingers. "I love you." I froze. That I did not expect.

Me: "Nkosi." He kissed me, holding my body against his. I held on to him to keep from floating away. He pulled away, looking at me again.

Nkosi: "Let's sit." He helped me down and sat next to me. "Would you like a drink?"

Me: "Yes please." He opened the bottle of wine and poured some in a glass. I took a sip, savouring the taste in my mouth. "This is amazing."

Nkosi: "I knew you'd like it."

Me: "You predicted it?" I teased.

Nkosi: "Yes." He smiled.

Me: "Tell me, can you predict the Powerball?"

Nkosi: "Why? Do you need money?"

Me: "No but can you?"

Nkosi: "No. I can't predict the lottery. Why?"

Me: "Can Amahle?" He looked down.

Nkosi: "I don't know. I don't think so. I can't be sure."

Me: "Baby?"

Nkosi: "Hm?"

Me: "Does your sister have a gift?" He looked at me again. "It's okay if you don't feel comfortable with sharing. I understand."

Nkosi: "No, she doesn't have a gift."

Me: "Oh."

Nkosi: "We have... different abilities." His stare was intense.

Me: "What does that mean?"

Nkosi: "I don't know if this will change our relationship or even end it but I can't continue keeping it away from you. If yesterday taught me something about you it's that I should be open with you about my life. I intend to do that. Always."

Me: "Nkosi, what are different abilities?"

Nkosi: "I'm... I can predict the future because I can see pattern and manipulate it." I swallowed, waiting for him to continue. What did he mean? "I can whisper. And I have the physical strength of a Siberian tiger." I stared at him, almost amused.

Me: "Everyone can whisper baby. That's not an ability." He stared at me quietly without another word. (Take off your dress.) I pulled down the shoulder straps before I zipped down the dress. (Stop. Zip back up. Smile.) I zipped my dressed up and smiled.

Nkosi: "Like that." I shook my head, my heart racing.

Me: "Y-y-you didn't say anything. But I heard you. You were in my head. You were controlling my brain and body. How..." I started shivering.

Nkosi: "Its my ability."

Me: "That's not real. It can't be. Please Nkosinhle, tell me that's not real. There has to be an explanation." He stared at me quietly. (I was born like this. My whole family was born with different abilities.) I stood up, backing away from him.

Nkosi: "I didn't want to scare you away."

Me: "Are you sure? Because you're doing a very good job!!!"

Nkosi: "I don't use this. I haven't. Every moment you spent with me was your free will. I would never take away your choice and free will. That is why I'm choosing to tell you now before we move further in our relationship. So if you don't want to continue, you aren't stuck. You're free to go." This was scary.

Me: "Can you hear my thoughts?" He nodded. Oh fuck.

Nkosi: "I've never violated your privacy. I can hear your thoughts but choose not to." I wrapped my arms around my body, suddenly feeling cold and naked.

Me: "Amahle?"

Nkosi: "She can't whisper. Amahle is immortal." I stared at him and laughed.

Me: "Where are the cameras?" Honestly, I was freaking out. "Nkosinhle, no one is immortal."

Nkosi: "She's committed suicide more than 20 times. She doesn't die."

Me: "That's, that doesn't mean she can't. That doesn't mean she's immortal. Because if she's immortal and you can creep into my thoughts then I'm going to fucking faint." I shook my head. "I'm going to fucking faint. There's no way. Nkosi, what's the real explanation. I need facts. This isn't... This is not real. It can't be."

Nkosi: "It is real."

Me: "Your family has abilities? What about the others? What do they do?"

Nkosi: "My father, Amahle and I are the only ones who have abilities. My father can manipulate the weather." Nkosinhle doesn't lie. He can't. But what is this? WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS!! If Amahle is immortal then she did die this morning? When I found her in our room, she had really died and came back to life? Oh dear God. I felt dizzy and weak. The last thing I saw was Nkosi jumping up to catch me.

PRINCE POV\_

I stared at Thembisa, laying in our bed. Sleeping. Mthunzi was in the middle of the room, staring at me. I know he was mad at me. I could feel his anger. Honestly, he knows me. Why is he surprised that I came clean?

Nkosi: "I don't know why you're mad at me-"

Mthunzi: "You DON'T know?"

Nkosi: "What did you expect me to do? Keep quiet?"

Mthunzi: "That's all I asked you to do. That's what you're good at!!"

Nkosi: "Amahle is busy playing the lottery at school and you want to be mad at me?!"

Mthunzi: "You don't get to turn this around!! No!! She was not ready, clearly! She's been passed out for 4 minutes now. What will happen when she wakes up? You better pray to God she doesn't leave you."

Nkosi: "I can't lie. I couldn't continue, possibly taking her virtue and locking her in commitment with something she has no clue of."

Mthunzi: "Okay, Mr Kindness. What will you do when she leaves you heartbroken?"

Nkosi: "I'll move on." It will hurt like hell but I'd still feel better that she chose. Nothing is more horrible than being unable to choose. I know this first hand. She moved in her sleep, starting to wake up. My heart beat irregularly. Burdening me with regret. Why did I tell her? Now I had the potential of losing her. I can't lose her. Please don't make me lose her. She opened her eyes, staring at me. It felt like time slowed down, waiting for the verdict.

Thembisa: "Hi." My heart bled within, trying to compose itself.

Nkosi: "Hello." She sat up.

Thembisa: "I fainted."

Nkosi: "Yeah. You did. I'm sorry."

Thembisa: "Why?"

Nkosi: "I told you about my family."

Thembisa: "No, I mean why did you tell me?" I looked at Mthunzi, he was still pissed.

Nkosi: "I want you to have the choice I never had. I want you to know the real me. Every part of me. Every side. I wanted you to choose me because you knew all of me and not just the shiny part. The scary parts too. And if you didn't want to choose me then I'd have to accept it and move on but feel better knowing you could make that decision yourself."

Thembisa: "How do I know you'll never use your abilities on me?"

Nkosi: "That, you can never know. I can only assure you and you can only trust me." She sighed.

Thembisa: "You said you have the physical strength of a what?"

Nkosi: "Siberian Tiger. It's a metaphor. The purpose is to emphasize the strength rather than compare me to the animal. Although...I kind of turn into ...one. Sometimes." she stared at me blankly.

Thembisa: "What. The hell Nkosinhle. You turn into a what?" She shook her head, sighing. "This is insane. Are all royals, like this?"

Nkosi: "No. It's only my family."

Thembisa: "This is insane, don't you think it's insane?" She looked at Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "Very."

Thembisa: "I have never in my life been so shocked. Amahle is a seer. That's how she knows things are about to happen. My God, she's about to play the Powerball and win." Amahle's main life goal is to stress me. Why is she doing this?

Mthunzi: "Thembisa. Do you still want a relationship with the prince?" Why does he call me the prince? I'm right here.

Thembisa: "This may surprise you but yes." She looked at me. "I do still want a relationship with you. I'm scared. I don't think I've cursed as much as I did in this hour in my whole life. I don't think it has fully sunk in, I doubt it ever will but I heard your voice in my head. Oh my God, is that why you said you could summon me awake next time I over sleep?"

Nkosi: "Like I said before, I wouldn't do it because it's rude."

Thembisa: "Yes, that felt very intrusive and confusing. I just.. I trust you, okay? I trust that you won't hurt me. Should I?" She looked me in the eye, unblinking, waiting for reassurance. She was placing her faith in me and I would never let her down.

Nkosi: "Yes. You can trust me."

Mthunzi: "Nothing will come to harm you, Thembisa. I've known Nkosi all my life. He will only protect you from anything and if push comes to shove, from himself too. Let me leave you two to some privacy." He walked out the room.

Thembisa: "Come closer." I climbed on the bed next to her. "I don't care about your supernatural powers. I want you Nkosi. That's all."

Nkosi: "It's not supernatural, baby. There's only natural and unnatural. Supernatural is taking it a bit too far." She giggled.

Thembisa: "So what do you call your powers then?"

Nkosi: "It's abilities. It's something I am abled with. I don't know how else to explain it."

Thembisa: "So, a gift?"

Nkosi: "Feels more like a curse."

Thembisa: "Who else can whisper?"

Nkosi: "The only other person that could whisper was my grandfather. He is the one who named me Nkosinhle. He whispered in my ear when I was born and I can still hear his voice. It's not usual for abilities to be recycled in our family but this one was for some reason. The strength isn't recycled though, I'm the only one who's had it."

Thembisa: "Why don't your other sisters have abilities?"

Nkosi: "Honestly, I don't know. Amahle and I share both parents. I think that would be the reason."

Thembisa: "Your mother is also royal?"

Nkosi: "Both my mothers are, yes."

Thembisa: "Hm.." she cuddled into my chest. "Thank you for telling me. Giving me the chance to make a decision."

Nkosi: " Thank you for choosing me." I kissed her lips.

Thembisa: "I have questions."

Nkosi: "Ask away, baby."

Thembisa: "What do you use the physical strength for?"

Nkosi: "Nothing other than climbing trees, mountains. I haven't had to fight someone or something."

Thembisa: "And the whispering?"

Nkosi: "I don't use it much however it is very useful in meetings when people are being difficult for no reason. A lot of the time, other leaders mostly, undermine me and my opinions because I'm young. They have the old 'things have been working fine there's no need to change it' mentality. I try to use it less, I really try."

Thembisa: "I know. You're not a bad person Nkosi. You want people to think you are."

Nkosi: "I don't care what people think about me. You're the only person important to me. You make my life worth everything that I've endured before. I would choose you always, and sooner."

Thembisa: "Do you remember when you didn't like to talk?" I laughed. She stared at me.

Nkosi: "Okay. I'm keeping quiet."

Thembisa: "That's the very first time I've heard you laugh."

Nkosi: "I laugh with you all the time."

Me: "No, you usually smile or chuckle. Never a laugh. It sounds beautiful."

Nkosi: "You know what's more beautiful?" I blushed.

Me: "What?"

Nkosi: "The picnic I set up outside. Let's go." He pulled me up. I laughed, getting out of bed.

Me: "I thought you'd say me."

Nkosi: "You're gorgeous my love." He kissed me slowly. I held on to his shirt, his hands slid down my waist, to my hips, and held on my ass firmly. He groaned, pressing me into his body. I stepped back, still holding him, laying down on the bed. He climbed on top of me, my dress pulling up to my thighs, separating my legs with his knee. I held on his head, sucking his lips, my legs wrapped around his waist.

Me: "Baby." I panted. His hand snaked up my thigh, hooking his fingers on my panty. He suddenly stopped.

Nkosi: "I'm sorry."

Me: "No, don't stop."

Nkosi: "We can wait baby. I'm not in a rush."

Me: "I am. I'm in a very big rush Nkosinhle!"

Nkosi: "I want to make it special for you-"

Me: "You're special enough." I unbuttoned his shirt.

Nkosi: "Thembisa, I'm going to get you pregnant."

Me: "I don't care. Just-"

Nkosi: "My love, please."

Me: "What's wrong? I can see that it's hard."

Nkosi: "Give me a second. Why are you so strong?" I let him go. "We need to be responsible baby. I want to get carried away, I do but you've already expressed that your education is important to you. Also... I don't want to piss off your dad. Okay? Let's plan this."

Me: "Okay. You're right."

Nkosi: "Okay. So we can go to the picnic right? We'll have a nice meal and relax. What time do you want to go back?"

Me: "Go back where?"

Nkosi: "I uhm, the last time you were here, you overslept so you said, we won't. Not on weekdays."

Me: "I'll set an alarm. Let's go have a picnic." Men really confuse me. "Maybe later we'll go buy condoms. Come." I held his hand, walking out.

PRINCE POV\_

We sat on the blanket, at our picnic spot. Thembisa was tasting the chicken Alfredo pasta and enjoying it. I was in trouble.

Nkosi: "Baby, I just forgot to remind Mthunzi of something. I'll be right back." I got up, walking swiftly to Mthunzi's suite. I knocked on the door urgently. Why wasn't he answering? Finally he opened. I slipped into his room.

Mthunzi: "Who's chasing you?" He looked out in the passage.

Nkosi: "This is going to be my most uncomfortable conversation of all time."

Mthunzi: "I'm listening."

Nkosi: "You know I've been celibate since I came back from the States."

Mthunzi: "Oh Dear God."

Nkosi: "Yeah. Call him." He laughed.

Mthunzi: "What is the problem Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "What if I hurt her?"

Mthunzi: "Let her take the lead."

Nkosi: "How do you reckon that will help?"

Mthunzi: "What do you want me to do Nkosi? I can get condoms. There's nothing else I can help with." I paced the living room, scratching my head. What if I can't control myself? What if the condom doesn't work? What if it breaks? What if I hurt her?

Mthunzi: "Hey. Hey. Calm down. Look at me."

Nkosi: "In this state? Please Mthunzi, don't make me fight you." He laughed again. What about this is so amusing?

Mthunzi: "Nkosi. You're not going to hurt Thembisa. Calm down."

Nkosi: "You don't understand how I lose myself when I'm holding her. My body quickly betrays me."

Mthunzi: "Then let it. Thembisa knows who you are. Let yourself go with her. She'll be able to control you. Trust that. Go." I breathed.

Nkosi: "Okay." I walked to the door.

Mthunzi: "Go get her tiger." I turned to look at him. "I'm sorry, I had to say it." He laughed. I opened the door walking out. I had to trust myself not to hurt her. My body could listen to her. I hope.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 17

SASA POV\_

Our picnic was amazing. After eating, we drank some wine and relaxed watching the garden.

Me: "So tell me what's happening this weekend?"

Nkosi: "There's a reed dance, my mothers are organizing. Apparently I need to find a maiden." I giggled.

Me: "Why don't you tell them you already have one?"

Nkosi: "Then they'd want to meet you and ruin what we have."

Me: "Why do think they'd ruin it?"

Nkosi: "My parents have a way of getting under someone's skin."

Me: "Have you introduced a woman to them before?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Two years ago I met a woman that I was interested in. We dated for a short while. I wasn't quite sure about her. My mother asked me to invite her for dinner, I did. It was a mess."

Me: "They didn't like her?"

Nkosi: "No, they loved her but something made me really uncomfortable. I wasn't sure what. She was suddenly obsessed with being a 'good wife' and taking care of me. This confused me because I wasn't planning marriage yet. I'd been celibate since I came back from the States and she was pushing. I wasn't really comfortable, so I took her up the trail in the mountain. We didn't even reach the top before it started. She kept falling and bruising her knees. When we kept going, she fell again before Nkanyamba appeared. I knew then and there, I needed to get her out. So we turned back. When we reached the building, she couldn't breath properly. Things got quite bad, Mthunzi brought the healer to work on her. After that, I broke up with her. She's since moved to another city."

Me: "Who's Nkanyamba?"

Nkosi: "The snake you were afraid of. The one that was in front of you. They represent my ancestors."

Me: "So the snakes bite? Or harm? What?"

Nkosi: "If you're not a good person, they'd never let you get to the top where we were sitting. That is their alter. You sat down, they came to acknowledge you and left you alone."

Me: "And that means what?"

Nkosi: "They approve of you."

Me: "Snakes scare me."

Nkosi: "They would never harm you. Besides, we won't have to go up the Dlozi trail again. Come here." I placed my empty glass aside, moving closer to him. He kissed my lips.

Me: "Why don't you want to make love to me?" He smiled.

Nkosi: "I want to marry you first."

Me: "Why would that make a difference?"

Nkosi: "I said I love you. By loving you, I need to respect your family. More especially your father. I'm not his favorite person to begin with."

Me: "I understand. Thank you Nkosi. I got carried away. You just smell so nice, and you have this beautiful gaze. Look at your smile. I love seeing you smile. I love you too." He smiled, shy.

Nkosi: "Thank you."

Me: "Tell me, have you ever played a sport?"

Nkosi: "Absolutely not. Why would I?" I laughed uncontrollably. Oh this was going to be perfect.

Me: "Babe. I think I want us to play soccer-"

Nkosi: "I would do anything, absolutely anything but that."

Me: "Why?"

Nkosi: "I'd look foolish."

Me: "No you wouldn't."

Nkosi: "Baby, I don't chase things. You're quite literally the only person I've ever chased. Not a thing else."

Me: "And how will you play with the kids?"

Nkosi: "I'd stand on the side and kick the ball for them to chase it and bring it back."

Me: "Like a dog playing fetch? Nkosinhle, I would be so mad if you did that to my son." He laughed.

Nkosi: "They'd be playing, wouldn't they? I've got my workout routine, I'm fine."

Me: "You workout?"

Nkosi: "I run every morning. Three times a week, I do weight lifting."

Me: "So that's why you've got this concrete wall on your chest."

Nkosi: "I'm soft as a marshmallow."

Me: "If it was a marshmallow coloured wall, yes. I felt it the first time I bumped into you, when I was coming out the bathroom. Why didn't you even try to say hi? I was so scared I thought you'd shoot me." He smiled.

Nkosi: "I was trying to say hi, instead you ran away to your boyfriend." I laughed.

Me: "Mxim."

Nkosi: "Honestly. I didn't need to go to the bathroom. I just followed you. The minute you saw my bodyguard, you spiraled and ran away. It was adorable." He chuckled.

Me: "I was scared. Why would you take a bodyguard to the bathroom?"

Nkosi: "They go wherever I go unfortunately." He sighed.

Me: "But you said you have the strength of a... What was it? Siberian Tiger. Why do you need so many guards? In a full circle around you."

Nkosi: "The world doesn't know of our abilities and I'd prefer to keep it that way. Also, as strong as I am, I'm not immortal like my sister. At least I don't think I am. How would I know? I doubt it though and I'm not going to try and figure it out."

Me: "How did she find out? That she's immortal?"

Nkosi: "She committed suicide. I found her in her room, with her wrists bleeding. I found her dead. She was cold, stiff and turning grey. I held her in my arms only for a few minutes before she gasped a breath of air and opened her eyes. I didn't know what to do. She didn't understand what was going on. Her intent was to die. That's all she wanted and so she kept trying."

Me: "Do you know why she keeps trying?"

Nkosi: "She thinks maybe one day she'll run out of lives and she'll really die."

Me: "Is that possible?"

Nkosi: "I doubt it." I couldn't tell Nkosi about this morning. That I actually found her dead and saw her wake up. I have a feeling he won't be happy about it. Oh shit, he can hear my thoughts. I looked at him, he looked back at me. "What, baby?"

Me: "Can you hear my thoughts?"

Nkosi: "I'm not listening to your thoughts baby, I told you I wouldn't violate your privacy."

Me: "So you can just switch it off?"

Nkosi: "In a sense, yes. I redirect my focus on something else. Like my own thoughts. Then again, you'd know when I'm in your head. Apparently the headache that follows is blinding."

Me: "Who told you that?"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi. He wanted me to try it on him. He hated it."

Me: "Who else knows about you and your family?"

Nkosi: "From the outside? Only you and Mthunzi. The other royal families have suspicions but they can't prove it."

Me: "Are you close to the Biyela's?"

Nkosi: "Yes. They're very close to our family. Our fathers share business deals. They are invited to our functions and we too attend theirs. The friendship is centuries deep."

Me: "But you're not friends with Sibonelo."

Nkosi: "I'd rather drink paint." I laughed.

Me: "He can't be that bad."

Nkosi: "I wouldn't know and I don't care."

Me: "What about his brothers?"

Nkosi: "It could even be washing powder mixed in that paint, I'm not picky, I'd drink it."

Me: "Why don't you want friends?"

Nkosi: "I don't like people. You and Mthunzi are fine. Why would I need more people near me?" I sighed. "I'm happy, you brighten my life. I don't need anything else." I kissed him. I was starting to fall in love with Nkosi, actually I was already in love with him. Which is quite strange. Doesn't love take months to develop? I was attached to him and I don't ever want to let go. That scared me alot. I'd marry him even tomorrow.

PETUNIA POV\_

I was in Amahle and Sasa's room in the evening. Amahle had given me the Powerball numbers to play and I was waiting for 9pm to hit. Playing with my banking app really helped. Would this even work?

Petu: "Amy. Are you like a psychic?"

Ama: "No." She turned a page on her book.

Petu: "Are you sure this is going to work?"

Ama: "Yep."

Petu: "You're playing with me right?"

Ama: "Why would I do that?"

Petu: "Right. I'm just anxious." I put my phone aside. "Let's chat. You've been quiet for a bit."

Ama: "I'm reading."

Petu: "Okay, you can do that when you're alone. Where are you from?" She looked up at me with her beautiful orange eyes.

Ama: "Mountain Peak."

Petu: "You grew up here?"

Ama: "Yes." She looked back down at her book.

Petu: "I grew up eMoyeni. When I got to high school, all my friends wanted to go to Golden Crown. I didn't want to leave this beautiful city. Also, this is kind of the best university in the nation."

Ama: "Second best. The Phakamisa's have the best university in Golden Crown."

Petu: "Do you have any friends here?"

Ama: "Yes. Nothando."

Petu: "Who is Nothando?" She looked at the door. Someone knocked.

Ama: "That's her." The door opened and the girl who came to us at breakfast earlier, walked in.

Nothando: "What are you reading?"

Ama: "Am I alone?" Nothando looked at me.

Nothando: "Hi." Then back at her. "What are you reading." Perhaps, I should go to my room. I had some work I wanted to go over anyway.

Petu: "Uhm, I'm leaving Amahle. I'll see you later. Maybe when Sasa is back."

Ama: "Sasa is not coming back. She'll be back in the morning. Why are you leaving?"

Petu: "I have some work to do and I -" my phone buzzed. A notification. <Congratulations. You have won R7500 in your Powerball ticket.> I looked at Amahle. She stared back at me. "I have to go." I walked out the room, almost running to my own. I locked myself in and looked at the notification again. How was this possible? We had an ATM out by the parking so I walked straight there, I withdrew R4000, tucking it into my bra like I'm about to deal drugs. No one was around me so I don't know why I was so scared. Or shocked? I think I was shocked. I went back inside the building to Amahle's room, knocking on her door.

Ama: "Enter." I opened the door, walking in.

Petu: "Hey again." Her friend was gone.

Ama: "Hi." I took out the money, giving it to her.

Petu: "I don't know what the hell you did, but you did it. Here's your share. Thank you." My hand was shaking.

Ama: "I'm the last person in this province who needs money. It's yours."

Petu: "I can't keep all of this Amahle. That is not fair."

Ama: "It's very fair. You asked for it, I helped. That's all. It's yours."

Petu: "Okay. Then get dressed, let's go have a drink!"

Ama: "I don't go out but have fun. Please go Petu. My book is getting interesting." I didn't know what to say so I quickly hugged her and walked out. In my room I changed into a tight white mini skirt and a pink crop top. I wore pink slip on heels and took my bag, walking out. I'd have a drink at Zoulah's, the restaurant a few streets down. A part of me felt very guilty for leaving Amahle. Although she clearly told me to leave.

Zimmy: "Hey."

Petu: "Hi."

Fikile: "You're scarce."

Zimmy: "You going somewhere? You look hot."

Petu: "Yeah. Just a light dinner and a drink at Zoulah's."

Zimmy: "Alone? No ways. Join us. We're going to Tempa for a bit. Here's our ride." She held my hand to the car. Tempa was another restaurant pub place. We've only gone there once. We arrived at the restaurant, getting seated at a private table.

Zimmy: "Can I have a bottle of champagne please? Oh and a platter." The waiter nodded, walking away. "I haven't seen you in a bit."

Petu: "It's only been a day."

Zimmy: "Hm.. saw you hanging out with Thembisa." I knew this was coming.

Petu: "Yeah, she's cool."

Zimmy: "So... Did she tell you who her man was?"

Petu: "No. She didn't."

Zimmy: "She doesn't talk about him? His name? Anything?"

Petu: "I just think she'll tell us when she's comfortable Zimmy. I don't think they've been together for long. Maybe she's getting to know him before she introduces the guy to all her friends."

Zimmy: "You're right. She is quite like that. I'm just dying to know!"

Fikile: "Maybe she has a blesser. Have you seen that car that keeps fetching her?"

Zimmy: "Thembisa is way too responsible. She'd never do that." The champagne arrived with glasses.

Fikile: "Hehe. You don't know people wena. It's the innocent village ones that show you flames-"

Zimmy: "Let's not do this again Fikile. What do you have against people from the village? Come on, stop this. This is the last time I'm addressing this classist bullshit of yours. Thembisa is not the reason why Khaya is ghosting you. He's moved on. If anything, she's ghosting him." She opened the champagne, pouring into each glass.

Fikile: "Khaya isn't ghosting me. We're just giving each other space."

Zimmy: "Haha. Okay."

Petu: "Zimmy, why do you push Thembisa to Khaya so much? What's in it for you?"

Zimmy: "Khaya is my best friend. I've known him for over a year now. I know he's in love with her, he's just scared. He doesn't know how to commit. On top of that, Khaya is the type of person who wants to calculate outcome. He doesn't know how it would be, moving forward, being in a relationship. I just wish he would listen to me and drop the hoes. He would be so happy. Thembisa is a good woman." She handed me a glass.

Fikile: "I'm a hoe?"

Zimmy: "If the shoe fits I have extra laces I can borrow you."

Petu: "Zimmy. Why are you pushing Khaya to Thembisa?"

Zimmy: "Khaya will take care of her. He's young, he's rich, he has an influential family, he's got a very bright future with high chances of success. Thembisa needs a guy like that. He is so gentle with her. Unlike the boys in this city who'll be taking advantage of her. Thembisa is shy and inexperienced. She doesn't deserve to be swallowed by sharks like whoever the hell she's seeing. With Khaya, she will be safe."

Petu: "She's the only one that can make that decision. Khaya isn't even trying to stop whoring. He can't expect Thembisa to wait around for that-"

Zimmy: "Oh my God. You just gave me an idea. You're absolutely right."

Petu: "What?"

Zimmy: "Never mind. Anyway, what's new?"

Petu: "Nothing much. I'm just battling with an assignment. Think I'll be starting it tomorrow."

Zimmy: "Hmm. You did say you want to get on top of it this year."

Petu: "Yeah. Less drinking, more studying." I stared at the still full glass in my hand. I wonder what Amahle is doing? I don't even have her number. I don't want to disturb Sasa by asking her, it's at night and she's probably asleep. "I have to go."

Zimmy: "What? We just got here, you've barely taken a sip."

Petu: "I just realized I need to really start that assignment." I took out my phone calling a cab.

Zimmy: "Okay. Don't you want a take away or something?"

Petu: "No, I'll be fine. Goodnight guys." I got up from the table, walking to the door. Khaya was walking in with a group of friends. I didn't like him and he knew that. There was no need to pretend. I moved to the side, letting them pass. I checked my phone, my cab was almost here.

"Hello Petunia." I looked up and stared at Mngqobi. Oh my God.

Petu: "I uhm, Hello. Your Highness." I bowed. He chuckled.

Mngqobi: "That's for Sikhosana. I am just Mngqobi."

Petu: "I know. I'm sorry."

Mngqobi: "How are you?" I couldn't even breath.

Petu: "I'm fine."

Mngqobi: "That's...nice."

Petu: "Also you, how you are? How are you? I'm sorry." Oh fuck. I wasn't fumbling badly. He smiled.

Mngqobi: "I'm great."

"Mngqobi!!" Khaya called from a few meters away.

Mngqobi: "Hmm, it was nice seeing you again, Petunia." He walked away. I ran outside to the car. Finally able to breath. Mngqobi Biyela remembers me!! He knows my name!! I squealed in the backseat like a little baby. When I reached res, I could barely wait for the driver to stop before I left his cash and jumped out. I ran to Amahle's room, right before I knocked, the door opened. She walked back to her bed.

Petu: "Mngqobi knows me!" I breathed.

Ama: "Of course he does, he met you in the afternoon."

Petu: "No! He came up to me and called me by name!!"

Ama: "I'm confused."

Petu: "Amahle. He recognizes me. ME."

Ama: "Again, he met you earlier." I laughed, flopping on top of Thembisa's bed.

Petu: "He is so dreamy."

Ama: "Why did you come back?"

Petu: "I wanted to chill with you. I'm ordering take aways. We're having a girl's night in. Do you want to drink."

Ama: "I don't drink."

Petu: "Fine, I'll order juice for you. Vegan pizza?"

Ama: "Is there such a thing?"

Petu: "We'll try it." I silently screamed, pressing on my phone. "This has made my night. Mrs Petunia Biyela. I'm going to have such sweet dreams." I sighed. Amahle giggled.

Ama: "Okay. Tell me what he said." I sat on the floor, facing her.

Petu: "So, I was leaving the restaurant right? A group of guys were walking in. I looked down at my phone, checking how far my cab was and I heard his voice first. He said Hello Petunia." I imitated his voice. She laughed loudly.

Ama: "That is a creepy accurate imitation of his voice. Do it again." We laughed into the night like good old friends.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 18

PRINCE POV\_

I have been awake for an hour now, staring at my beauty. She was sleeping peacefully judging from the smiles on her face. I kissed her lips trying to wake her. She turned on her side, curling into my body. Again. I kissed her again, sucking on her lip.

Thembisa: "Hm.hm, Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Wake up."

Thembisa: "No." Then she's going to say I didn't wake her up.

Nkosi: "Yes, it's 6. You need to go to school." She held me tighter. Okay maybe another 30 minutes. I waited, watching her beautiful face. I didn't

have a lot to do today but I did want to go to the new res and check if everything was complete to the standards I had proposed. Mthunzi was happy with it, the only thing I needed to do was to change the name. It would've been called New Hope but I wasn't too happy with that, mostly because it fetches the reminder that hope was needed to begin with. If leadership did what they had to do for the citizens of their nation, hope wouldn't be needed. We'd be striving and conquering. I would struggle with a name, this one needs to help me.

Nkosi: "Baby." I kissed her nose.

Thembisa: "Nkosi man."

Nkosi: "It's 8." She opened her eyes, sitting up quickly. "I'm joking. Good morning." I smiled.

Thembisa: "I was enjoying my dream."

Nkosi: "Do you want to tell me about it?" I pulled her into my arms.

Thembisa: "No."

Nkosi: "Ouch." She giggled. "Let's get you ready for school."

Thembisa: "Okay." She kissed me, getting up. "I didn't bring clothes again, one of these days I'll go to school with your royal suit on." I laughed. How can I not love this person? I have never met anyone more funny.

Nkosi: "When I drop you off, pack a few clothes, I'll bring them here. Or I can have stuff ordered for you I just need your sizes."

Thembisa: "Most of my clothes are altered. I'm a 36 bottom but a small top."

Nkosi: "I have no clue what that means. I'll bring the tailor on Friday so they can make you something to wear."

Thembisa: "Is the dance on Saturday?"

Nkosi: "Yes it is. He's quick. He'll finish by 6am on Saturday morning."

Thembisa: "You work him to the bone, don't you?" I chuckled.

Nkosi: "No. He's only my tailor, so he only makes things for me. All my outfits are made weeks before anything. I have something new to wear every few days. It's only now that he's going to have to buckle up when he makes clothes for you."

Thembisa: "I don't need that many clothes baby. Let me shower." She went to the bathroom. I walked out the sliding door on to the deck to watch the sun rise on the mountains. At least now, life was coming together. For the first time, I found myself happy.

SASA POV\_

Nkosi dropped me at res.

Me: "The next time you come, I'll have a bag ready."

Nkosi: "Okay."

Me: "Goodbye baby."

Nkosi: "When am I seeing you again?"

Me: "On Friday."

Nkosi: "I'm going to suffer."

Me: "You'll be strong like a Siberian tiger. Goodbye baby." He laughed.

Nkosi: "You're silly." I kissed him, climbing out the car. I went up to my room, finding Amahle getting dressed.

Me: "Hey."

Ama: "Hello." Since I'd already showered, all I did was change into a blue and white dress. I fixed my hair.

Me: "Have you had breakfast?"

Ama: "No."

Me: "Let's go then." We made our way to the dining hall, passing Petu's room. We all got our breakfast and sat in our table. "So... Did you win the Powerball?"

Petu: "Yep."

Me: "What!?"

Petu: "She's good."

Me: "Indeed she is." I looked at Amahle. She smiled without looking at me.

Ama: "Petu bumped into Mnqobi last night." I gasped.

Me: "What did he say?" Petu blushed.

Petu: "He just said hello."

Ama: "Called her by name too." She took a spoonful of her granola and fruits.

Petu: "For someone who doesn't talk much, you have a lot to say today"  
We giggled.

Ama: "Will you be participating in the reed dance?"

Me: "Uhm. No. I'll just watch on the side."

Ama: "Why? You're a virgin."

Me: "I don't know anything about it. I can't just attend. Plus I'm not from your tribe. Isn't it like groups and stuff?"

Ama: "No. You can come with me on Friday. Petu?"

Petu: "I'm not a virgin."

Ama: "You can attend as a guest on Saturday."

Petu: "What do we wear?"

Ama: "Traditional clothes , I guess. I've never took notice what guests have on. We can go to eMakhunga for some shopping later today." I finished my porridge.

Me: "And me?"

Ama: "You're sorted."

Petu: "Our first shopping spree. I love it already. Thembisa since you weren't here yesterday, we had a girl's night in. Amahle, are you up for it again?"

Ama: "Yes."

Petu: "Great. We'll get food, drinks and do our assignments together."

Me: "I've never heard anything more perfect." I've found my people. No clubs, just nights in with a few drinks. I wasn't against drinking, I just didn't feel safe doing it outside. Zimmy walked in the dining hall. She never really comes here. I watched her get her breakfast and she sat with us at the table. I thought she was mad at me.

Me: "Hey."

Zimmy: "Morning." I stared at her unable to ask if she was still mad. Honestly this was childish. "I know I said I was angry yesterday but I'm fine. You deserve to privately enjoy your relationship before introducing him and going public. So I will respect that." Amahle stared at her with a cold look. Her eyes were really scary when she wasn't impressed with you.

Me: "Thank you Zimmy." After our breakfast, we walked to school, all four of us.

Thursday morning, I woke up, got ready for school. Today's outfit was a floral skirt that had a short slit up my knee, I wore it with a white crop top and my white sneakers. Yesterday was a good day but we couldn't go shopping because the day had been extremely long and we had our assignment date. Amahle was in the shower, I made up my bed, tidying up a bit.

Me: "Amy, I'm going to Petu then dining hall. You'll find us there." She didn't respond. I walked into the bathroom. "Amahle." Silence. I could see her standing in the shower but why wasn't she responding? "Babe?" I knocked on the shower door. Nothing. Now what do I do? Was she about to die again? What if she falls in the shower? I don't know much about immortality but how does it work when your neck breaks? I opened the shower door. Her usual orange eyes were now pure white, staring at nothing. She blinked, shaking her head.

Ama: "Did you call me?"

Me: "Yes. I was worried."

Ama: "I'm fine."

Me: "What was that? Your eyes?"

Ama: "This seems like a very intimate conversation in an intimate setting."

Me: "Right. I'll wait out in the room." I closed the door, going back to the bedroom. She came out wearing a towel. "I'm sorry, I was worried when you didn't respond, I thought you would..."

Ama: "Die? In the shower? That sounds painful." She looked through her clothes. "I guess brother finally let you in on our family secret." She pulled out a long sleeve top.

Me: "Yeah. He told me you were immortal."

Ama: "He doesn't know that I can also see. Nobody does. Well, except you now."

Me: "Like the Powerball numbers?"

Ama: "That's a very small part of it. I see things that will happen. Khaya loves you." I stared at her.

Me: "Why?"

Ama: "I don't know why. I just know that he does. He doesn't understand it. He's fighting it by being involved with everyone. He's scared he will turn into his father, mistreat you and neglect you like his dad did to his mother so he's trying to stay away from you."

Me: "Amahle I'm falling in love with Nkosi."

Ama: "I know. And that will kill him. Khaya that is."

Me: "What must happen now?"

Ama: "I don't know." She got dressed.

Me: "I don't want him to die. That would hurt. He's my friend and if I have to cut contact with him, sure I'd do that but I don't want him to die. That would be horrible." She shrugged, putting on her shoes. "What can I do Amahle?"

Ama: "I have no clue." She stood up. "Ready." I was now stressed.

Me: "Maybe I could tell Khaya that I'm seeing someone. Prepare him, you know?" She laughed.

Ama: "You dating doesn't worry him. It's the person you're dating. I'm hungry, let's go." She walked out, leaving me stunned.

In the dining hall, I had a toast and tea. I wasn't really hungry but also, this wasn't my problem. I can't be worried about Khaya. If he can't take care of himself, why must I? No. That shouldn't be my responsibility. My phone buzzed a message: <Morning my love. Can I get a kiss please?

I'm traveling to Mthinomkhulu in a few minutes.> I smiled, responding:  
<Come get your kiss baby.> I sent it.

Petu: "What time are your classes finishing today?"

Ama: "3:30." I read the new message he sent: <I'm outside.>

Petu: "Sasa?"

Ama: "3:45. She's gone at this stage."

Me: "I'll see you guys outside."

Ama: "Nope. See you at school."

Me: "Lunch time?"

Petu: "Call me." I took my bag, walking out the hall. I bumped into Zimmy at reception.

Zimmy: "Hey babe. I was waiting for you."

Me: "Really? Why? You could've found me at the dining hall?"

Zimmy: "Didn't think of it."

Me: "Okay. What's up?"

Zimmy: "I wanted to walk with you to school."

Me: "Uhm. Can you give me 5 minutes?"

Zimmy: "For what?"

Me: "I just need to attend to someone quickly." I walked out to the gate. The car door was opened as usual, I climbed in the car. "Hi baby."

Nkosi: "Hey." I kissed him. He pulled me on top of him. "You look gorgeous."

Me: "Me? Have you seen yourself? You're dressed in full regal attire and here I am sitting on top of you in a crop top." He chuckled. "You look so sexy." I kissed him again, slowly. He held on my ass, pulling me closer to him.

Nkosi: "Thank you and you're getting me turned on. This is very mean. I came to say good morning."

Me: "You said you're going to Mthinomkhulu?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Do you have any special place you want me to visit?"

Me: "The market is really nice. Well, if you're looking for veggies that is."  
He laughed.

Nkosi: "I love you. I wish you didn't have school so you could show me your village."

Me: "One day I will, Prince Nkosinhle Mehluli Sikhosana. I love you too. Goodbye."

Nkosi: "You don't want me to drop you at school?"

Me: "Yeah, I feel like I'm going to be a spectacle when I get off this car, so rather drop me near school."

Nkosi: "I embarrass you now?" He knocked on the window. The driver got in, driving the car toward school.

Me: "Never." I kissed him again. "Okay that's enough to last you the day."

Nkosi: "Thank you baby. Have a good day at school."

Me: "Enjoy your day at my village. If you get hungry BabMkhize serves the best sheep head."

Nkosi: "Thank you for the suggestion but it would take the entire nation to beg me for 70 days straight to eat anything's head." I giggled.

Me: "Bye baby." I kissed him one last time, getting out the car. I fixed my skirt before walking to the gate. Khaya's small Benz was parked by the gate. He stood outside, visibly sick. He stared at me and I at him. "Hey."

Khaya: "Hey? That's what you're going to say?"

Me: "Erh.. what is it now?"

Khaya: "What the hell Thembisa? HIM? He's fucking you in the car and you think that's okay? That's not you!! That's not what you deserve!"

Me: "What the hell Khaya!!"

Khaya: "Thembisa. What the hell are you doing with Sikhosana?" He hissed. My heart stopped.

Me: "That is not any of your business and if you value your life, you'll keep that to yourself." I walked away, he grabbed my arm.

Khaya: "Him?? Of all people? Are you serious?! You do know he doesn't give a shit about anything right? Not you, not your value, nothing!!"

Me: "Get your hands off of me and keep your tongue in your mouth about my business. I don't answer to you." I snatched back my arm, walking briskly to my first class.

## PRINCE POV\_

I wonder if this boy is going to be a problem. Thembisa can obviously handle him but I didn't want her to stress. What was his damn problem? I could tell he wanted to come confront me but he couldn't.

Nkosi: "Drive."

Driver: "Yes Your Highness." Our first stop was picking up Mthunzi from the new building where I'd dropped him to check on the painters. He climbed in the car sitting next to me, since he wanted to come to Mthinomkhulu with me.

Nkosi: "Your friend is harassing Thembisa. He knows she's with me."

Mthunzi: "What is his deal with you? You've never even spoken to him."

Nkosi: "No clue. My only link to him is his father."

Mthunzi: "What do you want me to do about him?"

Nkosi: "Nothing."

Mthunzi: "What if he goes public?"

Nkosi: "He would never want to hurt Thembisa."

Mthunzi: "Are you serious? That would make him her hero. If he goes public, the people will tear Thembisa apart and there's nothing you can do about it. He'll be her knight, standing there like a fucking idiot trying to prove that you don't care about her. And then take your place in her life."

Nkosi: "Thembisa knows that I care about her."

Mthunzi: "Nkosi, we can't control this. A scandal like this, dependent on how dirty he makes it, could hurt your name but it will definitely destroy hers. Something needs to be done."

Nkosi: "Don't harm him. Just, get a hold of the media houses. They must double check everything to be published."

Mthunzi: "The papers are the least of our worries. We have the internet."

Nkosi: "Then flag her name. Any post that mentions her name, have the account suspended. Immediately. Just do something Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Talk to him."

Nkosi: "I'm not giving him the time of day. We've never spoken before and I refuse to start now because he's jealous he lost an amazing woman. Fuck him."

Mthunzi: "No thanks, I'm married." I looked at him.

Nkosi: "What's wrong with you?" He laughed.

We arrived eMthinomkhulu in 4 hours. I hated being on the road for long, it was uncomfortable. Our first stop was at the Chief's home. Our cars drove into his compound and as expected, a line of women stood at the entrance, dressed identical.

Nkosi: "If one of them throws a leg to start a dance, I'm leaving."

Mthunzi: "Can you relax and let people entertain you?"

Nkosi: "Why must I be entertained Mthunzi? I'm trying to work. If I need to be distracted, I will ask."

Mthunzi: "Fine. I'll talk to them." He climbed off the the car first, walking to the chief to greet him. They shook hands, Mthunzi whispering in the Chiefs ear. Alot of nodding was involved. My bodyguard opened the door. I got out the car walking to greet the chief. Everyone bowed, including the chief. My bodyguards surrounded me as they usually did. After a formal introduction, we were led to the other building in his compound, it was a council hall. Honestly, I wasn't interested in this meeting because I was going to see Thembisa's father and I don't know what his reaction would be.

Chief: "This is my wife. Nokwanda. My two sons over here, Ntsikelelo and Mfundiso." I nodded. We walked into the council hall which was bigger than I expected. People sat in chairs, waiting. When I walked in, all stood to bow. We sat in front, my guards standing behind and in all entrances.

Chief: "Good morning to all. Today we have a special visit from our future King. It is an honor to have you visit our village, Your Highness."

He bowed. I noticed there was an air of hostility in the hall. These people didn't like me. This would have never bothered me before, I simply couldn't care less but these are Thembisa's people. Her friends and family. What happened here? My speaker stood up, walking to the podium. While she spoke to the people, I scanned through the crowd, not one member of Thembisa's family was here. The community was not interested in this speech. Or my presence. I turned to Mthunzi, whispering in his ear.

Nkosi: "Ask them what's wrong."

Mthunzi: "What?"

Nkosi: "They're unhappy. Ask them why." He stared at me.

Mthunzi: "That's not our business."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi, ask the people their problem." He sighed, standing up from his seat to walk to the speaker. She stepped aside, to give him a chance to speak.

Mthunzi: "Good morning community of Mthinomkhulu. We thank you for welcoming us into your village. My Prince has noticed that..." He looked at me. I nodded, edging him on. He wanted to roll his eyes, I know him. "He has noticed that, the community seems to be not happy. Whether it is his presence or there is a problem. If there is a leader who can shed light to what is the issue, maybe we can find a solution." The community looked at each other. Chief stood up.

Chief: "I think I speak for the community, when I say we are very blessed. Our members are most probably only in shock to receive such an honor."

Mthunzi: "I would like to hear someone from the community speak. About anything. Is there a problem we can solve? Sir. Please stand." The gentleman in blue overalls stood up, his cap in his hands. He couldn't look me in the eye.

Man: "Good morning Your Highness. We as a community are honored to have you." This is going to waste my time. I don't need someone to lick my ass, how can I help if I don't know what's wrong. I signaled a guard.

Nkosi: "Tell Mthunzi to call the lady with a navy headscarf. She looks angry enough to insult me." He nodded, going to Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "Ma'am, would you like to say something?" The woman came forward.

Woman: "With all due respect Your Highness. I find it quite difficult to understand how this village is your least visited. This is the first time in 7 years your family has come here. We have had to make dangerous means of electricity. All the promises made to build us better roads, have fallen flat. There is that dangerous lake that our children have drowned in. Three children have never surfaced. Probably at the bottom of that lake. Our husbands have to travel far to cities like the one you live in to work because there are no jobs. We are left alone and vulnerable to our children that have now become thugs. Honestly, as a community I feel you have failed us. There are billboards in highways with your family on it promising us a better life. Yet, we keep getting poorer."

Mthunzi: "Uhm." He looked at me. Now I must speak? Hell no. That is the most uncomfortable thing I can endure. Absolutely not. "We understand ma'am, your frustrations. However, our Prince only came back to the country four years ago but that isn't an excuse as it is still quite a long time to not visit. No matter how far. I don't know we can fix these but what we will do is try." What was he doing? That sounded like an excuse that people didn't want to hear. I stood, walking to him. He stared at me, hiding his smile. I know he fumbled on purpose. He thinks he's slick.

Nkosi: "Installing proper electricity will not be a problem. It can be done by end of next week. As for the roads, that will take longer. Job creation will take months if not years, so my immediate solution for that is security for the vulnerable households. Another immediate solution would be the lake. All of this, would be in motion by end of today. Is that something that would please you?" The woman bowed.

Woman: "Your Highness, as much as I am grateful and honoured to have you address us, I am yet to see the improvements to completely say we are pleased. We thank you." I sat back down in my seat. This was uncomfortable for me and I couldn't wait to get out of here...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 19

## PRINCE POV\_

The morning went well in the council hall, at least. After the meeting with the community, I could feel the energy was a bit more calm.

Mthunzi: "So we'll be driving up to the first business."

Nkosi: "Let's walk."

Mthunzi: "Walk? The sun is at its peak."

Nkosi: "I'm not complaining." I stood up, my guards surrounding as we walked out. "Can you have them move back a bit? I want to see the place."

Mthunzi: "You know you're acting very strange."

Nkosi: "Strange because I want to work?"

Mthunzi: "You usually work but from a distance away from the people. You don't like people."

Nkosi: "I don't. But I want to see where my future wife grew up."

Mthunzi: "That's sweet." He spoke to the guards, having them move back. "Have you decided on what you'd say to her father?"

Nkosi: "No."

Mthunzi: "I brought a few gifts, just in case."

Nkosi: "That won't work."

Mthunzi: "Can't knock it till you try it."

Nkosi: "What is the business here?"

Mthunzi: "Welding. He does gates, burglars and so on." We reached the yard.

Nkosi: "Where does he get his materials? His equipment? It looks outdated. Is he being safe? That looks dangerous."

Mthunzi: "We'll find out." The owner of the yard came out. The look on his face was shock and confusion. "Good Day." The man quickly bowed.

Him: "Your Highness."

Mthunzi: "We're here on a royal visit, we would like to know more about your business. Can we come in?"

Him: "I'd be honoured Your Highness and my Lord. Please, come in. I apologize for the mess. I wasn't expecting you. I would've come to the council meeting but only a select few were chosen." Oh? That was new. I didn't know people were selected to attend. I thought people who were available came. I walked around the yard, looking at his equipment.

Mthunzi: "Where do you get your material?"

Him: "A lot of it is donated my Lord. I buy some from a warehouse out in town."

Mthunzi: "How old is your equipment?"

Him: "Almost 8 years now. I buy it bit by bit. We've got ourselves quite a collection."

Mthunzi: "Is it safe?"

Him: "Not entirely. Only myself and son use it. The other workers have to wear protective gear and only assist." Probably why he doesn't have a right eye because he prioritizes other people before himself.

Mthunzi: "How is business going?"

Him: "Fairly okay. I'm looking to travel out as well, I have been talking to Mr Ntaka about transportation."

Mthunzi: "Hm Okay." He looked at me. I held the welding gun, inspecting it in my hand. This was at least 10 years old. Third or fourth handed. It would die down in a few months, 3 at most. This business was bleeding money rather than making it.

Nkosi: "What is your other business?" He started shaking, his mouth shut.

Mthunzi: "The Prince is asking you a question."

Him: "My wife sells food at the local school."

Nkosi: "Why are you lying to me?" He fell to his knees, crying.

Him: "I am sorry Your Highness. All I have done is out of desperation."

Mthunzi: "What do you want me to do?"

Nkosi: "Shut it down." I walked out.

Mthunzi: "Should I tell the Chief?" He followed me out the yard.

Nkosi: "He probably knows. The failure of this business brought that one about. What is needed is to revive this one. We can have newer equipment brought, and protective gear. If in 5 months he still chooses to continue the illegal dealings, He will be punished. What is the next business?"

Mthunzi: "Mrs Zondi, she makes dresses, curtains anything really." I sighed.

Late in the afternoon, the entire village was out following us.

Nkosi: "How will we get rid of all these people?"

Mthunzi: "You decided to walk, Your Highness. That's unfortunately the result."

Nkosi: "I can't bring the entire community with me to Thembisa's home."

Mthunzi: "I'll have them wait outside the yard. You'll go in with one guard."

Nkosi: "I don't need a guard. Thembisa's family don't have a reason to harm me."

Mthunzi: "I can't take that risk. I'll go in with you then. Here we are. This is our last stop for the day. You must be tired."

Nkosi: "I don't get tired but yes I wouldn't mind a glass of water." He smiled, looking at the guard.

Mthunzi: "Get a bottle of water from the car. The rest of you keep the community away from the gate. This distance is enough. Nobody comes in. Are we clear?" We walked in the gate. A young girl came out of the house. This must be Nele.

Nele: "Mama!!!" She screamed. The mother came rushing out. The father came around the back of the house. The second his eyes landed on me, I knew he didn't like me.

Mother: "Your Highness." She bowed.

Mthunzi: "Good day. Is everyone well?"

Xolani: "Good day."

Mthunzi: "We're here on a royal visit. We would like to know more about your business. May we come in?"

Xolani: "Yes."

Mother: "Please come in this way, Your Highness. My house will be blessed to receive you."

Mthunzi: "That would be lovely but we'd rather start with the farm, I believe? Can you give us a tour Mr Ntaka?"

Xolani: "Please come this way." I followed him down to his goats. His yard was quite big. I hadn't been on a farm before so I didn't know what to expect. "This is a first. Royals usually visit the chief. Not the homes of the community."

Nkosi: "I'd like to know more about my people."

Xolani: "I am not your people."

Nkosi: "I understand that I may have been disrespectful toward you on our first meeting. For that, I do apologize. I didn't know Thembisa then. I did not mean to disrespect you." He looked at me.

Xolani: "Is that why you're here? Seems an awful long drive to just come apologize. So what is it that you want? Why are you performing for the community? Did you discover some mineral in our land? A precious gem you could mine and steal from us?" Yes, your daughter. I wanted to say.

Nkosi: "No. My coronation is in a few months. Before then, I want to know who the people I would be serving are. I want to develop the villages and invest in their future."

Xolani: "Why? You don't need votes. You're already the chosen one. It's not like you need us."

Nkosi: "I don't."

Xolani: "Then? What is it that you want? People of your stature don't just come to the poor unless they want something from them. I don't buy this walk about."

Nkosi: "I understand those that came before me have disappointed you, this community. My family has let you down for generations. I plan to change that." He laughed.

Xolani: "They might buy it. I don't. I know you want something that will cost us. This is my farm that you want to see." He folded his arms. I looked at the goats that had a wooden fence around them.

Nkosi: "That one is sick?" He looked at me.

Xolani: "Yes."

Nkosi: "Have you figured out why?"

Xolani: "It's possible that it ingested a plastic. It will push it out by evening or morning."

Nkosi: "It will be dead by then. It was fed poison."

Xolani: "Have you had goats?"

Nkosi: "No."

Xolani: "Then how would you know that?"

Nkosi: "I just do. Are these your only animals?"

Xolani: "There's the chicken coup but that would be too untidy for you dressed like that."

Nkosi: "Please show me." He led the way further down. This is where Thembisa collects eggs in the morning to sell to her neighbors. I couldn't help but smile knowing that I can now vision her when she's home. I know what it looks like, how it smells. Her story telling will make even more sense to me. I entered the coup.

Nkosi: "What would make your businesses easier Mr Ntaka?"

Xolani: "Who said they're hard?"

Nkosi: "You don't need to experience hardship in order to deserve ease. What can make it more efficient?"

Xolani: "Nothing." I expected that he wouldn't accept any help. I was not surprised or offended. Mr Ntaka was doing quite well for himself. Possibly better than most businesses in his village. This was a man who was good in business.

Nkosi: "Is there anything that you feel I can do for the community then? Something that would help them improve?"

Xolani: "Better roads. The ones we have ruin our cars. The electricity is unsafe as well."

Nkosi: "Fortunately this was brought up in the council meeting earlier. I do plan on fulfilling those promises. Can you tell me about the lake? Something about children drowning there?"

Xolani: "Seven children have drowned there. Only 2 bodies were recovered."

Nkosi: "I was told only 3 bodies were not discovered."

Xolani: "It's five. The other two are at least 10 years old. The families have since moved away."

Nkosi: "Hmm."

Xolani: "There's no way of getting into the lake. That's the one promise you won't be able to keep. Unless of course you're willing to donate 100 thousand to drain it." That sounded like a challenge but it couldn't be because he knew money was far too easy for me.

Nkosi: "Of course. Perhaps build something that can create jobs for the village in its place."

Xolani: "We can only hope and see."

Nkosi: "Thank you for welcoming me in your home and business, Mr Ntaka. My tour of your village was one of the first that I've actually enjoyed. I do believe that we will work diligently together in developing it." ...

SASA POV\_

I hadn't heard from Nkosi all day long and I was quite anxious to know how his visit was going. Maybe my mother or Nele spotted him somewhere in the village. I know my mother loves attending things or sometimes gossiping with neighbors. I'll have to call them later but I can't ask, they'll have to spill. Otherwise I'll just wait for Nkosi to tell me even though he probably wouldn't know my family. I walked to the school gate where Amahle was waiting on me with Petu.

Me: "Sorry I'm late guys. Do you think the shop is still open?"

Ama: "It is. I called a cab." A black BMW parked in front of us. This is definitely not a cab. Amahle and I got into the backseat, Petu in front.

Me: "Do you perhaps know what's happening in the village?" I whispered. She looked at me and smiled.

Ama: "No but he's not coming back today." She whispered back.

Me: "Why?"

Ama: "I don't think he's done." I sighed.

Me: "I guess I'll see him tomorrow."

Ama: "Saturday. You're with me tomorrow."

Me: "You're going to upset him."

Ama: "That's my job." She smiled. We arrived at a small boutique in a wealthier side of town. Amahle led the way inside it. Petu looked confused. The shop assistant followed Amahle immediately.

Amahle: "Please don't." The assistant walked away quickly. "This is nice." She picked out a dress.

Petu: "Amahle this place is expensive." She whispered.

Amahle: "What do you mean?"

Petu: "The dress you're holding costs over 15 grand. I don't have that kind of money." Amahle smiled, looking for a size.

Amahle: "Why are bigger sizes not on display?" She asked the assistant.

Assistant: "I- we- didn't thin-"

Amahle: "I want a large for this dress." She gave her the item and moved on. "This is nice." She picked up a skirt. She just walks around a shop saying this is nice and buying it? To be a King's last born. Petu was visibly shaken. I would be too if I didn't know Amahle was a princess. This shop was intimidating.

Assistant: "Here is a size large, prin-"

Amahle: "Thanks." She took the dress. "Let's fit this on, Petu."

Petu: "Amahle, I can't."

Amahle: "Honestly, it's not gonna bite you. Put it on and see how it fits." Petu took the dress, nervous as hell, walking into the fitting room.

Me: "How long will it take her to figure out who you are?"

Amahle: "Probably years at this rate." I smiled.

Me: "Will you tell her?"

Amahle: "Yes. Petu is a loyal friend. Besides, how will I explain Saturday when I'm sitting next to the King?"

Me: "Right." I walked around the shop, looking at the clothes. "How is he?"

Amahle: "My dad? Ruthless." I looked at her. "I'm not the type of daughter that acts blind to bullshit. He's a good father to me but shit to everyone else in the world."

Me: "Is that why you wanted me to watch the Game of Kings series?"

Amahle: "No I wanted you to watch it so you can dump Nkosi." I stared at her. "What? My family will make you miserable but I see you're determined and in love so you'll see for yourself."

Me: "Surely they can't be that bad." She pulled up her sleeves.

Amahle: "Really? I'm the richest kid in this country and this is what I do?" I shivered. Is that how bad they are? "At least Nkosi actually loves you so you might be safe." Petu walked out the fitting room.

Petu: "Guys."

Me: "You look so beautiful."

Amahle: "Do you like it?"

Petu: "It's gorgeous. I love it. One day when I'm successful, I'd love to own something like this." She twirled in front of a mirror.

Amahle: "Great. Now it's your turn."

Me: "Me? I don't know Amahle."

Amahle: "Your outfit is easier. Since you'll participate, the majority you'll need is beads. The skirt can be made by the tailor. The beads are in that area." I went to check the section. The assistant came to help me. She was nice shame, I can only imagine working for this family.

Me: "Which one do you suggest?"

Assistant: "For the reed dance? This one."

Me: "Will you be attending?"

Assistant: "Unfortunately not. My sister will be." She took out the beads, wearing gloves on her hands. You'd swear she was holding expensive jewelry.

Me: "Amy, what do you think of this?"

Amahle: "Perfect. Add these three as well. Please bag everything up. Including the dress."

Assistant: "Yes, my princess." Amahle turned to me.

Amahle: "Done. Do you want to go to dinner?"

Me: "Yes." Petu walked to us. "We're going to dinner."

Petu: "I'm starving. Let's go-" the assistant took the dress to pack in a paper bag. "What is she doing? Sisi, I'm not taking that." The lady worked mechanically, ignoring her. "Miss, hello? I can't pay for that."

Amahle: "Don't worry Petu. My dad will pay."

Petu: "Amahle I can't expect from you. No. I refuse it. It's too much."

Amahle: "It's literally peanuts. Trust me. I barely use my allowance."

Petu: "That doesn't matter. It's still too much."

Amahle: "So what are you going to do then because the dress is leaving the shop?"

Me: "Please put her out of her misery." I chuckled.

Amahle: "Maybe when we're sitting down." I took the shopping bags, we walked out the shop to the car. Petu was not taking it well. She was honestly feeling bad. Truly I understood exactly what she was feeling. Except she didn't even know who she was friends with.

## PRINCE POV\_

I couldn't leave the village of Mthinomkhulu yet because it had been too late for me to go to the school. When I left Thembisa's home, I just needed time out. The entire village was waiting for me and I didn't know what to do. Fortunately, I had Mthunzi. He did suggest we walked back to the Chief's home to lead the crowd away from the Ntaka home. At the Chief's home, he addressed them and we left for town. There was a

guesthouse, he had secured. It had been cleared for the night. I'd be leaving in the morning after the school visit. Finally, we got to sit down and have a meal before retiring to bed. Mthunzi was done with me. I'd made him walk around a village all day, I know he needed to rest. It was 3am when I got out of bed and slipped on my clothes. I knocked on his door. He opened, staring at me with an unimpressed expression.

Mthunzi: "I'm never coming here again."

Nkosi: "That's good and well but we have to go."

Mthunzi: "It's 3 in the morning Nkosi. School opens at 8!"

Nkosi: "Get dressed. I'll wait in the car." I walked out to the car. The driver was also waiting. Half the guards were sleeping as I'd ordered and the others awake to keep guard. Mthunzi came out the house.

Mthunzi: "I don't like you."

Nkosi: "I know." We climbed in the back, the driver driving away.

Mthunzi: "Where are we going Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "The lake obviously."

Mthunzi: "To do what there?"

Nkosi: "There's only one thing inside the lake that is of value."

Mthunzi: "They're dead. We already said we'd drain that stupid lake. They won't be any less dead in 7 weeks time."

Nkosi: "Well, I can't leave knowing children are rotting at the bottom of a lake."

Mthunzi: "I can't fucking stand you." He hissed, staring out the window. We drove into the village, going to the lake, parking beside it. I got out the car. "So what? You're going to conjure them out?" I took off my clothes. "Oh fuck no. Nkosinhle!!"

Nkosi: "Can you relax?"

Mthunzi: "Are you insane?!!! My job is to keep you alive and you want to jump into a deadly lake!? What's wrong with you?!"

Nkosi: "I'm a good swimmer, I can stay underwater for a bit longer than most humans."

Mthunzi: "Yes but you're not a fucking fish!! You can still get stuck and drown." I walked to the water. "Nkosinhle!!" He screamed. I jumped into the lake.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 20

PRINCE POV\_

This lake was huge and dangerously deep. The first four bodies took four hours to find. The problem was the last body. I couldn't find it anywhere. I went up for a breath of air before going back down. A lot was down here. A few cars or remainders of. Metal, poles, dirt. A lot of dirt. I couldn't go further down than this. It was already dark down here and it would quite futile to keep trying. Mthunzi was right, I might get stuck and drown. I swam up but I slipped and I couldn't move. Shit. My leg was stuck and I was sinking, losing air. I couldn't panic because I would go down quicker. I tried bending over to loosen my foot. What was down here? I slowly moved my feet, carefully twisting it and pulling free but then plunging me down further. Now I had to fight, I couldn't be calm while debris fell on me. With all my might I pushed the large object off me and quickly swam up to the surface before I didn't have enough oxygen. I emerged out the water and took a deep breath then swam to the land.

Mthunzi: "What happened?"

Nkosi: "Can't find it." He gave me a towel.

Mthunzi: "You've been down there for two hours looking for this last one. You can't go back in there Nkosi. It's already mid morning."

Nkosi: "You're right. Also, my skin feels disgusting and slimy. The lake is extremely deep and it's dark halfway in. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't go further." I looked at the four badly decomposed bloated bodies.

Mthunzi: "Should I call the Chief?"

Nkosi: "No. The community leader."

Mthunzi: "Okay, so we leave the bodies here so long?"

Nkosi: "If someone even tries to throw them back in the water, I'd burn them alive." I got in the car, him next to me.

Mthunzi: "You do know people will be curious to know why you did so much for this specific village?"

Nkosi: "People are curious when I walk into a building. It's nothing new." What I needed was a scrub. A quick one because I didn't feel like being in water for long. Swimming for six hours was enough. Having to come up for air a couple of times then going back inside was enough. The car stopped upon Mthunzi's instructions. He climbed out, walking to the gate of the community leader's home. I could hear him from the car.

Mthunzi: "I would suggest perhaps taking the police with you. We managed to retrieve four of the bodies in the lake. They are in bad condition and it wouldn't be ideal for the families to see them like that."

Leader: "That's impossible."

Mthunzi: "The bodies are currently on land. We can go to check. Unfortunately the fifth one can't yet be found. Hopefully when the lake is drained, we'll have a better chance at finding it."

Leader: "I'll follow in my car. I have to see this myself." He called his neighbor. Mthunzi came in the car.

Nkosi: "I need to get dressed Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "That's your problem Nkosi. I didn't tell you to jump in a lake. Here are your clothes." I stared at him. "We're just showing them the bodies and leaving. You'll be clean in an hour." I sighed. We drove back to the lake with two cars behind us. The community leader didn't believe this and so he brought an audience. I didn't have time for this. At the lake, Mthunzi addressed them. The bodies were covered with sheet.

Leader: "How did you do this?" Mthunzi looked at me, still in the car. I'm not getting out. I've done enough for the day.

Mthunzi: "I'm sure you can take it from here. The draining of the lake might start in a few weeks. Perhaps then we can find the last body. Good day." He got in the car, next to me and we left.

Mthunzi: "You make my life difficult but that was a good thing you did there. That was incredible." It almost cost me my life too but I would never tell him that. He would never let me do anything ever again.

SASA POV\_

Friday midday, I was so worried. I hadn't heard from Nkosinhle since he left here. What did they do to him? Not to mention, when I called dad last night he was cold. He didn't seem to be in a mood to talk. I dialed Nkosi's number again. This time he picked up.

Nkosi: "My love."

Me: "Finally! I've been trying you since last night."

Nkosi: "I'm sorry baby. It's been a hectic day and a half. I'm on the way back now. I'll be in the city in about three hours."

Me: "Okay. Please come see me."

Nkosi: "Of course baby. See you soon." I hung up, walking to the soccer stands. This was our hang spot now. I sat next to Amahle, who was reading her book.

Amahle: "Did you see the news?"

Me: "No. What happened?"

Amahle: "Check the news."

Me: "I don't even know where I'd check the news Amahle. What am I looking for?"

Amahle: "Your village." She turned a page on her book. One thing about Amahle, she was not of many words so that was all I'd get out of her. I took out my phone searching my village. Headlines: Bodies of four children have been discovered in Lake Mthinomkhulu. I looked at Amahle then back at my phone to read. "In the early hours of Friday morning, the community leader was called to the scene where the bodies of four children were laying on the ground next to the lake they had drowned in. These are the children that had drowned in the years and have never surfaced. This discovery comes the morning after Prince Nkosinhle Mehluli Sikhosana has visited the village. The Prince had

been alerted of the danger of the lake to which he promised to attend to immediately. Only one body remains undiscovered and it is said the lake will be drained in the next coming weeks. The plans for it are still inconclusive." I stared at Amahle.

Me: "He didn't."

Amahle: "He obviously did." She sighed.

Me: "That lake is so dangerous Amahle."

Amahle: "He's a very good swimmer." My hands were shaking as I dialed my father's number. Did he hear this? Obviously. News travel fast in the village. Especially now that it was in national news.

Xolani: "Hello."

Me: "Hello Tata. How are you?"

Xolani: "I'm well my child, how are you?"

Me: "I'm okay. I just saw the news tata."

Xolani: "You're supposed to be in school."

Me: "It's lunch time tata. What's happening there?" He sighed.

Xolani: "The Prince was here."

Me: "I saw that."

Xolani: "I'm not yet sure what he wants but I know he wants something. Why would anyone go into a lake that has taken lives?"

Me: "Oh tata. I'm sure he's only trying to help."

Xolani: "Thembisa, no one ever tries to help the poor. Especially people like him. He has all the money in the world but instead he sends his guards in there to retrieve bodies of children who died years ago? Why?"

Me: "He didn't send his guards. Tata, you need to believe that there are good people in the world."

Xolani: "Oh I believe that my child. I just know he isn't one of those good people. One day, this village will lose something of value to him. And we won't be able to do anything about it."

Me: "Did you see him?"

Xolani: "Yes. He was here. He apologized for being disrespectful. I know he didn't mean it and so that means you told him to." I kept quiet.

"Thembisa, what is this man to you? Why is he suddenly so interested in our village? In you?"

Me: "Tata."

Xolani: "I told you to stay away from him." I couldn't even answer him because what I wanted to say would break his heart. I can't stay away from Nkosi. I don't want to. He wasn't a bad person. I don't care what anyone says. "No King would compromise his life for free Thembisa. Understand that." He hung up. Petu joined us, sitting next to Amahle on the grass. When Amahle told her last night who she was, she kind of went silent. I was worried about her but Amahle was her usual unbothered self. Right now, I couldn't deal with anyone else's problems. The man I've loved all my life hated the one I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. I know there was no changing my dad's mind.

Amahle: "Petu, Do you want to go for ice cream?" Petu looked at her but quickly avoided her eyes.

Petu: "Yes."

Amahle: "Are you going to treat me differently now?"

Petu: "You're a princess."

Amahle: "Yes, and I'd appreciate the anonymity. I don't like being treated differently. We're friends. Can we continue like we have the past few days?"

Petu: "Why did you tell me?"

Amahle: "Apart from you seeing me seated next to your King tomorrow, you're my friend. You deserve to know."

Petu: "This is too much for me. I'm going to try to be normal but it'll be hard. I was raised to be respectful of your family."

Amahle: "Hm. So can we go?"

Petu: "Yes. Sasa?"

Me: "Yeah. I've got three hours to spare." We got up.

Amahle: "We'll wait for you at the gate."

Me: "Why would you need to-" Khaya walked up to us. Petu and Amahle walked away.

Khaya: "Sasa."

Me: "Hello Khaya."

Khaya: "Look I'm sorry about yesterday morning. I just..." He scratched his head. "I know I've been an unstable piece of shit since you've known me but Thembisa you need to understand that I just didn't want to hurt you. The minute I saw you, I knew I wanted you in my life. I know I needed you. I just didn't know how to... How to have you."

Me: "Where is this going Khaya?"

Khaya: "What I'm saying is, I'm willing to give you all of me. I want to try this relationship thing. Without any hold backs, no other women, no lies. Just you and I."

Me: "Khaya, I can't -"

Khaya: "Sasa please. I'm begging you. I don't care what happened between you and Sikhosana. I just need you and me to try."

Me: "How do you know it's him?"

Khaya: "My father works for him. Of course I know his cars. I also know how cold and unfeeling he is. That's not who you want in your life, Thembisa."

Me: "I think that's exactly who I want in my life Khaya." He stared at me.

Khaya: "Thembisa." I could feel the emotion in his voice but there wasn't anything I could do for him. He pulled me close to him, his forehead on mine. "Please. I will never disappoint you. I swear." I pulled away from him.

Me: "I'm sorry Khaya."

Khaya: "Thembisa. You can't do this."

Me: "No, you can't do this. This is not fair Khaya. You've been enjoying yourself for almost three months, now that I've found someone I like you want to ruin it? No. Don't be like that. I never said anything when I slept in your spare room while you fucked girls in your own. I didn't even say anything when you rejected me. I kept even more quiet when you

continued to pursue people in my circle. Fikile to be specific. Now I can't be happy because you don't like my boyfriend?"

Khaya: "Boyfriend?" He chuckled. "Do you know Sikhosana? Thembisa, do you actually know that guy? Boyfriend? Please be serious. There's nothing he would want from you. He can only be using you." I pulled my arm from him. "Thembisa."

Me: "Stay the fuck away from me. I do not want to see you again Khaya." I walked away.

## PRINCE POV\_

We drove into the city around 4 in the afternoon.

Mthunzi: "I'll wait for you in the office."

Nkosi: "For what now? I have my Friday off."

Mthunzi: "Hehe. You can't have today off. First of all, your father is seething. Secondly, tomorrow is the reed dance."

Nkosi: "None of these are my problem."

Mthunzi: "I wish I could agree with you but the King wants to see his son in the flesh and I'm not going anywhere near him without you."

Nkosi: "And this means I can't spend time with Thembisa tonight?"

Mthunzi: "I woke up at 3 to swim for six hours, the very least I deserve is the warmth of my woman."

Mthunzi: "You want your father to follow you eNtabeni? Please, because if that's your plan, tell me now so I can skip town."

Nkosi: "Mxim." I stared out the window. The car drove into the office parking.

Mthunzi: "See you soon, golden fish." He climbed out the car. The driver took me to res. I sent Thembisa a message: <Please come outside baby.> She read the message and didn't respond. I felt my heart pain uncomfortably. What was wrong now? I was only two minutes from her so I had to be patient. The car parked in its usual spot. The driver got out, waiting outside. Thembisa came out the gate, climbing into the backseat next to me.

Nkosi: "Hi baby."

Thembisa: "Hey."

Nkosi: "What's wrong?"

Thembisa: "How was your trip?" Although I appreciated her not lying to me but why was she avoiding my question?

Nkosi: "It was nice. You have a nice village."

Thembisa: "Hm. I saw the news." This wasn't the reason she was unhappy.

Nkosi: "I didn't know they'd call the papers. That's not why I did it."

Thembisa: "I know."

Nkosi: "Why are you upset?"

Thembisa: "How was everyone?" I pulled her on top of me.

Nkosi: "Please tell me what's wrong?" She curled into my chest.

Thembisa: "My dad doesn't like you." This I knew. "He says you want something."

Nkosi: "He's right." She looked at me. "I want you."

Thembisa: "I'm serious Nkosi. He is currently very upset with me. Somehow he knows I've been communicating with you. He wants me to stay away from you."

Nkosi: "Don't worry about your dad. He'll come around." Most likely not. "I understand why he's skeptical."

Thembisa: "Skeptical Nkosi? He's angry."

Nkosi: "What do you want me to do?"

Thembisa: "Nothing. The more you do, the more he will be suspicious of you." And the more you'll be suspicious too. My love was starting to doubt me. Something that I didn't think would happen. Something I didn't know how to handle. The worst part was that I couldn't spend time with her this weekend as I wanted to. That would possibly help but I couldn't piss my father off any more than I have already. As much as I wish I could stay like this for the rest of the night, I had a duty to do.

Nkosi: "Have you ever thought about eloping?"

Thembisa: "What's that?"

Nkosi: "Running away with the person you love, get married and start a life away from everyone you've ever known."

Thembisa: "No. I don't think I could." I kissed her head.

Nkosi: "I know my love. Neither could I. I can only wish." We sat in silence for some time. It wasn't even 10 minutes before my phone rang irritating me to no end.

Thembisa: "Answer your phone."

Nkosi: "I don't want to."

Thembisa: "Please Nkosinhle. I can't take more drama."

Nkosi: "Are they bothering you here?"

Thembisa: "Not really." My phone rang again. I took it out to answer.

Nkosi: "Yes?"

Mthunzi: "Your father is sending the army to come fetch you." Thembisa jumped to her seat.

Nkosi: "I'm coming." I hung up. "I'm sorry baby. Mthunzi is joking. He's not going to send the real-" I listened carefully. "I have to go."

Thembisa: "I'll be with Amahle. I'm participating in the dance. I'll see you probably tomorrow."

Nkosi: "I'm looking forward to it. Goodbye baby." I kissed her lips. She got out the car, walking into the gate. The driver got in his seat.

Nkosi: "Drive." Just as he started the car, the army tank crept behind the car. What the fucking hell is wrong with him? I called Mthunzi. "What the hell!!!"

Mthunzi: "I told you."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi you knew exactly where I was!!!"

Mthunzi: "Yes and I tried to cover for you but he thinks something is wrong. He thinks you died in that damn lake. The media is all over it and he can't get hold of you. There was nothing I could do." I hung up. My father was something else and it was pissing me off. It's not like I was a child that needed babysitting. After picking Mthunzi up, we drove to the palace. My mood was in the mud being eaten by pigs now. Not only was

my woman upset, I couldn't even enjoy time with her. Now this? How fucking ridiculous.

Nkosi: "The army? Seriously??"

Mthunzi: "I asked you not to go into that lake."

Nkosi: "I'm alive, am I not!!"

Mthunzi: "Why are you angry at me? I didn't tell him where you were and that on its own will earn me a tongue lashing."

Nkosi: "Mxim!"

Mthunzi: "We need to be patient with him Nkosi. You're his only heir. Any form of danger near you stresses the crap out of him."

Nkosi: "Does that warrant this?? Look behind us!!"

Mthunzi: "Yes, that was dramatic. Fully agree. However, let's be honest. You weren't going to go home if he didn't send them."

Nkosi: "Mxim." I stayed quiet the rest of the way home.

We drove into the palace. I got out the car, walking inside the house. My father was waiting in the foyer. He was so pissed I wanted to laugh.

Nkosi: "Father-"

Sikhosana: "Mehluli."

Nkosi: "You called me home."

Sikhosana: "I DRAGGED you home because you don't have the decency to come address me yourself!! I've been trying to get hold of you all day long! What the hell were you thinking jumping into a filthy lake to fetch dead bodies? DEAD DECOMPOSING BODIES!!! What the hell's wrong with you Mehluli!!!" He shouted. "You're the future King!! This is way below your standards and even below that of your guards and advisor!! Why would you do something so stupid! You're not leaving this house again, do you understand me? That tank will follow you everywhere. You want to act like a child? I'm treating you like one. Test me." ...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

## Chapter 21

### SASA POV\_

After having dinner, we were chilling with Petu in our room she preferred it that way so that Amahle can be in a comfortable environment. Petu was super considerate even besides knowing Mahle was a princess.

Amahle: "A car will be here to fetch you at 9 Petu. Since you'll be attending as a royal guest, you might be sitting with people you don't know but in a private setting where you can fully enjoy the celebration. Are you okay with that?"

Petu: "A royal guest? You're kidding!"

Ama: "I do not kid."

Petu: "I don't know Amahle. Who will I talk to?"

Ama: "You can bring your sister."

Petu: "Are you serious?!" She squealed, "let me go fetch my phone and tell her." She ran out to her room.

Ama: "I take that as a yes. Will you be back before 6?"

Me: "Me? I'm going with you today, aren't I?" She looked at me. "Amahle?"

Ama: "You need to be back before 6." My phone beeped a message. I read it: <One normal night away from everything we know?>

Me: "I don't know Amahle."

Ama: "When you arrive at 6, they will test you and you will participate."

Me: "Won't I miss out on anything?"

Ama: "Singing and dancing mostly. The king will come to address us and talk about how proud he is and that he has a son, who is looking for a wife. Sadly for him, the son will already be with his wife so he's basically wasting his time."

Me: "Won't he be mad at me?"

Ama: "He doesn't even know you. A lot of girls will arrive on Saturday because they're coming from all villages in the province."

Me: "Okay. So you think I should go."

Ama: "Yes. He needs you." Petu came back in. Her phone on loud speaker.

Petu: "Yes Siza. We'll be guests."

Siza: "Who's guests Petu?"

Petu: "I got an invitation and all I need is you to come with me. That's it. No questions."

Siza: "Fine. What time?"

Petu: "We leave at 9."

Siza: "Okay then. See you then." She hung up.

Ama: "Maybe you should go to her house and leave from there tomorrow, the car will pick you up there. I'll be leaving for the night soon."

Petu: "Okay. Then I guess I should pack. I'll see you ladies tomorrow. Good luck okay?" I hugged her, she hugged Amahle and walked out. I sighed replying to the message: <Okay baby.> Sent it.

Ama: "Don't be nervous. I wouldn't let you go if there was something bad."

Me: "Right. I'm just nervous."

Ama: "Don't be." She held my hand. Her hand was freezing cold, I flinched.

Me: "Why are your hands so cold?" She shrugged.

Ama: "Always are."

Me: "Okay but you'll be out in a bush all night. You're freezing already."

Ama: "I don't get cold."

Me: "Will you be okay? Tonight?" She smiled.

Ama: "Without you? Yes."

Me: "That's not what I mean."

Ama: "I know. There's plenty of women there. My guards on standby too."

Me: "Okay."

Ama: "Tell him to bring you eManzini before 6. I'll have ugogo waiting for you. She'll take you in to get tested, once you're done, you'll join us."

Me: "Alright. eManzini you say." I read the new message in my phone: <Can't wait to see you. I'll be there at 9pm.> I smiled.

## PRINCE POV\_

My father was truly senile if he thought he could keep me inside this house. Ordinarily I wouldn't go against him but for the mere fact he treats me like a 2 year old is enough for me to act like one. I sat with them at the dinner table. My mothers discussing and happy with their planning. My sisters were here, unbothered about anything. I ate only a bit of my food. My father was watching me closely as if I'd disappear in front of his eyes.

Sikhosana: "Mehluli." I sighed, looking at him. "I'm only trying to protect you. I don't know why you believe in this good Samaritan persona so much. You're not an ordinary human. You are royalty. The highest of them all. Being kind can only get you in trouble. People will disrespect you. You were named Mehluli to defeat all others and you did. Why do you want throw that away in a dirty lake?"

Nkosi: "I was also named Nkosinhle. It's strange how you completely erase my first name from your vocabulary."

Sikhosana: "That is not who you are-"

Nkosi: "That is what the ancestors named me. You don't get to choose."

Sikhosana: "I am your father. I have lived in this world they haven't lived in. I know what's good for you!"

Nkosi: "How would you know what's good for me? You dictate my entire life-"

Sikhosana: "I'm grooming you to be a KING!!"

Nkosi: "I don't want to be a stupid king!!!" I screamed. "I don't want this." I breathed. Sikhosana: "You don't have a choice. This is who you are. I'll make sure you sit and stick to that throne whether you like it or not. I did ask you to test me." Now it was my turn to be angry. My blood was boiling. I got up, walking to my room. I took my phone, calling Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "My Prince."

Nkosi: "Remove all the trackers from the Mercedes Benz."

Mthunzi: "Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "All four of them. I want that car undetectable."

Mthunzi: "Nkosi, I can't let you run away."

Nkosi: "I'm not running away. I just need time out. I'll be back by morning."

Mthunzi: "Fine. Take my wife's car instead. It will be impossible to remove all trackers on the royal cars including mine because even I don't know where they are."

Nkosi: "Fine. Bring the car before 8pm."

Mthunzi: "What will you do with the guards?"

Nkosi: "What I do best. Whisper." I hung up, sending a message to Thembisa: <One normal night away from everything we know?> I looked through my wardrobe for any normal clothes. Everything I owned was suits and gym clothes. I didn't remember what it felt like to put on a pair of denims, a plain t-shirt, some boots. Fortunately, I had one pair of jeans, I hadn't worn these in four years. It was the outfit I had on when I came back to this country. I got dressed then checked my phone. I had a new message from thembisa reading: <Okay baby.> There. Just one night, living like a normal person. I'd drive down to Langoluhle. It was the more quiet harbour town. The many people who lived there were mostly those who worked at the harbour and their families. The little town usually died down at around 8 at night. Except for the tourists who are looking for a quiet private place to relax in. Tonight, we'd be the tourists. In 30 minutes, Mthunzi called.

Nkosi: "Yes?"

Mthunzi: "You'll find the car parked in our spot."

Nkosi: "Thanks."

Mthunzi: "Nkosi, Please come back?" I could hear plea in his voice. I'd never abandon Mthunzi.

Nkosi: "I will. I promise."

Mthunzi: "Good because my wife will kill me if she can't find her car in the morning." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "We'll talk." I hung up. I only needed to wait 40 minutes before everyone went to bed. Then I'd take care of the guards. I sent Another message to Thembisa: <Can't wait to see you. I'll be there at 9pm.> I smiled, sitting on my bed.

50 minutes went by fast. I waited the extra ten just in case. My occasional hunting and experiments have finally come to good use. I took the Lamba powder burning a very small pinch of it in the passage of our West wing. This was the wing my parents slept in. The powder would last until morning and residue will disappear before then. Only a pinch can be used. It was strong enough to knock the entire wing out. I didn't need to worry about my sisters' wing, they wouldn't come looking for me for any reason. Once they went in their rooms, you'd only see them in the morning. I went downstairs, six guards were in the foyer area of the house. Whispering to more than 2 people was a difficult task but it helps we're in a close space. (There is a security threat in the back gardens and I need you to keep guard out there. Once you walk out the back, you do not come back inside.) They all nodded, walking out quickly to the back garden. I stepped out the palace doors. Two guards stood at the entrance. (The guards inside are attending to a threat in the back garden, clear out the ones in the yard to spread out.) They walked towards the patrolling guards, giving orders. While distracted, I slipped to the army tank. The soldier stood outside with his weapon. He was the only one left. His partner was patrolling as well. (Sleep.) His eyes closed and he fell. I quickly grabbed him, pulling him to the side.

Nkosi: "I'm sorry." I took off his jacket and cap, putting it on myself. It was finally clear. I snuck to the side of the tank, watching for the patrols. The one guard turned around facing away, I slipped out the gate. The jacket and cap didn't give any suspicion. I walked normally, away from the palace. That was easier than I thought it would be. I made it to the private spot I shared with Mthunzi. He's such a show off. He had bought his wife this sexy BMW beast the minute it dropped. I opened the door

climbing in. The key was in the ignition. I started, testing the controls and drove off. Finally. When was the last time I actually drove a car? It felt so good for once to be in control of my own life. I typed a message: <I'm on my way, my love.>

## SASA POV\_

Before Petu left, she had braided my hair in very neat cornrows. Right now, I was left alone. Amahle had left some time ago. I didn't need anything really but I packed a small bag. Just a dress and underwear. I also took the beads that Amahle bought for me. Someone knocked on my door. It had to be Zimmy. I'd seen Amahle and Petu get into cars when they left. I opened the door.

Zimmy: "Hey." She walked in.

Me: "Hello."

Zimmy: "Are you going somewhere?" She looked at my bag.

Me: "Yes. I'm visiting Amahle."

Zimmy: "Amahle left hours ago?"

Me: "Yeah, she needed to do something first and I was finishing my assignment." She sighed.

Zimmy: "I hate what's happening between us."

Me: "Me too Zimasa. You're my first university friend."

Zimmy: "I know. And I'm also sorry for pushing you to Khaya so much." She sat down. "I'm not trying to convince you, please don't get me wrong. I respect your decision. It's just that he really does feel something for you. Khaya has been struggling, alot. For years even. He grew up in a toxic family setting. His father focused on building the law firm and neglecting his mother. Then turned abusive. His mother died a couple of years ago. Khaya moved out of home, the second he could. That's why he doesn't like going to his family for holidays. His father hasn't really changed. He has a step mom who's only a few years older than him. I'm sorry I pushed Thembisa. He's just a good guy and when I saw how he looks at you, I saw the opportunity for him to be loved. For once in his life. That was unfair of me." I sat on Amahle's bed, opposite her.

Me: "Yes. That was very unfair of you. It was even more unfair that you wanted me to endure his bed hopping and multiple women then accept him with warm loving arms when he's done."

Zimmy: "You're right."

Me: "Why don't you date Khaya? You know what he needs. You're also loving and you care about him." She laughed.

Zimmy: "He's more like a brother to me. I don't see him that way."

Me: "Perhaps as his sister you should suggest he go to therapy then." She chuckled.

Zimmy: "Yeah. That would probably do him good. Anyway, when are you coming back?"

Me: "Sunday."

Zimmy: "Alright. I like this for you. Having friends more suitable to you. I know you like me as a friend but socially you weren't comfortable with my activities. I just don't want anyone to take my place in your life okay?"

Me: "No one will take your place in my heart." I hugged her. My phone rang.

Zimmy: "Okay. Let me get going. Have fun baby."

Me: "Bye." She walked out. I answered my phone. "Baby?"

Nkosi: "I'm outside, love."

Me: "Okay. I'm coming out now." I grabbed my bag, walking out the room and locking it.

Nkosi: "I'm not with the guards today. It's just you and me." I walked down the passage, to the reception.

Me: "You drove here?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Me: "You can drive?" I walked outside to the gate.

Nkosi: "Of course I can drive baby."

Me: "I mean, you're allowed to?" He chuckled.

Nkosi: "No."

Me: "I can't see your car."

Nkosi: "Let me switch the lights on. I'm not driving my car." I saw the lights flickering.

Me: "Okay love. I see you. You can stop flickering now."

Nkosi: "I don't want to stop. I want you to feel like I do when the press follows me." I laughed.

Me: "Stop it." I reached the passenger door, opening it. "You're crazy, you know that?" I got in the car, putting my bag in the back.

Nkosi: "You look gorgeous. Hello baby." He kissed me softly, holding my face.

Me: "Why do you have an army cap on?"

Nkosi: "I stole it to leave the palace." He started the car driving off.

Me: "Wait... Nkosi, did you steal the car?"

Nkosi: "No, not the car. Only the cap and jacket in the back."

Me: "Why?"

Nkosi: "My father wants the army to follow me everywhere. I'm not allowed to leave the house. I just need one night as a normal human being. No guards, no bullet proof, no escorts. Just normalcy."

Me: "So where are we going?"

Nkosi: "Langoluhle. It's about an hour and a half away." He held my hand, his other hand on the steering wheel. "It's quiet at this time but we'll be able to enjoy ourselves."

Me: "Won't someone recognise you?"

Nkosi: "That's why I have an army cap on." I kissed his hand.

Me: "Well, can't have a road trip without some music. Do you have a favourite genre?" He smiled.

Nkosi: "You're my favourite genre."

Me: "Stop being cute for a second please."

Nkosi: "I'm being serious. I don't have a favourite anything. Show me everything."

Me: "Okay. I'll put on some love songs. I love those. How do I do this? How do you search music here?"

Nkosi: "You're asking the wrong person my love. Call Mthunzi and ask him."

Me: "I can't call Mthunzi."

Nkosi: "Of course you can. My phone is right there."

Me: "Why don't you call him?"

Nkosi: "I'm driving and holding your hand."

Me: "I'm sure I can figure this out. Wait." I went on to Google typing 'how to play music in a car'

Nkosi: "Write BMW M6 for more specific results."

Me: "But baby, you've driven before. How can you not know how to play music in the car?"

Nkosi: "I never listened to music when driving. Only the radio."

Me: "It says here I can connect to it by Bluetooth." I pressed the buttons on the car and paired my phone. "You bother Mthunzi way too much, this was easy."

Nkosi: "I know. He can't stand me, he says." I laughed.

Me: "This is my favourite song."

Nkosi: "Are you going to sing for me?"

Me: "Do you want me to?"

Nkosi: "Yes please." I played the song.

Me: "It started out in spring time. Against the golden skyline, You spoke to me at last. It started out intensely and with it all my senses I knewww. I'm sure I knew. The only reason God gave me eyes was to see you. The only reason God gave me ears was to hear your voice. Say, I will allll... I will always love you. And when the wind gets cold. I'll wrap my arms around you." He kissed my hand, keeping it on his lips while stared at the empty road ahead.

Me: "We shared our dreams, endeavors and many things, we never could tell a soul before. I saw you smile through the tears that fell to the flooorr. I'm sure I knew, The only reason God gave me hands was to hold you. And he finely tuned the drums of my ears just to hear your voice.

Say, I will allll... I will always love you. And when the wind gets cold, I'll build a fire to warm your hands. I'll wrap my arms around you."

Nkosi: "I love you."

Me: "I love you too."

Nkosi: "Please sing another song. I love the sound of your voice." ...

We arrived in Langoluhle. A really small intimate town that was dimly lit but lively. He parked at the beach.

Nkosi: "There are stalls selling food down this path, do you want to try it out?"

Me: "Let's go. I haven't eaten." We walked down the pavement. Small containers were selling food and beverages, along the beach. A few tourists walked by buying and eating. "Have you had a hotdog before?"

Nkosi: "In New York yes."

Me: "Okay, let's look for something you haven't eaten. A Kota?"

Nkosi: "Quarter of what?" I giggled.

Me: "A quarter loaf of bread."

Nkosi: "Does my diet mean nothing to you baby?" He chuckled. "Fine let's have a quarter then."

Me: "No baby, you have to say Kota."

Nkosi: "That's what I said."

Me: "You said quarter. You need to say it like K.O.T.A."

Nkosi: "A Kotha?" I couldn't stop laughing.

Me: "Mxim. Let me order. What will you drink?"

Nkosi: "A bottle of water?"

Me: "Coke. If we're ruining your diet tonight, let's go all the way." I went to the stall to order. "Hi. Two Kota's please. Include everything and all sauces. Plus two cokes. You have the glass bottle? That's perfect. Thanks." I paid, walking back to Nkosi. He was looking around him. "Do you feel uncomfortable?"

Nkosi: "No. I feel free." He looked down at me, holding me close. "Thank you for loving me Thembisa. Thank you for choosing me."

Me: "I will always choose you. Not matter what. Above everything else." Even my life. I thought.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 22

PIRNCE POV\_

I haven't enjoyed myself like this since I was born and I'm not exaggerating. Even as a child I had this weight of responsibility on my shoulders. Being groomed to be a king. I didn't know comfort, empathy, and love. I didn't know what it felt like until I met this woman. The road ahead will be difficult still because my family will not have it. My father prefers me to be unfeeling and void of any emotion. I doubt he even loves my mothers. I'd have to be more discreet about how I feel about Thembisa until I marry her. Last night, we ate what I found to be the most interesting food. A quarter of a loaf of bread, with potato chips, cheese, polony, russian and sauces of all kinds. I wasn't too sure of it at first but I enjoyed it. Thoroughly. Then of course the Coke. Thembisa is convinced that the one in the glass bottle tastes better. I thought that's impossible, it has to be the same beverage and so we went to buy more Coke. One in a plastic bottle, can and a glass bottle. She was right, there was something in that glass bottle.

Nkosi: "I'm so in love with you." I whispered. She snuggled closer to my body, holding me tight. I checked the time. It was now 4:40am. I needed to get her to her dance preparations.

Nkosi: "My love." I kissed her lips.

Thembisa: "Hmm."

Nkosi: "It's time to wake up."

Thembisa: "Already?"

Nkosi: "Yes." I was a heart beat away from dropping it all and running away with her but I knew I couldn't. It would be hell for everyone else. She stretched, waking up.

Thembisa: "I had so much fun with you."

Nkosi: "Me too. Maybe we should do it more often?"

Thembisa: "Run away?"

Nkosi: "Yes. On our weekends off, instead of eNtabeni we could go to other towns. Just live life for a few days." She smiled.

Thembisa: "I'd love that." She kissed my lips getting up. "I've never attended a reed dance. I don't even know the songs or what's supposed to happen." She got dressed.

Nkosi: "Me neither. I don't think there's a formal program though. It's mostly a celebration and of course. My family's hidden agenda of finding me a wife."

Thembisa: "So you'll be introduced to maidens?"

Nkosi: "Sort of. My mind is made up though."

Thembisa: "What if you see someone else you like? More beautiful?"

Nkosi: "Who could possibly be more beautiful than the love of my life? Don't be silly." She smiled, crawling onto the bed again. "We're going to be late."

Thembisa: "Just wanted to give you this." She kissed my lips slowly sucking on them. The desire in me was sparkling once again as if I didn't spend almost an hour trying to calm it down. "Let's go." I got out of bed, putting on my pants.

Nkosi: "After the dance, are you coming home with me?"

Thembisa: "I can't. I'm spending the night with the other maidens and Amahle. I want to experience festivities of this celebration."

Nkosi: "Can I ask you a question?" I pulled on my t-shirt.

Thembisa: "Yes baby."

Nkosi: "Why did you stay a virgin for this long?"

Thembisa: "Apart from having strict parents. I was kind of scared. Our village doesn't have many options or perhaps I should say openness

when it comes to contraceptives. There's no access to condoms unless you buy them in town. Also, the nurses are extremely mean when you go for family planning. The stigma about HIV is so horrid still. Sex is such an uncomfortable conversation for teenagers in my village so it's better to just abstain. Most of us do. Then when we're obviously in the bigger cities, we learn of more contraceptives and have quicker access to condoms, there's hospitals that offer free and safe abortions and on top of it all, you aren't treated like a less than human for contracting hiv. I wish one day that could change in the villages." I gave this a lot of thought. There was a lot of land in her village. All of it belonging to my family obviously. In the place of the lake, I wanted to build a mini shopping center. This would create jobs. The people who'd be working there, would be living in the village, using their salaries to buy in their village. Also driving more traffic from tourists passing by. Once the roads are fixed, the center is built. I thought the end of building the new Res meant I'd be bored again but now I have this new project. Man I needed to thank Mthunzi for pushing me to this girl.

Nkosi: "Then you came to Mountain Peak and studied a whole year? Still no boyfriend."

Thembisa: "Still driven by fear really. My dad made sure to put the Fear of God in me. He told me city boys are very dangerous." I held her hand.

Nkosi: "They are but this one will protect you." We walked out the guesthouse, getting in the car. I drove us back to Mountain Peak.

Nkosi: "So, I'm thinking of building a shopping center in your village to create more jobs. What do you think?"

Thembisa: "That would be incredible but what will happen to town? Won't they lose business?"

Nkosi: "No. I will look into it though. The priority is to bring more value to the village and it's people. That's the main focus. Also, perhaps a community center would be beneficial. A few other villages have these already."

Thembisa: "What would happen at the community center?"

Nkosi: "At the council meeting, the problem with thieves came up. Mostly boys in the village without guidance really. In this center, maybe they can learn some skills. Zondo does welding, he could teach the boys the basics. Your dad could teach business skills because he's really good at

that. We can provide the materials and everything. There will also be community events, talent shows, and because you've mentioned sex issue, I think educational events will also benefit the community."

Thembisa: "That's a great idea. In fact, having qualified individuals coming to speak to the youth about sex and everything else will be amazing. More access to contraceptives as well. Maybe the community center could also double as a soup kitchen in the evenings for the families that have less."

Nkosi: "I love that." This is the first time, being a king has actually made sense. From all that I've been taught by my father, it never interested me. I did as I was told because that's all I knew but now? I had the power to make a difference. A real difference. Not for love, fame, money. Just because it was right and I wanted to. It's quite a lot of firsts for me. We drove into Mountain Peak an hour later still talking about our plans for her village and other villages.

Nkosi: "I'm starting to enjoy my life. You're going to make my job very easy Mrs Sikhosana." She giggled.

Thembisa: "I'm not Mrs Sikhosana until you ask my father."

Nkosi: "Do you think he will accept it? Me marrying you?"

Thembisa: "I'd like to think he loves me enough to let me make my own decisions but he really has very strong negative feelings about you. I'm not sure if it's because you're royalty or it's just because you're a man from a big city and a bit older."

Nkosi: "I'm not that old."

Thembisa: "No you're not but he's very upset. I thought I would avoid going home in the coming holidays but I have to now. I need to butter him up."

Nkosi: "So you want to marry me?"

Thembisa: "Not immediately but eventually, yes." I stopped the close to the veld opening. An old woman stood there, waiting. "This is awkward. I can't kiss you goodbye."

Nkosi: "Okay baby. I'll see you later today. Please smile at me when I look at you, I'll need it." She giggled.

Thembisa: "You're silly." I watched her get out the car, walking to the woman with her head bowed. The woman greeted her, leading her into the veld, I drove off.

My second stop was the forest I loved to go to whenever I was stressed. Except today I wasn't stressed. I walked to my tree, climbing up to a comfortable branch and sat.

Nkosi: "I have a question." My guide always knew when to appear.

Guide: "Yes?"

Nkosi: "Why was I named Nkosihle?"

Guide: "I think that's clear, you're destined to be."

Nkosi: "Yes but how would you know that?"

Guide: "You weren't born by accident Nkosi. You were sent. The people are suffering and they need you. You are destined to be a good king."

Nkosi: "I haven't been good. I haven't been good anything. My entire 30 years of life, I have never been good. I have just been. I've not felt. I've not helped. I've not given. I've just existed."

Guide: "That may be true but You've built schools in the past years. You've given opportunities to those less fortunate."

Nkosi: "But that's my job."

Guide: "Your job was never to compromise your life for others but in a heart beat you did and I know you would do it again. Bringing this woman in your path can only make you better than the good you already were. You had kindness within you but it was suppressed by tyranny which you had been forced into by your father."

Nkosi: "My father will not be impressed."

Guide: "That is not something you should worry yourself about. There is so much good this nation needs from you."

Nkosi: "Thank you. For her. For the first time in my life, I feel hopeful and happy."

Guide: "Protect her Nkosihle."

Nkosi: "That I will do." I got off the tree, walking back to the car. Time to face the music.

SASA POV\_

The gogo led me to the rest of the camp where some of the girls were awake, singing. A fire had been burning but now was dying down. There seems to have been a cow slaughtered as well.

Gogo: "Come this way." She led me into a small hut where one other older woman was in. "You can take off your clothes and lie down." This was a bit uncomfortable. I've never been tested for my virginity before. I know I've never slept with anyone before. Nothing has penetrated me before but what if? I did as I was told, closing my eyes as I lay down. The most uncomfortable few minutes of my life. Once she was done, I was given a skirt. "Siyakwamukela ntombi." The first Gogo said. I wore my skirt, I'd be putting a tight under. I was led out to the other girls singing. Amahle was sitting in a distance with Nothando. I joined them.

Me: "Hello."

Amahle: "Hey. So how was it?"

Me: "Quite uncomfortable."

Notha: "But you passed. That's all that matters."

Me: "How was last night?"

Amahle: "Not bad. Singing, dancing. We had a cow."

Me: "Oh damn. What did you eat?"

Amahle: "Wasn't hungry anyway."

Me: "Did the king come last night?"

Amahle: "Yes but not for long. You didn't miss anything."

Me: "Okay." The gogo who had brought me in asked everyone to come closer.

Gogo: "Sanibonani zintombi. Siyanamukela ebuhleni obuhle bobufazi. Nilapha ukuze nizogubha lolusuku olibaluleke kakhulu empilwen yenu. Nizigcinile nimsulwa futhi ngenxa yalokho kufanele niziqhenye." (Hello

girls. Welcome to the beauty of femininity. You are here to be celebrated, this day should be the most important one in your life. You have kept yourself pure and therefore should be proud.)

Gogo: "Manje siya emfuleni ukuyohlansa futhi silungiselele umcimbi wethu. Umndeni wasebukhosini uzobe ugcwele futhi njengoba wazi inkosana yasebukhosini izoba khona." (Now we are going to the river to cleanse and get ready for our ceremony. The royal family will be in full attendance and as you know the royal prince will be present.) All the girls giggled excitedly. So this was true that the king wants Nkosinhle to choose a wife. Did he want him to choose, or would he choose for him? I was suddenly very nervous. We made our way down to the river. The girls were singing but I didn't know the songs, I tried with the repeating ones. All the way to the river, where we washed ourselves.

The festivities were starting and I had begun enjoying myself. Amahle was not bothered as she usually isn't. Nothando was strangely just like her. Very short answers and unimpressed facial expressions. So I had to ask.

Me: "So you're also a royal?"

Notha: "What do you think?"

Me: "I'm asking you, am I not?" She grinned slightly.

Notha: "Yes."

Me: "Biyela?"

Notha: "Hell No."

Me: "You're also a Sikhosana?"

Notha: "Nope. Phakamisa."

Me: "Oh, from Golden Crown. Why did you come to Mountain Peak?"

Notha: "Take a wild guess."

Me: "How would I know? I wasn't born in royalty." She rolled her eyes and looked back at the other girls who were dancing. I continued to stare at her. If she thinks she'll brush me off when I'm being nice, she clearly doesn't know me.

Notha: "I just needed space. Okay? Are you happy now?"

Me: "No. I'm not. How did you become friends with Amy?"

Notha: "Amy?"

Me: "Amahle."

Notha: "There's 7 royal families in a population for 70 million people in one nation. It's unlikely that I wouldn't know her. We basically grew up in a cult."

Me: "Oh." Amahle was as usual, very quiet standing with us, staring at the dancing. "You don't want to dance?"

Amahle: "Now why on earth would I ever want to do that?"

Me: "It's fun. Come."

Amahle: "Absolutely not."

Me: "Nothando?"

Notha: "Hard Pass." I went to the other girls that were dancing and joined in. I could see Amahle shaking her head where she was standing. When I was done, I ran back to them.

Me: "It's fun."

Ama: "I can see."

Me: "Guys come on. You have to do something, you can't just stand here." Another girl joined us. Amahle stared at her and looked back at the dancing. "Hi, I'm Thembisa." She smiled.

She: "Zinhle. Biyela, You?"

Me: "Ntaka."

Zinhle: "I've never heard of that one before. I thought there was only 7 of us?" She looked at Amahle and Nothando who didn't move or respond.

Me: "Oh, I'm not royal."

Zinhle: "Oh." She looked me down and up again. "Why then are you standing here?"

Notha: "Why are you standing here?"

Zinhle: "I wasn't talking to you Nothando. You're busy standing here with a commoner, are you serious?" Amahle looked at her. Her eyes. I quickly walked away to continue dancing. Zinhle was obviously the

typical royal Princess. Seeing herself superior than non royals. I wonder how Amahle's sisters are. They obviously weren't here. Is this how they behaved? But Nkosi, Mngqobi, Amahle weren't classist. Yes Nothando was cold but she wasn't unnecessarily mean. This breed of humans was quite a strange one. So far, it's only Mngqobi who has acted like a proper human being, in the standards of socializing. I'm used to Nkosi but he's very awkward around people. Even last night, he kept looking around like he's paranoid someone would get too close. Was Nothando being serious? This was basically a cult and they couldn't let anyone in?

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 23

PRINCE POV\_

My father was livid. When I walked into the palace, it took all of him not to tackle me into a hiding. I was finding it difficult to keep a straight face. I've never seen him this angry before and it was quite hilarious.

Sikhosana: "Who is she?"

Nkosi: "Who?"

Sikhosana: "You keep sneaking off, where the hell do you go!!"

Nkosi: "I was at the forest."

Sikhosana: "All night? Why the he-" he stopped himself and took a deep breath, looking at me with a fire in his eyes.

Nkosi: "I just needed a moment to myself to think. It's been a stressful few days. Maybe today I might find a maiden and from there I can have something to look forward to." He relaxed, nodding.

Sikhosana: "Okay, fine. You can go rest now. We leave in two hours." I nodded, watching him walk away. I focused my gaze on him eventually seeping into his thoughts. King's thoughts: "I needed to ask his guards to report his past two weeks to me. Where has he been, who has he been seeing? He is obviously hiding something." Damn it. I needed to

find all my guards. I waited until my father walked into his quarters. I went to the guards room. They were having breakfast. The second I walked in, all of them bowed down.

Nkosi: "Can all my guards meet me in my office. We need to discuss the following days and who is on duty, where. Mthunzi will be unavailable this morning. Walk with me." They followed me to my office. All 10 of them fit inside it. I locked the door. They stood in a single line, side by side. (The past weeks of my activities have been the same as always. There has been no new development. I have not seen anyone apart from work contractors and visited only villages. I have not met any women or Any men I do not work with. I have not gone anywhere else.) I walked to the first guard.

Nkosi: "Who has the Prince been seeing in the past few weeks?" I asked using my father's voice.

Guard: "No One, my King. The Prince has only met with work contractors."

Nkosi: "Where has he gone apart from work?"

Guard: "He visited the restaurant only. Nothing else, my King." I closed my eyes, penetrating his thoughts. I seeped through his memories, sifting through them rapidly, erasing Thembisa, her Res, anything relating to her. I asked each and everyone of them similar questions and did the same. I hated doing this to them but I wasn't going to allow my father to ruin this for me.

Nkosi: "Our transit today will be with the family. You all will join my father's guards. I need you on high alert as usual. Open your mouths." They did as I said. I placed a small maca leaf on each tongue. "The leaf will relieve the headache and energise you. It'll dissolve in your mouth in the next 3 minutes." I unlocked the door. "You're dismissed." They walked out my office. After the last one left, Mthunzi walked in.

Mthunzi: "And then? I'm fired?" He closed the door.

Nkosi: "Has my father spoken to you?"

Mthunzi: "No. I haven't spoken to him. Why?"

Nkosi: "He wants to find out from my guards who I've been spending my time with. So I wiped the pieces of their memory of her."

Mthunzi: "Nkosinhle!" He hissed.

Nkosi: "What choice did I have?"

Mthunzi: "I thought you hated whispering."

Nkosi: "I do but I had to do it."

Mthunzi: "Fine. But you do know if he can't get anything out of them then he'll come to me? So you have to do the same to me."

Nkosi: "Do I have to?"

Mthunzi: "I can't lie to a king Nkosinhle. I can't even lie to you."

Nkosi: "But he won't know. He can't access your thoughts."

Mthunzi: "He can access a polygraph test."

Nkosi: "But then you'll forget Thembisa and how we got to this point. How I got to this point. I would want my only friend to share this memory with me."

Mthunzi: "And I'm honoured Nkosi but my first priority is protecting you and her. You can tell me about how you started and got to this point even at 2 in the morning, I don't care if you wake me up for it. I will listen." I sighed.

Nkosi: "Fine." ....

In two hours I was dressed in my high rank royal attire in the family colours. Pure Black, Royal Purple and Sikhosana Gold. Yes, we had our own gold. It would annoy me to even begin to think about how we got it. Mthunzi walked into my room also in his regal attire. His being Pure Black and S Gold.

Nkosi: "I'm done."

Mthunzi: "Good. The family is already downstairs."

Nkosi: "You spoke to him?"

Mthunzi: "Yes he called me to his office. I was right. He got a lying detector test."

Nkosi: "What is his problem? Why is he nervous about me talking to people?"

Mthunzi: "I have no clue. Let's move." I fixed his left collar and we walked out. My father was waiting in the foyer, the guards around him.

Sikhosana: "Finally. Your mothers are waiting in the car. We got in our own car, Mthunzi and I, being driven by a guard. We could've walked but my father wouldn't approve of that. Our arena was open, spectators had arrived, having traveled far. Anytime my family had an event, people from all over the nation came to attend. I'd like to think they really just enjoyed the festivities but a part of me feels they're mostly here to see us. My family hardly ever went outside to civilians. I probably did the most public appearances than all of them combined but still, not anyone could fully see me because I was always surrounded by guards. It probably explains why the Mthinomkhulu village followed me around all day. They'd never seen me that up close before. No one ever had. We entered the Arena. Guards blocking off the entrances and shielding us. My father walked on the stage first sitting in his seat. I followed after him, sitting on his right. His first wife, on his left and second after her. My sisters were after. Only Amahle would be sitting next to me on my other side. The spectators had been bowing until we sat down. The royal speaker stepped forward to the mic and addressed everyone.

Speaker: "All hail the King."

Everyone: "Bayede iNkosi."

Speaker: "We welcome you all to this wonderful celebration of our young girls. The royal house thanks you for gifting your presence and attending this special event." I zoned out of this very boring introduction and scanned the crowd. It was quite the turn out. Sure, our celebrations are usually the nation's spectacle but this was crazy. It was only before 9 in the morning. Imagine how it would be at midday. I looked at the royals who have attended. All 6 families have come. Obviously. It would be rude not to. The Biyela's, Phakamisa's, Mpondo's, Nakhamula's, I hate them more than all, Bathonga's and the Mufhuwalo. I hate the Nakhamula's because they have tried to take over from us, now I don't care about that but why do you have to kill to do it? The fucking nerve. All the families got involved in the feud but it was agreed that they're not to be killed, mostly because I whispered for them. If they try one more thing though. Which they haven't in years but I'll keep an eye. The speaker introduced a dance group of young men. They performed in the middle where everyone could see them. I looked at Sibonelo who was texting on his phone, obviously bored. Why would Thembisa want me to

be friends with him? He's rude. How are you clicking your phone as a guest? Mngqobi sat next to him equally bored but enduring the performance. Their third brother, Zwelethu sat with their father, probably discussing business. I wanted to eavesdrop but that's just rude. The next family, Phakamisa had only two children. The girl was Amahle's friend or whatever it is you call people that sit in silence all day. The second was a younger boy, possibly still in high school. The Mpondo family had three girls much to the father's disappointment. I love it. He was the one that voted women out of council and now look at God. I smiled. His own offspring can't sit in meetings because he's stupid. I wanted him to boil a little longer before I changed it. The Nakhamula's had three boys. The first two are twins a little younger than I and another boy about Amahle's age. I didn't know much about them but I knew they were foolish. All three of them. Nothing about them breeds intelligence just like their father. A very foolish man. The twins were friends with Sibonelo and again, how the hell could I be a friend of that boy? I sighed looking back at the grounds. The maidens were approaching, singing. Immediately I spotted her. She doesn't even know the words but look at how confident and happy she is.

Sikhosana: "I take it you see someone you like already." I didn't realize the big smile on my face, quickly straightening out.

Nkosi: "No. Just find the whole ceremony beautiful."

Sikhosana: "Hmm." Shit, I was terrible at hiding my emotions. The girls sang and danced but my eye was focused on just one. The love of my life. I was trying hard not to smile but I definitely wasn't winning.

Sikhosana: "It's time, son." He stood up, everyone stopped moving and bowed. I followed him down the stairs to the line of maidens waiting to be addressed. I started at the beginning, barely looking them in the eye or longer than 2 seconds. I knew where I was going and when I reached her, I stopped. She was looking at the ground but I could tell she was smiling. She looked up at my face and smiled sweetly. My heart melted. It's you. I choose you. Over and over again. I kept walking until we reached the end of the line. We walked back to our seats, I looked back at her, my heart happy.

By midday, the arena was packed to capacity. Amahle had taken her place next to me. My father was speaking to mother on his other side about work things.

Nkosi: "How is she?"

Amahle: "Fine."

Nkosi: "Why then are you here leaving her alone?"

Amahle: "Nothando is with her." I looked at where the maidens were. They were sitting under a tent together while a cultural group performed. My father's conversation came to an end.

Sikhosana: "My son. We're having lunch now. Do you want to join the other Prince's?"

Nkosi: "No."

Sikhosana: "Mehluli you can't sit with old men all your life. These are the people you'll be carrying our legacies with. You need to get to know them."

Nkosi: "I think I know enough father."

Sikhosana: "I know you do. I need to know the deal Phakamisa is working on. It involves a royal from another nation, up north."

Nkosi: "You want me to spy for you?"

Sikhosana: "Yes."

Nkosi: "Fine."

Amahle: "Please control your anger." She said a quiet tone. I walked to the the princes, they were sitting at a table together. I hated this. I really didn't mind being alone. "Mind if I join?"

Sibonelo: "We'd be honoured, Your Highness." They chuckled. I sat down, already bored.

Sibonelo: "Already time for you to get a wife huh?"

Nkosi: "Hm."

Phiwokwakhe: "I wouldn't mind choosing from this batch too. This year's virgins look fine as hell." This was the second twin of the Nakhamura's.

Sibonelo: "Then get yourself a wife bra."

Mandla: "I hope you're not looking where I'm looking Phiwo. This time I will actually kill you." And this is the first born twin. I wanted to roll my eyes. It's a good thing they didn't look alike because that would just be too much.

Phiwo: "She's not even your type-"

Mandla: "Just try me. I swear." These were human beings they were fighting about.

Sibonelo: "So you're just marrying someone because you want to fuck her?"

Phiwo: "Yes."

Sibonelo: "What if you don't like her?"

Phiwo: "I'll get another one. Most of these virgins, are only virgins because they haven't been approached by a royal. I don't even need to promise marriage. They'll do what I want." Honest to God, my father was punishing me surely.

Sibonelo: "And wena? You're thinking of marrying too?"

Mandla: "Yeah if I can get the one I'm eyeing. Nc nc nc." The ladies were up again, dancing and singing. Thembisa really seemed to be enjoying herself. Definitely more than I am.

Sibonelo: "I see her. Yeah you're right."

Mnqobi: "Who are you talking about?"

Mandla: "The chocolate on the left. What a perfect fucking body. Look at those curves and perfection." I stared at him, ready to strangle him to death.

Mnqobi: "Ohh. I know her. She's in my school." My hand was shaking, my gaze still focused on Mandla. I swear if he says one more thing.

Sibonelo: "This is why you're my brother-"

Mandla: "Hey hey hey. Let's not fight. I spotted her first. You can have her when I'm don-" I felt strong hands on my shoulder just as I was about to pounce on his neck and never let go.

Mthunzi: "Your Highness. Can I have a moment of your time?" I got up, walking away. Mthunzi followed behind me. "I could feel you steaming from far away. What was that?"

Nkosi: "I'm going to fucking kill him."

Mthunzi: "Mandla? For what?"

Nkosi: "You didn't hear the shit he was talking about Thembisa. I swear Mthunzi, I'm going to kill him."

Mthunzi: "Who's Thembisa?" Oh fuck. I wanted to scream and throw something against a wall.

Nkosi: "I'm going for a run."

Mthunzi: "No. Not right now. Nkosi, I can't help if I don't know what's going on."

Nkosi: "I'm going fucking insane right now!! I don't want to be here Mthunzi!!"

Mthunzi: "I understand that. I just need to know how to fix it."

Nkosi: "Tell Amahle to show you Thembisa and make sure no one comes near her."

Mthunzi: "Okay. I'll talk to Amahle. Will you be going back to the Princes?"

Nkosi: "Without killing them? No."

Mthunzi: "Okay but will that be a good idea? This will further isolate you from them. Maybe you can lead the conversation with business."

Nkosi: "You know I can't do that."

Mthunzi: "Yes you can. You're their leader."

Nkosi: "I need a minute." I couldn't control the rage I felt. All I wanted to do is smash Mandla's face in concrete. How dare he look at her like that? These are innocent women being celebrated and what he sees is a play thing. My wife!! I looked at him, heaving with anger. I seeped into his thoughts.

Mthunzi: "Not a good idea. Hey!! Stop it. This is not going to help you at all." He shook my slightly out of my trance.

Nkosi: "I need to know what he's planning."

Mthunzi: "And if his thoughts are of his fantasy with her? You'll rip him limb to limb. Stop it."

Nkosi: "Get me out of here."

Mthunzi: "Let's go." I followed him out with the guards surrounding us.

SASA POV\_

The celebration was amazing although I was tired now and so no more dancing for me.

Notha: "Come."

Me: "Where are we going?"

Notha: "I need to greet my parents. I haven't seen them in months."

Me: "I'm not allowed there."

Notha: "I also said to Amahle I won't let you out of my sight, now what must happen? Let's go!"

Me: "You can leave me here. It's not like I'll get kidnapped."

Notha: "Please stop making my life difficult. I ask just that from you." I sighed, getting up and following her to the royals. The Sikhosana's were sitting high on the stage by themselves. They weren't beating the god-imitating allegations anytime soon. The guests, just beneath them on the grounds. Nkosi was not here, not even at the table where the other princes were sitting. Did he leave? Why would he?

Notha: "Stand here. Don't move. I'm watching you." I rolled my eyes and stood there awkwardly. It wasn't in an awkward space. A few other maidens were close by and some guards. Where was Nkosihle? Maybe doing some royal things, he would be back surely.

"Hello." I looked next to me. Who was this now? He was dressed in what looked like a royal suit. Navy Blue and white in colour.

Me: "Hello."

Him: "I'm Sibonelo, Biyela." Of course, my pretend boyfriend to Petu.

Me: "Thembisa." I smiled and looked at the stage again. Amahle was looking at me with that scary look.

Sibonelo: "Your friend?" Oh, she wasn't looking at me.

Me: "Yes."

Sibonelo: "She's very protective of you. I would be too."

Me: "Hm." Why was Nothando taking so long? I looked at her, she was panicking while trying to get away from her parents. Her mother was holding her hand, telling her something or keeping her hostage. I don't know.

Sibonelo: "Thembisa, would you like to see a movie some time? Or get dinner?"

Me: "Are you allowed to talk to me?" He chuckled.

Sibonelo: "Of course I am."

Me: "I'm only here waiting for Nothando, honestly."

Sibonelo: "I see that, I thought I'd come introduce myself. A royal doesn't usually approach like this. It's just, I didn't want to pass up this opportunity in case someone beat me to it." He had a seedy look in his eyes that I didn't trust. Two shadows stood behind him. Nkosinhle and Mthunzi.

Nkosi: "Sibonelo."

Sibonelo: "Your Highness." He smiled, turning around "Thought I'd look myself a wife at your event, I hope you don't mind."

Nkosi: "I do mind."

Sibonelo: "Ah my Prince. I'm sure you have the perfect royal wife you have an eye on. You can leave us some crumbs."

Nkosi: "Crumbs?" Nothando finally came back, grabbing my arm, swiftly pulling me away to our seats.

Notha: "Really?"

Me: "Really what? You took me there and left me by myself, was I supposed to be invisible?"

Notha: "I hope you can keep that smart mouth because now the king has spotted you."

Me: "And how is this my problem Nothando? I was perfectly fine until you dragged me to the lion's den."

Notha: "I didn't say make Princes fight over you. All you had to do was stand and wait for me."

Me: "They're not fighting. It was just a simple hello."

Notha: "That made the heir almost fly to you?" She laughed. "You're adorable. Now, I just need to keep you away from the king."

Me: "What is he going to do?"

Notha: "Nothing drastic. Probably just ask questions about you and your family." We reached our sitting place. "Don't worry, I'll get him distracted."

Me: "How are you going to do that?"

Notha: "Someone else must talk to the Prince and get his attention." My heart panged at the idea of him being distracted by another woman. It's either that or get interviewed by the actual King. So what was it going to be?

Me: "No. If the King wants to ask me questions then so be it."

Notha: "Are you sure? He's very intimidating Thembisa."

Me: "I'm not scared of him." She smiled for the first time.

Notha: "No wonder he chose you. You're his perfect match." She held my hand.

## PRINCE POV\_

I took my seat between my father and Amahle once again. This time, I was seething.

Nkosi: "Do you see what you did?"

Amahle: "No. All you had to do was calm down. I told you to control your anger."

Nkosi: "How can I control my anger when those idiots are talking shit about what they'd do to her!" I hissed.

Amahle: "Still. She's yours. There's nothing they can do but talk and dream."

Nkosi: "It doesn't make it right. She's not some piece of meat."

Amahle: "Your father will start becoming suspicious if you dare show more emotion." I sat back quietly staring at the grounds. "Thembisa is a very beautiful girl. That's what attracted you to her in the first place. Her beauty. Her body. That didn't magically disappear when she became yours. Other men, will still find her attractive. More so now that they know you want her. It was only the princes before your rude interruption. Now even some of the kings are watching her." My whole body was cold. What the hell have I done? I couldn't have stood by. When I saw Sibonelo talking to her, I wanted to punch him in the face. I couldn't just stand back. Thembisa's beauty is one thing but her heart and mind will capture your soul. It would be difficult for anyone not to want her. She's a treasure. My treasure.

Amahle: "Please don't whisper. You're guaranteed to be even more angry." I looked at her.

Nkosi: "How did you know I was going to whisper?"

Amahle: "Just don't." I know I should probably listen to her but I needed to know what was going on. This is why I hated this ability. You use it once and you get addicted, even paranoid. I needed to let things go. I couldn't let things go. If I can't whisper, I'm sitting with them and hearing what they have to say. I went to the Prince table and took my seat. The conversation carried on without a pause. It was about soccer. I knew nothing about it and so had nothing to contribute. I only stared at Sibonelo, he eventually noticed my glare.

Sibonelo: "My Prince."

Nkosi: "Sibonelo."

Sibonelo: "I hope this doesn't come off as disrespectful, seeing that this ceremony is for you, have you chosen a wife already?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Sibonelo: "Oh, that's good. Congratulations. I hope this means, the rest of us can too?"

Nkosi: "No." He stared at me, shocked. What was he expecting? I've never been nice, this shouldn't shock them.

Sibonelo: "Can I ask why?"

Nkosi: "No."

Sibonelo: "Okaay. That's unfortunate."

Nkosi: "It is." Okay, I can't take it anymore. I seeped into his thoughts, watching him sip the whiskey in his cup. Sibonelo's thoughts: "What the fucking hell is wrong with this guy? It's not like he can marry all these girls. Shit, he can. But will he? He's fucking insane. I'm getting this girl. She's not royal so he can't be bothered."

Nkosi: (Please try.) He stared at me, I looked back at him. (I beg you to try.)

Mnqobi: "Sibo?" He looked at his brother then at me. The table was quiet, only he and I stared at each other. I was still in his head. Who would believe him? He shook his head and focused back on the grounds. Sibonelo's thoughts: "There's no way he can read my thoughts. I'm just paranoid. What a creepy fuck." I'm not competing with Sibonelo Biyela. Of all fucking people. He's worse than that Solinga boy. I knew Thembisa loved me. I trusted that she wanted me but I didn't trust anyone else. I didn't trust my father, I didn't trust these people and according to Amahle, I now couldn't even trust the kings of the other families. I obviously needed more security near her. I don't know what lengths they'd all will go just to irritate me. Especially my father. He would be too delighted to crush my soul.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 24

PRINCE POV\_

In the evening, the event was drawing to a close. It was time for me to leave. I wanted to see my baby for just two minutes and get a kiss but I couldn't. I have a feeling my father is watching me closely.

Mandla: "My Prince, would you like to join us for a drink?" I had no desire to do that at all.

Nkosi: "Sure. Maybe later, I have something to quickly attend to this evening." He smiled, nodding like a clown. I looked at Sibonelo, he didn't seem fine. The headache was starting. I almost felt bad for intruding in his thoughts but he'll be fine.

Nkosi: "Sibonelo, you don't seem well."

Sibonelo: "Just a slight headache."

Nkosi: "Maybe you should lie down."

Sibonelo: "I'll be fine." His eyes were woozy already from the pain alone. "I just need a pain killer. Too much noise for the day."

Nkosi: "Hm." I got up from my chair, walking away. Mthunzi stood nearby waiting for me.

Nkosi: "I need extra guards looking after the maidens tonight. First priority being Thembisa. No matter what happens, she gets out first."

Mthunzi: "Done." I walked out following my family with my guards. When we reached the palace, I honestly couldn't sit still but I needed to be less suspicious. We sat down for dinner.

Nobantu: "Today was so lovely."

Nolwazi: "Very. Did you see anyone interesting Mehluli?"

Nkosi: "Yes mother." I cleansed my hand, wiping them dry.

Nolwazi: "From which family?"

Sikhosana: "Is it the Biyela girl? That's a good choice son. I would've hoped more for the Phakamisa girl. We need a better alliance with the family."

Nkosi: "It's not Biyela."

Sikhosana: "She is royal, right?"

Nkosi: "Does it matter?" The table was quiet.

Sikhosana: "Mehluli."

Nkosi: "Father."

Sikhosana: "No commoner can handle being a royal. That has been proven time and time again. Especially a Sikhosana royal. We don't mix. I'm saving you a lot of time here."

Nkosi: "I don't need to be saved time. You and I had a deal, I marry who I want. Royal or not." I ate my starter. He exhaled slowly.

Sikhosana: "Okay. When should we prepare to have her come to dinner so you can get to know her."

Nkosi: "There's no need for that father."

Sikhosana: "Yes there is. If you want to marry a woman I don't know, it would do her a great deal to honour me and this family to a dinner." I could hear the irritation in his tone.

Nkosi: "Okay. I'll court her and see if she accepts." He laughed.

Sikhosana: "My son, stop being so modest. You're the future king. No girl would reject you. Look at you." He laughed. "if she accepts. You're hilarious." This is going to be difficult. I know my father will keep an eye on me and I can't whisper to my guards everyday. That would just be cruel. Also, I don't know the long term effects of that so I'd rather not. So this means I can't see Thembisa as often? No. I'm smarter than this man. We'll just have to find a creative way to see each other. I looked up at him. He had a smirk on his face.

Nkosi: "Father."

Sikhosana: "Mehluli." He smiled, drinking his wine.

SASA POV\_

The weekend was finally coming to an end. Sunday morning, after we cleansed at the river, Nothando got her belongings ready.

Notha: "Let's go."

Me: "Excuse me?"

Notha: "I'm tired of this place. I'm going back to res. Come."

Me: "Nothando, look. We're not friends. You don't have to drag me anywhere. You can leave if you want. I'm not a child."

Notha: "Okay. How will you get to Res then?" I stared at her.

Me: "Some of the girls will catch a taxi nearby, I'll go with them."

Notha: "What is your issue Thembisa?"

Me: "I don't have an issue. You seem to be the one with an issue."

Notha: "I'm asking you, to go home. You're refusing. Why?"

Me: "I know my way home."

Notha: "Look, I didn't even want to be here."

Me: "Then why are you?"

Notha: "Because Amahle asked me to look after you but you're so damn stubborn! Why do you want to befriend everyone? Are you serious? You're about to be a high rank royal wife. You cannot be friends with the whole world!" She hissed. "Get it together. Let's go!" She stomped away from camp, out to the opening. I followed her begrudgingly, my arms folded on my chest. The guards were waiting for us, with a car. I got in after her. We were driven back to res.

Me: "If you didn't want to be here then Why'd you stay?"

Notha: "I promised Amahle I'd keep an eye on you. Especially now that everyone is looking at you."

Me: "Who's everyone? Why are they looking at me?"

Notha: "Thembisa. I've spent two nights in singing and noise. I just need silence. Please." I sighed looking out the window. I really missed Nkosi now. His world and people were so confusing and cold. Yes they were taking care of me but at the same time I couldn't talk to any of them. I felt lonely. Is this how Nkosi always felt? Lonely? It was only a small part of my life and I already wasn't coping. How do you communicate with people who just didn't like talking? Or perhaps, talking to you? We sat in silence until the car drove into our residence. I got out going straight to my room. The first thing I did was change into my leggings and t-shirt. I took out my school books to finish my assignment and start the second one.

Notha: "Thembisa." I got the shock of my life, spinning around to face her.

Me: "Are you serious!! You scared me!"

Notha: "Your left your door unlocked. That basically invites anyone in."

Me: "What do you want?" She kept quiet, staring at me. "I've got work to finish Nothando."

Notha: "There's extra security looking out for you. Don't be alarmed. They're only around to keep you safe." She walked out. I let out a sigh of exhaustion before I sat down and finished my assignment. I started the new one almost immediately, losing myself to it for hours with music playing in my earphones. I was almost done when my phone rang. My sister Zanele was video calling me. This was new. She didn't have a phone that supported this purpose. I answered.

Me: "Hi angel." Her face popped up on the screen.

Nele: "Hey big sis."

Me: "How are you? How are you video calling me?"

Nele: "Daddy bought me a new phone." She screamed. I giggled.

Me: "Congratulations baby."

Nele: "What are you up to?"

Me: "I'm finishing my second assignment." I showed the papers to her.

Nele: "Do you ever not do school work?"

Me: "Yeah. I was with my friends this weekend, we attended a reed dance. Now it's school work time. After this, I need to prepare for my school week."

Mama: "What dance did you go to!?"

Nele: "Reed dance mama. It's some event for virgins."

Mama: "Why are you going to such things? Your purpose to be there is going to school!"

Me: "I just wanted to experience something out of my comfort mama. My roommate invited me."

Mama: "Next thing you're going to start drinking and sleeping with boys outside your comfort."

Nele: "Wait, did you go to the reed dance at the Kings Arena?"

Me: "How did you know that?"

Nele: "It was broadcast on TV Sasa!!" She screamed. "So how was it? Did you see the royals?"

Me: "Yep. They were all there."

Nele: "Oh my. How are they? Do you know the Prince was here? He came to our house Sasa!! He even went with dad in the chicken coup!"

Me: "Seriously?" Now why would he do that?

Nele: "Yes! He even said, next time he would love to join us for dinner because he couldn't stay longer. Mama even cooked for him." She showed me my mother's pleased face.

Mama: "That Prince will make a good king. Just you watch."

Nele: "He even got the kids who drowned out of the lake. Some people say he even went in the lake himself. Can you believe it?" I do believe it because he did do that.

Me: "That's really nice of him. Where's dad?"

Nele: "Here he is. He doesn't like him."

Xolani: "Leave my name out of it."

Mama: "You know your father is hard headed. He's just jealous that he proved him wrong about getting the children out of the lake."

Xolani: "Mxim. One act and you're all singing his praises? Thembisa, what are you doing there?"

Me: "I was finishing my assignment Tata."

Xolani: "is it still the one from last week?"

Me: "No Tata, I finished that one in the morning. This is another."

Xolani: "That's good my child. Did you enjoy the reed dance?"

Me: "Yes Tata. It was quite the experience."

Mama: "What happens there?"

Me: "Well, you get tested for virginity when you arrive. Then once you pass, you're let in with the other ladies. You're introduced to each other, we sing songs, dance. The king comes to talk to us about how proud he is then the next morning, we go to the river to cleanse before we attend the celebration."

Mama: "Hmm."

Me: "School is about to be hectic this week. I have a test on Thursday."

Xolani: "You must do your best, my child."

Mama: "Don't just do your best, pass. Those fees are expensive."

Me: "I'll make sure I pass mama."

Mama: "Good. Your father will send you something tomorrow so you can buy a dress for yourself, do you hear? Maybe also buy a burger for you to enjoy."

Me: "Thank you mama."

Mama: "Okay ke. Bye bye."

Me: "Bye guys. I love you."

Nele: "Love you too."

Xolani: "Bye bye mntanam." They hung up. I continued with my assignment quietly until I finished. It was my first draft, I'd need to check it over again and see where I can improve. My phone buzzed on the table. I checked the message: <I miss you.> From Nkosi. I smiled replying: <I miss you too. Please come see me.> I sent it and packed my books away then started preparing for my week. I checked my timetable, packed my bag according to the first day. I checked the weather and planned my clothes. I even changed my bedding but I realized I hadn't received a message back. That was strange. I checked my phone, no new messages. <Baby? Are you busy?> I sent. It was early evening and I was a bit hungry. I wonder if Petu was back. After packing away my things, I took a walk to her room, knocking on her door. She opened, smiling.

Petu: "Hey. You're back."

Me: "Yeah. Since morning. I just needed to do some work." I walked in her room.

Petu: "Me too." She closed her books. "So... How was it?"

Me: "It was really nice. I enjoyed myself."

Petu: "I saw. I also saw your boo and you talking." She giggled.

Me: "My boo and I?"

Petu: "I get you want your relationship to be a secret, but you two looked too cute trying to act like you didn't know each other." I don't remember any interaction with Nkosi at the event. Apart from when he interrupted Sibonelo.

Me: "Oh you mean Sibonelo." I laughed.

Petu: "Of course. Who else would I be talking about? Yoh, the Heir was so intense. Why did he come up to him like that?"

Me: "I don't know. Maybe royal stuff."

Petu: "Probably. Anyway, should we get some dinner?"

Me: "Yeah. Let's check what they have."

Petu: "When is Amahle coming back?"

Me: "Probably tomorrow." Someone knocked on her door.

Petu: "Okay? That's new. I never get visitors." She opened the door. "Oh. Zimmy?"

Zimmy: "Hey girl." She walked in. "Hey! You're back?"

Me: "Yeah. Hello."

Zimmy: "I was going out of my mind with boredom this weekend. All people wanted to do was watch the dance."

Petu: "It was really cool though."

Zimmy: "I guess. Have you guys eaten? I'm hungry." Petu looked at me.

Me: "We were about to get some dinner."

Zimmy: "Life saver. I'll get a cab."

Petu: "Oh we're just going to dining hall."

Zimmy: "Oh." She sulked. "I hate dining hall. Okay then, let's go."

Me: "Where do you wanna go?" Her face lit up.

Zimmy: "Anywhere outside. Just anywhere. You choose."

Me: "Petu do you have suggestions?"

Petu: "Amelia's is a nice vibe and they have great food."

Zimmy: "Uhm... That won't be a good idea. We're more likely to bump into Khaya there. Let's choose a different place."

Petu: "But Khaya is all over the city. There's no telling where he could be."

Zimmy: "He enjoys Amelia's. Especially on weekends."

Me: "Look, I'm not going to spend my life avoiding Khaya. I've told him I don't want him. If he has any respect for me, he will leave me alone. Unless he wants me to put a restraining order against him. I'm going to change, then we can go."

Zimmy: "Thembisa are you sure? I don't want you to be uncomfortable."

Me: "I'm absolutely sure." I got up, walking to my room, checking my phone again. Nothing. I dialed his number but it didn't ring. Now I was worried. Where was Amahle? I changed into an orange semi tight fitting midi dress, with draw strings on the side. I wore my sneakers, brushed my hairline and wore small earrings. I still had the cornrows from Friday and they looked new. I walked back to Petu, she was dressed in black mini dress and sneakers. Zimmy came in wearing a black leather mini skirt a white top and heels. I giggled.

Me: "Okay now I feel like your child?" She laughed.

Zimmy: "Yeah, I'm trying to find a hot dzaddy. The cab is here loves, let's go." We walked out the building, finding the car outside. We were driven to Amelia's. I checked my phone again but no new messages. How was this man kanti? How do you miss me and disappear into thin air? We walked in to Amelia's and got a table on the balcony. As usual, I looked over to his favourite table and it was empty. He was probably the only person who sat there. The waiter took our drink orders. Mine was just juice. Zimmy and Petu got a bottle of champagne. I didn't want to drink because tomorrow was school and the last thing I needed was a hangover.

Petu: "Have you spoken to Amahle?"

Me: "No. Not since early this morning." I lied. I hadn't seen or spoken to Amahle since yesterday afternoon before she went to sit with her family.

Petu: "Hm. Do you think I should text her? What if she's busy?"

Me: "She'll let you know. Text her." She took her phone, texting. "Where's Fikile?"

Zimmy: "I don't know. She's not talking to me."

Me: "Why?"

Zimmy: "Apparently I'm a two faced bitch." She laughed.

Me: "Zimasa?"

Zimmy: "She's mad that Khaya has dumped her. She wanted me to beg him but I told her no. I didn't tell her to sleep with him. How is it suddenly now my business to keep them together? So I went out for drinks and she went off when she saw us together."

Petu: "But Zimmy, what you're doing is wrong."

Zimmy: "What am I doing Petu?"

Petu: "Bringing your friends to Khaya, knowing he'll sleep with them and toss them to the side when he's done. Why do you do that?"

Zimmy: "First of all, I don't bring friends to Khaya. I go out with friends who want to go out with me. Yes I bump into Khaya, I don't plan to but this is my friend simply because we usually go to the same places. I'm not going to suddenly ignore him when I'm with new people. He then decides to approach the girls, it is the girl that decides to either reject him or sleep with him. I do not get involved. So what exactly am I doing wrong please?"

Petu: "But you benefit from it."

Zimmy: "What am I benefiting? My parents send me an allowance which I use very happily when I want to go out. I've never asked anyone for anything. Especially Khaya. He offers to buy drinks, wena ke Petu if your friend offers to buy you drinks you're going to say no? What would I be benefitting from him?"

Me: "Okay, can we not argue please. Let's just have some dinner and relax. There's no need to go back and forth."

Zimmy: "But Thembisa, it's irritating that I have to keep explaining myself. It's not my fault that Khaya is a whore. Why is that the reason I must stop being his friend? Every day in that res, I'm villainized because I'm said to be a pimp. I've never forced or asked anyone to sleep with him. Every girl goes to his bed willingly without me having to say a thing. If he was raping girls, I'd immediately stop being around him but he hasn't done anything wrong. He makes his intentions clear. The only time I've pushed Khaya was to be with Thembisa and that, I know was

wrong but everyone else? They literally threw themselves at him. But I'm the villain? No man." She looked out to the ocean with glossy eyes.

Petu: "I didn't say it was wrong to be his friend but it would help if you told him to not come for your friends."

Zimmy: "Petunia, you saw how Fikile threw herself at Khaya the first time they met? Now I'm supposed to pull her away and tell her no?"

Me: "I'm on Zimmy's side on this one. The first time I met Khaya, girls were literally throwing themselves at him. It's not something Zimmy said or did. Even when we hung out at his place, I had the option of not cuddling with him but I liked him and honestly, I did want him. It was Zimmy who said to me we can leave if I'm not comfortable being with him or feeling safe and I chose to stay. So no, I don't think it's fair to label her the way she's been labelled."

Zimmy: "I honestly would've loved for him to settle down but I'm not his mother. I can't tell him what to do."

Petu: "Wow. Speak of the devil."

Zimmy: "I did warn you about this place so don't put this on me too." The waiter brought the bottle of champagne and my juice. He opened the bottle and poured in their glasses before walking away. I sipped my juice.

Petu: "Okay? This is new."

Zimmy: "No it's not, we've had this bottle before."

Petu: "Your friend hasn't come to say hi."

Zimmy: "This is again my fault?" I giggled.

Me: "Can we please just move on from this topic?"

Petu: "Uhm...Sasa..."

Me: "What?"

Petu: "Your ..."

Me: "My what?" I sipped my juice. She signaled with her eyes. I looked over where she was pointing. Khaya was sitting with Mngqobi and Sibonelo. My God. "Oh."

Petu: "Oh?" She signaled to Zimmy. This was a mess. Now I can't even go outside to enjoy a meal? How small is this city?

Zimmy: "What's the problem?"

Me: "So Khaya is friends with the royal family?"

Zimmy: "The Biyela's? Yes. He went to school with Mngqobi all his life. They're best friends."

Petu: "Yikes." I sipped my juice.

Zimmy: "Yikes what? What's going on?"

Me: "This platter looks delicious." I looked at the menu.

Zimmy: "Guys?" Petu stared at me wide eyed. I needed the bathroom, so I got up walking to the ladies. After doing my business, I washed my hands and walked out back to the table. Khaya was standing next to Zimmy, chatting.

Khaya: "Why didn't you call me today?"

Zimmy: "Wena why didn't you call Khaya?"

Khaya: "Hawu, what's with the hostility now? We usually talk mos."

Zimmy: "I'm dealing with enough drama because of you. Please, go back to your friends."

Khaya: "You're my friend, I'm trying to talk to you."

Zimmy: "We can talk another time."

Khaya: "Mxim." He looked at me. "Hello Thembisa."

Me: "Hello Khaya." He walked back to his seat.

Petu: "Okay, now we can focus on us. It's my birthday in two months. What do you guys think I should do?"

Me: "It's your day, what do you want to do?"

Petu: "I don't know. That's why I'm asking you." She giggled.

Me: "I've never had an actual party before. I mean a few get togethers with some school friends, whole thing organized by my parents. So I don't know what parties outside of supervision look like."

Zimmy: "How about just a girls night? We can book a house, get alcohol and food. Then each of us cook something different, could be anything. Also, we could make cocktails. Play games and listen to music."

Me: "That sounds amazing. Petu?"

Petu: "I like that. We can do that." I checked my phone again, typing another message: <I'm getting worried. What's going on? Please tell me you're busy.> I sent it.

Zimmy: "Can we move? Tempa also has nice food."

Me: "Why? What's wrong?"

Zimmy: "That."

Sibonelo: "Ladies."

Petu: "Hello Prince Sibonelo." She smiled sweetly. I looked at him.

Sibonelo: "Hello again. Sasa. I hope you don't mind me calling you that, your friend Khaya told me this cute nickname."

Me: "My friends and boyfriend are the only people allowed to call me that." He smiled.

Sibonelo: "That's good to know. Sasa."

Petu: "Zimmy can you please help me in the bathroom? This zip is going to be a problem."

Zimmy: "I'm sure we can wait-"

Petu: "I'm pressed. Please."

Zimmy: "Thembisa, will you be okay?"

Me: "Yes." She looked at Khaya and scowled at him before walking away with Petu. As much as she thinks he might have sent Sibonelo, I have a feeling Sibonelo wasn't sent. In fact, Khaya has retreated from me because of him.

Sibonelo: "You have friends that really love you. All of them seem to protect you."

Me: "I do the same for them." He sat down.

Sibonelo: "That's good. I believe we were interrupted yesterday. Our Prince has a tyrannical approach to his events. He likes to control everything."

Me: "I'm sure he's just protective of his people."

Sibonelo: "Sure. Maybe. Anyway, how about that dinner? Just you and me. I'm free this Thursday."

Me: "No thank you Prince Sibonelo. I'm not interested in having dinner with you." He looked shocked.

Sibonelo: "Can I ask why?"

Me: "No." He chuckled, biting his lip.

Sibonelo: "I see."

Me: "That's good. To see. Very useful sense." He smiled.

Sibonelo: "What can I do to change your mind?"

Me: "Absolutely nothing. Not even God himself can change my mind." I sipped my juice. He looked quite puzzled.

Sibonelo: "This is confusing."

Me: "What is? Being rejected?"

Sibonelo: "Uhm, yeah."

Me: "Quite humbling, huh? I can understand why that's difficult for you Prince Sibonelo. Life is a tricky thing to navigate. Some people get lost even when they own the highest quality navigating system."

Sibonelo: "Unsure what that means, please explain."

Me: "What I'm saying is, using your royal status to lure girls into your bed is kind of tacky."

Sibonelo: "I'm not trying to lure you to my bed." I gasped.

Me: "Really?? That sounds so sweet. Too sweet. Like honey but I don't like honey, Prince Sibonelo."

Sibonelo: "I get you now. You like to play hard to get. I love that. Hunting is my favourite sport. We'll see how humbling that gets in a week." He got up, walking away. What an arrogant asshole. Does he really think he can charm me? Me? Does he know my man? I laughed out loud.

After our dinner, we had some dessert. Zimmy was quiet throughout the dinner. It was late and I wanted to go to bed now.

Me: "Are we ready to leave guys?"

Zimmy: "Just need the bathroom." She walked to the ladies leaving me with Petu.

Me: "And then?"

Petu: "She asked if the boyfriend you've been hiding is Sibonelo. I said no but she just kept quiet after that." I sighed, calling over the waiter. The manager came instead.

Me: "Hello."

Len: "Ma'am."

Me: "I wanted to tip the waiter. For the service."

Len: "Oh that's absolutely unnecessary. Please enjoy the rest of your evening."

Me: "Thank you." He walked away.

Petu: "And that?"

Me: "The bill is already paid. Please don't tell Zimmy."

Petu: "Are you okay? You've been distant a bit. Did Prince Bae say something to you?"

Me: "No. He said nothing." Zimmy came back from the bathroom. "We can go." She took out her wallet. "Don't worry, I already got it." She stared at me.

Zimmy: "Fine. We can go." We walked out of the restaurant to the cab outside. The ride home was quiet but uncomfortable too. Why was Zimmy mad at me now? When we got to Res, I went to my room, Petu went to hers and Zimmy to her own. Amahle was in bed reading a book.

Me: "Hey."

Ama: "Hello."

Me: "Thought you weren't coming back today."

Ama: "I wasn't. Your boyfriend wanted me to."

Me: "Where is he?"

Ama: "At home, having dinner with his parents."

Me: "Oh."

Ama: "He can't communicate with you because father is watching him. He'll be in contact. Don't worry." I nodded, changing into my pajamas. "Phone." I picked it up as it rang.

Me: "Khaya Solinga."

Khaya: "Can I please talk to you for 5 minutes."

Me: "No."

Khaya: "This isn't about us Thembisa. It's not about me, I'm in the parking lot." He hung up. I wore my gown walking out to the parking lot. He was standing outside his car.

Me: "Khaya."

Khaya: "You're not safe."

Me: "What are you talking about?"

Khaya: "Thembisa, you don't understand the royals. They're not good people."

Me: "You mean your best friends?"

Khaya: "Mnqobi is my best friend. You're also my friend and that's why I'm here. Sibonelo is not going to give up. I told you to stay away from Sikhosana. Anything that he touches or even gets close to is of high value. Every royal will want to snatch it. If he truly loves you, he will protect you. But I need you to be vigilant because this will not end well. This is why I didn't want you near him. Now you're quite literally a commodity. Just look out, okay? Try not be by yourself. No more walking alone to school or back. Please promise me this?"

Me: "They can't kidnap me, surely. Khaya that's illegal. Why would you say that?"

Khaya: "It's not kidnapping if it's ordered by a King. You'd be taken and no one can do anything about it. I'm just saying be vigilant. Anything can happen. I wouldn't want anything to happen to you." His eyes shone in the darkness. "Let me walk you in." He walked me into the Res building.

"If I call you out again, don't come out. Not even if Zimmy asks you out. Don't."

Me: "Why?"

Khaya: "Just don't." He walked back to his car.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 25

SASA POV\_

I made it back into my room quite shaken. Khaya didn't seem like someone who would just scare me. Not even as a prank. Plus he looked scared himself.

Me: "What do they want from me?"

Ama: "Not from you. They want it from Nkosinhle."

Me: "Why Amahle?"

Ama: "It's simple. If they can get to you, they can see how he reacts to you. Seeing that Nkosi finds it difficult to control his emotions when it comes to you, it will be very easy for them."

Me: "Is this what he meant when he said he can't be seen with me in public? That people will want to hurt me to get him to react?"

Ama: "More or less, yes."

Me: "What is wrong with you people? No offense but what the hell? Is power so important?"

Ama: "No offense taken. Yes it's important but we have to keep it in the right hands."

Me: "This is alot for me." I got in bed, covering myself.

Ama: "I'm sorry." I couldn't even sleep. Everytime I tried I felt like I was drowning. It was so uncomfortable and annoying seeing that it's late and

I'd like to rest after a busy weekend. Eventually I slipped into a quiet peaceful sleep.

## PRINCE POV\_

My father was hosting the Phakamisa family. I did not have much of a choice but to attend this dinner and later meeting with King Phakamisa and my father. He was being secretive about his business opportunity, but I wasn't in the mood to figure out why. I also couldn't stop thinking about Thembisa. I know she's probably worried about me and I couldn't wait to get out of this meeting. I couldn't leave the house because I knew my father had the army as extra security following me. Maybe if Thembisa goes to eNtabeni first, then I follow, it would be better? The staff. Fuck. Okay, I can clear out the staff. How will she get to eNtabeni? Mthunzi needed to pick her up. But Mthunzi is basically joined at my hip, him not being near me would be suspicious.

Sikhosana: "I think that would be a great idea. Don't you think so Mehluli?"

Nkosi: "Yes." What the hell was I agreeing to now?

Sikhosana: "Then it's settled. I'll ask her family to join us for dinner this week."

Nkosi: "Who?"

Sikhosana: "I thought you were listening?"

Nkosi: "Sorry, I was thinking about work." He stared at me, not believing a word I said for sure.

Sikhosana: "We're talking about the Bathonga princess. Her father expressed interest in meeting you. She's only two years younger than you. I think you'll have a great deal in common."

Nkosi: "Because she's two years younger than me and she's a princess?"

Sikhosana: "No, because she studied architecture too."

Nkosi: "I see. Father, I promised the princes I'd join them for a drink. I'll only be a short while."

Sikhosana: "Alright then. Go be with your peers. We'll talk tomorrow."

Nkosi: "Have a lovely evening King Phakamisa." I got up walking out. Mthunzi was in my office.

Mthunzi: "My Prince."

Nkosi: "The army is still following me."

Mthunzi: "I can talk to your father tomorrow." I dialed Thembisa's number, the phone rang to voicemail. I tried again and she didn't pick up.

Nkosi: "Fuck. What's Amahle's number?"

Mthunzi: "Same one you've always had." I dialed the number, voicemail.

Nkosi: "It's on voicemail. Thembisa is not picking up."

Mthunzi: "She's probably sleeping. Try in the morning." My phone rang in my hand, melting my heart.

Nkosi: "Baby?"

Thembisa: "Hey." She yawned.

Nkosi: "I'm sorry for waking you up."

Thembisa: "That's okay."

Nkosi: "I couldn't contact you, my father was hosting King Phakamisa after that, we had a meeting."

Thembisa: "Okay."

Nkosi: "I want to see you."

Thembisa: "Then come see me."

Nkosi: "I'm trying to find a way. Uhm..my father wants to meet you. I want to control that. I don't want him to ambush you."

Thembisa: "And why would he ambush me?"

Nkosi: "He'll probably try to intimidate you to leave me."

Thembisa: "Why would he do that? I thought you said you're allowed to marry whoever you want."

Nkosi: "Yes I am but he's being very sneaky now. I don't know what he's up to, but it's something and it involves you."

Thembisa: "Do you think he'd hurt me? Khaya said I shouldn't walk alone or be alone. He said everyone is watching me. Is that true?" How would Khaya know that?

Nkosi: "Why would Khaya tell you that?"

Thembisa: "Sibonelo approached me tonight at Amelia's." My blood boiled in my veins. He actually wants to challenge me, doesn't he?

Nkosi: "What did he say?"

Thembisa: "He wants to take me out. When I told him no, he said that hunting is his favourite sport. According to him I'm playing hard to get and he's going to humble me in a week. I don't know what that means." It was taking all of me, all of my might and power to not break this table across the room. HOW DARE HE.

Nkosi: "I've put up extra security around you. Clearly I have to do more. Are you comfortable with bodyguards?"

Thembisa: "That would be even more suspicious Nkosi. I'm an ordinary girl. I can't just rock up with heavily armed bodyguards out of the blue. That would give it away." Oh my God, I want to kill him.

Nkosi: "Thembisa, I can't just let this go. If he is circling around you then he's not the only one."

Thembisa: "Right. Apparently, being snatched by a king isn't called kidnapping and it's not illegal. So... I don't know anymore." Okay, he didn't need to tell her that, it'll just scare her for no reason.

Nkosi: "I'll fix this. Okay? We'll fix it. Thembisa I'm not letting you go, ever. I love you."

Thembisa: "I love you too."

Nkosi: "Go back to sleep, my love. I'll sort this out." I hung up.

Mthunzi: "We're in love now?"

Nkosi: "Stop it. We've got a problem."

Mthunzi: "I heard."

Nkosi: "I'm trying not to react Mthunzi but if I see Sibonelo, I'm going to break his neck."

Mthunzi: "And that would be bad because?"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi you're supposed to be my advisor. This can't work the opposite way."

Mthunzi: "Fine. The right thing to do is to obviously leave him alone, any form of reaction will make it obvious that she's special to you. Giving everyone else ammunition to go after her and then? Chaos. That's when you'll be heavily distracted and most probably make bad decisions, weakening the throne. Personally, I don't care. I'd kill him on sight if he was circling my wife but of course, you're a better man than me."

Nkosi: "How can I protect her?"

Mthunzi: "She's right about the bodyguards. It's another give away. Maybe let's wait this out. There's already security around her, good thing she's friends with Amahle because then it'll just look like her security instead. Downside? She has to stick by Amahle's side day and night."

Nkosi: "How do I see her?"

Mthunzi: "Unfortunately, that will have to wait, my prince. We can't risk it right now. Not while everyone is watching." I'm obviously in hell.

SASA POV\_

The week went on ahead without incident. I could feel the security around me but I couldn't really see them. You know that feeling like you're being watched? Amahle, Nothando and Petu have stuck to my side all week. I was honestly scared, I'm not going to even lie. There was nowhere I went without my group. We went to school together and came back together. I didn't go anywhere else. I didn't even get the delivery of the pizza at the gate. Khaya was also around alot. He left his car at school and walked near us from a distance everyday often abandoning his best friend, Mngqobi. Unfortunately I'd run out of luck today. I came out of school and realized my friends hadn't yet come out. Shit, it was Thursday. I came out early on Thursday. I saw Khaya at the parking, we locked eyes and he slightly shook his head. What the fuck did that mean. I stopped right then. What happens now? I could go back into school but where? This isn't exactly the safest place in the nation. Khaya was standing with Mngqobi who was having a conversation obviously with himself. I saw behind them, Sibonelo approaching. He smiled at me. I didn't have an exit. I could go back into school but do what there? I

needed to face this bully and punch him in the face if needs be. Okay, I can't punch him but I needed to face him. I walked to them, smiling.

Me: "Hi baby." I hugged Khaya. He stood there, stunned to hell and back, unable to speak. "I hope you weren't waiting too long." Mngqobi hid his face, giggling.

Khaya: "Thembisa, what are you doing?" He whispered.

Me: "I thought you're driving me home?"

Khaya: "Thembisa." He warned. I looked at Sibonelo.

Me: "Oh hello Prince Sibonelo. Lovely seeing you again."

Sibonelo: "Right." He smiled, looking quite amused. "How about you let my brother and his friend go play soccer while you and I talk."

Me: "I would love to. But my boyfriend said he's taking me on an ice cream date after my test today. Right baby?"

Sibonelo: "Boyfriend?"

Me: "Yes. It's when two people are in a relationship together."

Sibonelo: "That's interesting."

Me: "Is it though? Anyway, should we walk baby?"

Sibonelo: "Mngqobi." Mngqobi walked away with him.

Khaya: "Are you serious!?"

Me: "Where would I run to Khaya? I had to do something."

Khaya: "You don't insult a prince. He won't take that lying down."

Me: "I'm not going anywhere with him. If you refuse to protect me, then why are you here?"

Khaya: "Protecting you is Sikhosana's job. I can't fight with a prince. Especially over a woman who is not mine." I stared at him.

Me: "Ok." I walked away, going to the res building.

Khaya: "Come on, Sasa, you can't be walking alone."

Me: "I'll be fine Khaya. Whatever happens, happens." I walked all the way to the Res. I didn't have class tomorrow, my lecturer wouldn't come in, she told us. I'd have a short study session in the morning then probably, Nkosi will come pick me up for a weekend together. I entered

the building, going to my room. Since I had nothing to do, I decided to sort out my laundry. Someone knocked on my door, scaring me a bit. But this is Res. Outsiders aren't allowed inside. I opened the door.

Me: "Jimmy. Thank God it's you." She walked in.

Jimmy: "Who are you running from?"

Me: "No one. How are you?"

Jimmy: "I'm fine. Despite you hiding that you're dating a Prince. Really, Thembisa? I thought we were friends. Why would you hide Sibonelo?"

Me: "I'm not hiding him. Jimmy, this is a complicated situation."

Jimmy: "Is it? Or you thought I'd be jealous of you? Thembisa You're my best friend."

Me: "That's not why I didn't tell you."

Jimmy: "It doesn't matter anymore, I'm not upset. If he makes you happy then I'm happy for you. He is a little bit shady but I mean he's hot so..." She giggled. I smiled, upset that I still can't tell her the truth. "Doing your laundry?"

Me: "Yeah."

Jimmy: "Okay then can we hang out tonight instead? I miss you."

Me: "Indoors. Yes."

Jimmy: "Perfect, I'll bring wine and food." She walked out. I took my laundry down to the laundry room, putting in the first load, clicking the machine and watching it start. I sighed, realising I'd forgotten my phone again.

Me: "What is it about this room that I keep forgetting my phone upstairs." I mumbled, turning around. I almost choked in shock.

Sibonelo: "Thembisa." He smiled.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 26

## SASA POV\_

I stood still, staring at him. My heart was racing but I wouldn't show him I'm scared. He might like it. How the hell did he get in here?

Me: "I would think a prince has housekeepers that do their laundry for them." He smiled.

Sibonelo: "I would think you're smart enough to know you can't get rid of me that easily."

Me: "I didn't try to get rid of you Prince Sibonelo. I'm not capable of attempted murder. Please." I walked to the couch. He chuckled.

Sibonelo: "Not only are you gorgeous but your brain is something else. I love a smart mouth. Makes sense why he'd be so interested in you."

Me: "Who's he?"

Sibonelo: "Sikhosana."

Me: "I don't know who that is."

Sibonelo: "Of course you do Thembisa. Everyone knows who Sikhosana is. Especially because, he showed interest in you. I'm sure you've heard of him. The future king."

Me: "Okay. I have a feeling you're not here to keep me company while I do my laundry Prince Sibonelo."

Sibonelo: "True. I came to pick you up for our dinner."

Me: "I vividly remember telling you I'm not interested in having dinner with you."

Sibonelo: "And why is that Thembisa?"

Me: "I don't need a reason. I simply just don't want to."

Sibonelo: "I think that's pretty unfair, judging me of the sole basis of my status. No different to the tacky approach of luring you to bed, now is it?" I stared at him, quietly.

Me: "I'm quite busy."

Sibonelo: "I'm not in a rush. Maybe 5pm you'll be ready for me?"

Me: "We'll see."

Sibonelo: "We'll see." He walked out the laundry room. I let a sigh of relief out. This was scary. How can people just walk in and out of here? I felt so exposed. What happens when someone comes in here and takes me? Amahle walked in, I almost jumped in shock.

Me: "Hi."

Ama: "Hey."

Me: "Sibonelo was here."

Ama: "I noticed."

Me: "Amahle. I need to get away from here. I don't think he's the type to take no for an answer."

Ama: "He isn't."

Me: "Well?" She looked at the floor.

Ama: "I'm sorry."

Me: "Why are you sorry Amahle?"

Ama: "This you can't run from. If you try to avoid or hide, he will persist. Making life more difficult for you."

Me: "What are you saying?"

Ama: "I'm saying, it may be a better idea for you to have dinner with him. To show him you're not hiding anything."

Me: "Are you fucking serious?!"

Ama: "Sibonelo isn't interested in you Thembisa, he wants to push Nkosi to do something."

Me: "Who wouldn't do something? Who would stand by while their girlfriend is being hunted by another man?"

Ama: "Unfortunately. This is how the game is. You can dissuade Sibonelo. Make yourself unlikeable. Nkosi has a meeting today and maybe after today, Sibonelo will realize he's wasting his time." I was shaking. Not out of fear but actual pain.

Me: "What is this meeting about?"

Ama: "Father is introducing him to a princess from the Bathonga family." I laughed.

Me: "Ok." I sat down staring at the TV.

Ama: "Thembisa, we're doing this to protect your identity for now. Soon you'll meet our father and you'll understand why we're trying to keep you away from him. Unless of course you want to marry Nkosinhle this weekend, that would make all our lives easier honestly." I stared at her.

Me: "Do you mind giving me some space?"

Ama: "Sure." She walked back out. I stared at the television. This was not what I signed up for. This isn't the first love I was hoping for. Not this difficulty.

## PRINCE POV\_

I paced my office.

Nkosi: "No."

Mthunzi: "Nkosinhle-"

Nkosi: "No!!" I banged the table.

Mthunzi: "Nkosi. What do you want me to do? Even with extra security, Sibonelo can talk to her. The bodyguards will make everything obvious. What we need is for him to lose interest. He needs to see you uninterested."

Nkosi: "I'm not uninterested Mthunzi. How can I act something I'm not? What's our other option?"

Mthunzi: "We take her into hiding."

Nkosi: "And what about school? Her family?"

Mthunzi: "You own the university. Her family will be the problem. Maybe you should convince her to marry you then."

Nkosi: "She said not now, eventually but not yet." I sighed, continuing with my pacing. "I can't do it. I can't let him near her. Ban him from that res. Do it now!!"

Mthunzi: "I can't do that. He has a royal pass." I threw the glass ornament against the wall. "My Prince."

Nkosi: "FUCK!!!!" I screamed.

Mthunzi: "I can still take him out. I've got the sniper on standby."

Nkosi: "Do you want a war?"

Mthunzi: "It's not like we can lose."

Nkosi: "That's not the point Mthunzi!! If I kill one, I'd have to kill them all." I tried to calm down but the rage in my heart wanted to rip Sibonelo apart.

Mthunzi: "This will work Nkosi. I need you to try your best."

Nkosi: "I need to talk to her." I dialed her number, leaning on my desk. Her phone rang for a while before she eventually picked up.

Thembisa: "Hello."

Nkosi: "Hi baby."

Thembisa: "Hi."

Nkosi: "I'm sorry this is happening." I've never resented my life more than I do right now.

Thembisa: "Okay."

Nkosi: "I'll make sure he doesn't hurt you. I swear on my life."

Thembisa: "How will you do that Nkosi? Amahle already told me his plan is to get a reaction out of you. Don't you think if you try to interfere, he will be proven right?"

Nkosi: "I'm trying baby. I really am."

Thembisa: "Amahle says he will back off soon. So hopefully, after today I won't have to deal with him again."

Nkosi: "On condition that I am not interested."

Thembisa: "Yes. Good luck for tonight."

Nkosi: "What's happening tonight?"

Thembisa: "Aren't you meeting with the Bathonga princess?" Amahle that fucking brat!

Nkosi: "It's a family dinner really."

Thembisa: "If you say so."

Nkosi: "My father wanted to introduce me to her."

Thembisa: "Okay. I have to start getting ready." Dear God please don't look sexy. I know this was an impossible ask but please.

Nkosi: "Okay baby. Please call me tonight. I'll make a plan for us. Maybe you can go up to eNtabeni and I meet you there."

Thembisa: "I love you Nkosihle. I need you to know that."

Nkosi: "I love you too Thembisa." She hung up.

## SASA POV\_

I was ready for dinner and very nervous. I'd let loose my afro combing it and holding it back with a black bejewelled band. I wore a black satin skirt that held my curves slightly and flowed loosely down to my calf. The top I chose was a black modest bodysuit with short sleeves. The heels I owned were the short black ones and luckily fit perfectly for this outfit.

Ama: "You look beautiful."

Me: "I wish you'd let me wear leggings and a sweater."

Ama: "It doesn't really matter what you wear. At this present moment, Sibonelo only sees you as a chess piece." I checked the time. "He's here." I heard a knock on the door.

Me: "Amahle, will I be safe? He won't try to kidnap me?"

Ama: "Sibonelo won't kidnap you. You're safe. For now."

Me: "What does that mean?"

Ama: "That means, Nkosihle needs to play his part." I nodded opening the door.

Security: "You have a visitor."

Me: "Thanks. I'll see you soon." I say to Amahle before I walk out. It's the worst time, as most girls are either coming in or going to dinner. I hope Sibonelo stays inside the car or better yet, only sent the car for me. I stepped outside. Nope. I was out of luck. Not him blocking the gate with his sleek Mercedes Benz. He stood outside, leaning on the car with the back door open. As if that wasn't enough, he was playing music. No, he

wanted to embarrass me. I could've died with shame. I stood in front of him. He threw his cigarette on the floor before stepping on it.

Me: "This entire scene is unnecessary."

Sibonelo: "What about it is unnecessary?"

Me: "Can we please go?"

Sibonelo: "You haven't even smiled at me or said hello." He smiled.

Me: "Good evening Prince Sibonelo." He leaned in the car taking out a bunch of flowers.

Sibonelo: "Good evening beautiful."

Me: "Thank you." He closed the door holding my hand to the passenger seat. He opened it leading me in. I climbed in the car, he closed the door after me. So he drives himself? Great. Just great.

Sibonelo: "Where do you want to eat?" He drove out the Res gate.

Me: "Anywhere is fine."

Sibonelo: "Is Amelia's fine? Maybe you'd like to be in a familiar environment?"

Me: "I don't mind anywhere to be honest Prince Sibonelo." He chuckled.

Sibonelo: "Please call me Sibonelo. Or baby."

Me: "And why would I call you baby?"

Sibonelo: "Maybe because you told your friends we're dating."

Me: "Who told you that!!"

Sibonelo: "Your friend." He smiled. "So you do like me? That's nice."

Me: "Which friend?"

Sibonelo: "It doesn't matter now. What matters is, we're spending some time together. Who knows, maybe we could actually start dating by the end of the night." I know it can't be Petu. She would never approach Sibonelo and she'd probably be too shy to respond to him. She can barely say two words to Mngqobi who is a much nicer version of this one. Could it be Zimmy? Why would Zimmy tell him that? Or ask him? He drove into the Amelia parking lot.

Sibonelo: "Am I making you uncomfortable?"

Me: "A little bit, yes."

Sibonelo: "Then why did you lie to your friends?" I can't tell him I'm protecting Nkosi.

Me: "It was harmless. I didn't think you'd find out."

Sibonelo: "I'm not mad." I looked at him. He had a menacing look that I think was more his identity than anything. He was just a sketchy person as sexy as he was. "Let's go inside." We got out the car, he gave his keys to his guard which had been following in a different car. We walked into the restaurant, settling for a table in the more private area. Len came to the table, smiling as usual.

Len: "Good evening, Prince Sibonelo. Ma'am."

Me: "Hi."

Sibonelo: "I'll have a double of my usual."

Len: "Yes sir. Ma'am?"

Me: "Just a cranberry juice please." He nodded and walked away. Sibonelo looked around. "Does this happen all the time. Everywhere you go people are staring at you?"

Sibonelo: "They're not staring at me. They're used to me."

Me: "They don't know me so I can only assume you're their interest."

Sibonelo: "Oh I wish I was the interest, Thembisa. Where are you from?"

Me: "I'm from Mthinomkhulu village. Born and raised there." He laughed.

Sibonelo: "That makes sense."

Me: "What makes sense?"

Sibonelo: "The new developments for the village are quite sudden, don't you think?"

Me: "No actually. They're long over due. The community was very displeased with the royal family. They hadn't had a visit for years and they were really struggling. That village is abandoned and left out because it's too far. I don't think that's fair. All the others have developed and ours stayed the same as it was in 1940?"

Sibonelo: "So you're into those politics huh."

Me: "Yes. Very much into that."

Sibonelo: "So what do you think about the developments? Are they a stunt or really being built to benefit the people?" This one was trying to trick me.

Me: "How can the people benefit if they don't own the land?" He smiled.

Sibonelo: "So you're against the developments?"

Me: "I can't comment until I see the end of the process. How will it benefit the community? What will it take away from them? From the town nearby? Too much is relying on the end product."

Sibonelo: "You seem like a difficult woman to please."

Me: "No I'm not actually. I believe it's easy to please someone you're willing to listen to." Len brought our drinks. Sibonelo stared at me quietly. "Thank you." Len nodded, walking away.

Sibonelo: "What are you studying?"

Me: "Law."

Sibonelo: "Everything about you just makes sense."

Me: "What do you mean?"

Sibonelo: "The way you're advocating for your community. You'll be the first lawyer out of that village?"

Me: "And definitely not the last."

Sibonelo: "I don't doubt that at all. What does the future king think about your views? About the developments."

Me: "I wouldn't know. The man is untouchable. He doesn't make it easy to walk up to him and speak, now does he?"

Sibonelo: "Somehow, I find that hard to believe."

Me: "And why is that?"

Sibonelo: "Something happened on Saturday. Not sure what. He just seemed very passionate about you."

Me: "You must have been mistaken, I don't think he knows me. If he did, he would've said something."

Sibonelo: "Hm... I think he did. I could've sworn I heard him dare me to come near you."

Me: "That's strange."

Sibonelo: "What's strange is that he didn't speak. He had a look in his eyes, something dark." He gulped down his whiskey.

Me: "That sounds scary." I sipped my juice. "Do you think he'll say something now?"

He looked at the door. Nkosinhle had just walked in with Mthunzi and their guards. They sat down in his usual couch.

Sibonelo: "Interesting." I don't know what Nkosinhle was doing but he wasn't looking at me. His usual uninterested facial expression on, staring at nothing. I missed his smile so much.

Me: "What is it about him that interests people so much?" Sibonelo stared at me for a long time before he answered.

Sibonelo: "Something about him isn't right. He has hidden way too much of himself to the world."

Me: "And that's a bad thing?"

Sibonelo: "We're yet to find that out."

Me: "I see. Anyway, tell me about you."

Sibonelo: "Not much to tell. You already know I'm Sibonelo Biyela. I have two brothers and a sister. I grew up in the east of Mountain Peak."

Me: "How old are you?"

Sibonelo: "29."

Me: "Oh? You don't look it."

Sibonelo: "Yeah? You reckon I should keep the routine?"

Me: "No, it's aging you faster is what I'm trying to say." He laughed.

Sibonelo: "You don't care, do you? You just insult me as you please."

Me: "I was joking. I apologize for insulting you."

Sibonelo: "You're forgiven sweetheart." He held my hand on the table.

Me: "Should we order food?"

Sibonelo: "You don't want to wait a bit?"

Me: "No. I'm hungry. I don't come to restaurants for ambience." He smiled, calling over the waiter.

Sibonelo: "What would you like to have?"

Me: "Hmm... I think I want the chicken burger with the chilli cheese fries, the buffalo wings come in a pack of six? Add those. Can I also get the ocean platter? It looks delicious. Maybe a bottle of the...uhm how do you pronounce this champagne? That one. I've been dying to taste it." I smiled at Sibonelo. He looked at me, puzzled.

Sibonelo: "Quite a lot of food."

Me: "Is that a problem for you? Strange that you want to go out with a thick girl but God Forbid if she tries to eat."

Sibonelo: "I'm not worried. As long as you're enjoying yourself." I wasn't. Nkosi hadn't looked over at me once. "Please refill me." The waiter nodded and walked away.

Me: "Did you study here at Mountain Peak?"

Sibonelo: "Partly. I did my undergrad here, went on to do my honours in Golden Crown."

Me: "Are you thinking about studying further?"

Sibonelo: "I partly run my father's companies with my father and occasionally my older brother Zwe. I wouldn't have the time to go back to school especially for masters."

Me: "What businesses does your family own?"

Sibonelo: "Telecoms and Automotive."

Me: "Oh. That's impressive. So you're rich rich."

Sibonelo: "I guess." He looked at his phone and frowned. I hope my hints of gold digging rub him off the wrong way. I didn't know what I was doing.

Me: "Everything okay?" He looked at Nkosi and back at me.

Sibonelo: "Yeah."

Me: "You look like you got bad news?"

Sibonelo: "Not bad, just confusing." He looked at me. "I might have made a mistake."

Me: "With what?"

Sibonelo: "Don't worry about it." His drink came and he gulped it down quick.

Me: "That's worrying."

Sibonelo: "Don't worry, I don't drive when I'm drinking."

Me: "That's not the worrying part. You look mad." He licked his lips, looking at me.

Sibonelo: "I'm not mad." His eyes swayed over to the view while he chewed ice. What the hell was going on? Finally, Nkosi looked at me. My heart fluttered. I quickly looked down at my juice.

Sibonelo: "What?"

Me: "Hm?"

Sibonelo: "You're blushing."

Me: "I'm having dinner with my crush. Of course I'm blushing." I giggled. He rolled his eyes, looking back at the view. I'd succeeded but I did want to irritate him some more. "I know it's still early but... Maybe we should wait a bit before, you know. The deed. As you know I'm a virgin. I actually wanted to wait till marriage before, doing it."

Sibonelo: "What makes you think I will wait for you till marriage sweetheart?" He was no longer looking at me. The view behind me was much more interesting and I couldn't care less.

Me: "Well, earlier you said that we're getting to know each other since we're known to be dating." He chuckled.

Sibonelo: "I hate to disappoint you and your fantasy but I don't think you're my type."

Me: "And why is that?"

Sibonelo: "Don't make me say it."

Me: "Please do."

Sibonelo: "The only interesting thing about you was your association with him." He signaled to Nkosi with his head. "But that was untrue. You

were a mere diversion because he wanted to discreetly welcome the Bathonga princess as his new wife."

Me: "Why would my association with him be interesting?" My chest was burning.

Sibonelo: "That isn't something your cute little self needs to worry about, Thembisa. Stick to Khaya. He'll take good care of you. Do you want a take away?" The waiter placed all the food I'd ordered on the table. I was so disgusted I wanted to throw up.

Me: "No, thank you. I'm not hungry Prince Sibonelo." He shrugged, taking out his wallet.

Sibonelo: "Bring the bill." The waiter rushed to fetch the bill. "Don't be so sad, Sasa. At least we had this nice time together, right? That's something a lot of girls can't brag about. You can tell your friends I'm an asshole and you dumped me." The waiter brought the bill and he paid. I kept my mouth shut, my mind still reeling at the Princess bride thing. "Do you want to bag this?"

Me: "No thank you."

Sibonelo: "Alright then. To waste it goes." He stood up. I got up, taking my bag about to walk. He held my waist pulling me to him. "I'm sorry. For what it's worth, you're beautiful and smart. You were just a pawn in a royal game. Who knows, maybe we might bump into one another in the future when you've experienced more in life and we can explore something else together."

Me: "Right." I stepped around him, walking out the door. I'd successfully removed the Sibonelo obstacle but now there was this Bathonga princess? What did Sibonelo mean when he said discreetly welcoming the Bathonga princess? As his new wife?

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 27

PRINCE POV\_

My hands were shaking while I tried hard not to explode. Sibonelo was standing, holding Thembisa close to him, talking softly in her face. I hate that he was even touching her. I avoided looking at them. Thembisa walked out the restaurant. I took my glass gulping down my drink.

Mthunzi: "Almost done." Sibonelo came to our section.

Sibonelo: "Your Highness." He smiled.

Nkosi: "Sibonelo."

Sibonelo: "I just wanted to come over and say thank you for an amazing event last weekend. I may have found myself a good distraction." He looked after Thembisa then back at me.

Nkosi: "Enjoy." His jaw tightened.

Sibonelo: "I suppose congratulations are in order for you as well."

Nkosi: "And why would that be?"

Sibonelo: "I couldn't have expected you to have an interest in the Bathonga princess. That came as a shock."

Nkosi: "Hm."

Sibonelo: "Well then. I wish you the best of luck and all the nation's blessings with your new wife. I have a long night ahead of me." He smiled, licking his lips. I looked back at my restaurant, minding my business before he walked out with his two guards.

Mthunzi: "Perfect. You did so well."

Nkosi: "Follow them."

Mthunzi: "We can't do that-"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi." I hissed.

Mthunzi: "Nkosi it's too risky. We already have security following at a safe distance. If you or your guards go near, his suspicions will flare up again. We've gotten this far. Let's wait it out." My phone rang. Now's not the time. "Answer him."

Nkosi: "I'm not answering a damn thing until I'm sure Thembisa is inside her room Mthunzi. Don't fucking piss me off." He surrendered. We sat

quietly, waiting. My phone kept ringing and I kept ignoring it. Then Mthunzi's started.

Mthunzi: "Yes Your Highness?"

Sikhosana: "Give him the phone." Mthunzi handed me the phone.

Nkosi: "Father, now is not the ti-"

Sikhosana: "No. I want you back in this house now. Do you hear me?!" I hung up, giving Mthunzi his phone.

Nkosi: "Call Amahle."

Mthunzi: "Nko-"

Nkosi: "Now!!" He dialed the number on his phone. She picked up on the third ring.

Ama: "What?"

Nkosi: "Has she arrived?"

Ama: "No."

Nkosi: "Amahle. Check outside."

Ama: "I'm not doing that. Can you relax?"

Nkosi: "No. This is Biyela we're talking about. Fucking check!"

Ama: "No." I heaved with frustration. "Don't even think of coming here. You think your father isn't watching where you are? Please don't be stupid Nkosi." Why must I be punished? Why do I have to go through this pain?

Nkosi: "Please check." Begging was beneath me but I didn't have much of a choice anymore. I heard the door opening on her side so I waited.

Ama: "I'm standing outside. She's not here." My heart started racing.

Nkosi: "What does that mean?"

Ama: "Wait."

Nkosi: "Until what Amahle." She kept quiet. "Amahle Sikhosana."

Ama: "There. He just parked."

Nkosi: "Okay. Tell me when she gets out the car."

Ama: "She's out of the car, walking towards me. I'll have her call you when we're in the room." She hung up. I sighed in relief.

Mthunzi: "Let's go." I followed him out the restaurant to our car. We were driven out, going to the palace. "Nkosi, what you feel for this girl is quite dangerous, don't you think?"

Nkosi: "Do you think I planned to feel like this Mthunzi? I didn't want to fall in love. That was not the plan. What I needed was a wife that would serve as a Queen and a mother to my children. I didn't even know I could ever feel like this. That on its own is fucking scary. If I could, Thembisa would be my wife by day break tomorrow."

Mthunzi: "And you think this will stop? Whether she's your wife or not, once the royals realize how much you're willing to give up for her? It's over." I promise I hated this life. I hated it with all of me. My phone rang in my hand.

Nkosi: "Baby?" I answered.

Thembisa: "Are you getting married to the Bathonga princess?"

Nkosi: "No. Why?"

Thembisa: "But she's being introduced to your family today?"

Nkosi: "It's just a formal dinner my love."

Thembisa: "Are you sure Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "Yes. I'd never lie to you."

Thembisa: "Fine. I'm in my room now."

Nkosi: "I'm glad to hear that. I was losing my mind."

Thembisa: "You looked like you didn't care."

Nkosi: "I wish that was true. I wish we didn't have to go through these lengths. Thembisa, I want to marry you."

Thembisa: "Nkosihle, we can't marry because people are jealous of you. That's not a good reason. I love you, I want to be with you but I'm not ready for marriage. We've only known each other a little less than a month."

Nkosi: "I understand."

Thembisa: "Let's give it a few months before we discuss marriage. Okay? I'm yours. I'm not going anywhere. I only want you." I sighed.

Nkosi: "Okay baby. I'll call you after dinner. I'll send a car to pick you up so we can meet eNtabeni. I'll bring you back before school tomorrow."

Thembisa: "I don't have school tomorrow so you won't have to bring me back." I smiled.

Nkosi: "Good. Then we can spend all weekend together. I miss you so much."

Thembisa: "What do you miss?" I chuckled.

Nkosi: "Everything."

Thembisa: "Tell me." She giggled. I looked at Mthunzi, he was staring at me with a shocked look. Why is he in my business?

Nkosi: "I miss your dry jokes, I don't know why you think you're so funny."

Thembisa: "You laugh when I tell my jokes so I know I'm funny. What else?"

Nkosi: "Your soft skin, you have the softest skin I've ever touched. And you smell so damn good." She giggled.

Thembisa: "Okay fine. I miss you too."

Nkosi: "What do you miss about me?"

Thembisa: "I miss cuddling on your lap. Your kisses and your laugh when I tell you dry jokes." I laughed.

Nkosi: "I can't wait to see you."

Thembisa: "Me too."

Nkosi: "I love you baby."

Thembisa: "I love you too my king." I smiled.

Nkosi: "Hang up the phone then."

Thembisa: "I can't hang up on you Your Highness." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "You're so silly. Bye bye baby. Mthunzi is looking at me funny."

Thembisa: "Bye love. Say hi for me."

Nkosi: "Okay." She hung up. "Thembisa says Hi-"

Mthunzi: "I heard."

Nkosi: "Say what's on your mind while I'm still in a good mood."

Mthunzi: "The softest skin you've ever touched? Please, what other skins are you touching?"

Nkosi: "Why can't I enjoy myself for all of two minutes?"

Mthunzi: "You're in love and it's very strange. I never thought I'd witness it." I looked out the window.

Nkosi: "She makes me happy."

Mthunzi: "And you deserve to be happy." I looked at the new message on my phone, opening it. It was a picture of her face. <I miss you.> My heart softened as it usually did when I saw her. I couldn't stop staring at this picture. "A response would be nice."

Nkosi: "Get out of my business Mthunzi." He laughed.

We arrived at the palace. I walked in, intending to go upstairs first but my father already was waiting for me.

Sikhosana: "Finally. What took you so long?"

Nkosi: "I was in the city. Working."

Sikhosana: "Fine. Come on in, dinner is about to be served."

Nkosi: "Can't I change first-"

Sikhosana: "You're absolutely fine. Come." I followed him to the palace dining hall. We only used it for guests, as a family we used the smaller dining room. The Bathonga family was seated with my own already.

Sikhosana: "My son is home." He smiled, sitting down.

Nkosi: "Good evening King Bathonga and family. Mothers." I sat next to my father.

Bathonga: "I'm glad you were able to join us Prince Mehluli. Your father wasn't sure you'd make it. I understand you must be very busy these days with new developments and all."

Nkosi: "Yes. I'm quite busy." I washed my hands in the bowl offered by our server.

Bathonga: "Which one has your attention now?" I looked at him.

Nkosi: "The new residence."

Bathonga: "How is it different to the three you've already built?"

Sikhosana: "My son has a soft spot for the poor and ordinary. He thrives well in making life more bearable for them." He held my hand, beaming.

Bathonga: "That's a good quality in a king. You raised him well."

Sikhosana: "I know." He was definitely proud of himself.

Bathonga: "And what about the village? Which one was it? The Mthinomkhulu? I hear there are talks of the lake being drained soon."

Nkosi: "Yes. They're starting this Monday."

Bathonga: "Are you planning to do something with the land?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Sikhosana: "Tell King Bathonga what you're planning my prince."

Nkosi: "I'm building a mini shopping center in its place." I drank my glass of water.

Bathonga: "That is incredible. Is there any way I could be a part of that project? My daughter here is an architect, I'm aware that you yourself are one. Perhaps our companies can work greatly together to achieve this magnificence. A mini shopping center in a developing village? That's amazing."

Sikhosana: "It works because that village is right at the beginning of the province, connecting us to your province which has multiple tourist attractions. When people drive up to Mountain Peak, they'll pass there. I can't not be proud. He's my greatest creation." He smiled at me. My sisters coughed.

Nobantu: "The King loves all his children. He just understands his son's vision."

Sikhosana: "True. Princess Samukelisiwe, where did you graduate?"

Samu: "My King, I graduated in University of Cambrogà."

Sikhosana: "Ahh. Mehluli here was in California. Isn't that so, son?"

Nkosi: "Yes father."

Sikhosana: "Completed his MBA four years ago too."

Samu: "That's impressive." She smiled at me. I ate my starter.

Sikhosana: "And what are you working on now?"

Samu: "Currently, our real estate company has been booming, my king. I've been focused on that mostly."

Bathonga: "And now it's time for her to get married. It's not good for a princess to grow old in her father's house. Especially when there are very eligible bachelors available."

Sikhosana: "I agree." I don't know what my father is planning but I'm not allowing him to manipulate me into marrying who he wants. I know who I want to spend my life with. He has two wives to worry about, he must leave mine alone.

At the end of the dinner, I was ready to leave.

Nkosi: "Dinner was lovely. Unfortunately I have to get going now."

Sikhosana: "At this time? Where are you going?"

Nkosi: "I have some things to finalize with Mthunzi. I might sleep in the city, I need to be there very early in the morning."

Sikhosana: "Alright. Well, The Bathonga family might need your help settling in eNtabeni. I've set them up there for the weekend." I stared at him. He had a pleased smirk on his face.

Nkosi: "I beg your pardon?"

Sikhosana: "They'll be eNtabeni for the rest of their stay."

Nkosi: "There's plenty of space here, we have guest chambers. Why do they have to go all the way to eNtabeni?"

Sikhosana: "I'd love for them to experience your creation. eNtabeni isn't seen enough for it's beauty. I think the Bathonga family will appreciate that. Why? Did you plan something eNtabeni for the weekend?"

Nkosi: "It's my private villa." I stated.

Sikhosana: "And you've been spending way too much time there. Maybe having guests will do you good. Settled? Good, you can escort them there for the evening. I'm retiring for the night. Have a good evening Bathonga and family." He stood up and walked away. I was so angry, I could not speak. I could not utter a word.

SASA POV\_

I was woken from my sleep by my ringing phone. I checked the caller, I don't know this number.

Me: "Hello?"

Caller: "Hey beautiful."

Me: "Who's this?"

Caller: "How do you forget your boyfriend so quickly?" This doesn't sound like Nkosi at all.

Me: "Who is this?"

Caller: "You're hurting my feelings, Sasa."

Me: "Sibonelo? It's midnight."

Sibonelo: "It's 10 pm. I'm sorry I woke you up."

Me: "What can I help you with?"

Sibonelo: "I wanted to apologize for this evening. You didn't deserve that. I acted like an asshole. I'm sorry."

Me: "Okay."

Sibonelo: "I'd like to make it up to you-"

Me: "No it's fine. Don't."

Sibonelo: "Is there any chance I can see you again?"

Me: "Absolutely fucking not. And stop calling my phone. Nx." I hung up. Now I was awake. What the hell is wrong with him? My phone rang again. "This time I'm going to properly insult you. I don't give a fuck who you think you are." I answer.

Nkosi: "Uhm.. what have I done ?"

Me: "Oh it's you baby, sorry. Hello."

Nkosi: "Who are you insulting at this time of the night?"

Me: "It's Sibonelo. He just called wanting to apologize."

Nkosi: "I see."

Me: "Are you on your way?"

Nkosi: "No baby."

Me: "Why?"

Nkosi: "My father set up the Bathonga family eNtabeni and I've still got the army following me."

Me: "Are you getting married Nkosinhle? Please tell me right now, are you actually planning to wed this weekend?"

Nkosi: "I'd never do that to you baby. I'm not getting married to anyone but you."

Me: "I have to be sure Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I have no reason to lie to you. Which is why I feel maybe it's best that you do meet him. My father that is. If he can see I'm with you, maybe he'll back off."

Me: "Okay. When do you think we should meet?"

Nkosi: "This coming week. My father only allows guests for one dinner a week. I'll talk to him."

Me: "So when am I seeing you?"

Nkosi: "I have a feeling that Sibonelo, or whoever else is keeping an eye on that residence. I don't have proof but I know something is up. I don't think it's a good idea for you to come out."

Me: "Oh. Okay."

Nkosi: "Please don't cry baby."

Me: "I'm not crying." I held back my tears. I just wish I could rewind time back to our night away. If I knew it would be this hard, I wouldn't have gone to that dance.

Nkosi: "I'll speak to you soon, okay?"

Me: "ok." I hung up, covering my head with my blanket. Loving Nkosi was becoming harder by the day. I didn't know if I could stop. I really wanted to be in his life. What if his family doesn't like me? Amahle did say they were ruthless and if his sisters are anything like Zinhle Biyela then I'm in trouble. Oh my God, they're the least of my worries. What about the actual King? If he doesn't like me will he let Nkosi marry me? Why couldn't I just have a smooth first love? Why did it have to be scary and difficult? I sat up from bed. Amahle was reading her book on her bed.

Me: "Hi."

Ama: "Hello." I took my own book to start reading but I couldn't focus. I ended up reading the same page three times before I gave up. Instead, I just listened to music on my earphones. After the fourth song, I saw Amahle getting up from bed. I was getting sleepy now but where was she going at this time. I pulled out an earphone.

Me: "Where are you going?"

Ama: "Petu." She wore her shoes and sweater.

Me: "Is my music too loud?"

Ama: "No." She stood up, looking at the door.

Me: "Then what's going on?" I sat up, looking at the door. A knock. "Who's that? Amahle?" Dear God, I hope it's not Sibonelo. My hands were trembling as if I'm freezing. I might as well be. Amahle opened the door. He walked in.

Me: "Nkosi." I sighed in relief. He looked at Amahle, who walked out the room closing the door behind her.

Nkosi: "My love." He smiled.

Me: "What are you doing here?" My heart was doing somersaults with joy. He looked around the room before his eyes landed on me again. My beautiful orange-eyed love. Just seeing his face melted all doubt away from my heart.

Nkosi: "I can't let you cry. I had to come see you." I got out of bed, hugging him tight. He pulled me up, carrying me in his arms. "Let's get you to sleep, my love." He placed me back in bed, climbing in next me.

Nkosi: "Your bed is small."

Me: "Or you're big. It fits me just fine." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "Please sleep." He kissed my head. I closed my eyes, falling asleep in his arms.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 28

SASA POV\_

I woke up in the morning, stretching. My bed was empty. Nkosi had left, not sure when. There was a little note on the pillow. "I love watching you fall asleep in my arms. Leaving is so hard. I love you." He had the funniest handwriting. I woke up smiling, taking my phone to call him. He answered immediately.

Nkosi: "My snoring baby."

Me: "Don't even start." I giggled. "Hello."

Nkosi: "How did you sleep."

Me: "Much better. When did you leave?"

Nkosi: "Around 4 in the morning."

Me: "How did you even come in."

Nkosi: "Did what I hate doing the most. Whispered. But it's worth it. I couldn't sleep without holding you."

Me: "Thank you for coming but you need to be careful Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I will never let you cry for me, baby."

Me: "I wasn't even crying."

Nkosi: "You wanted to." I smiled.

Me: "What are you doing today?"

Nkosi: "Anything to get away from my family. I'll be at the new res for most of the day. I wish we could go somewhere for the weekend."

Me: "I don't think that's a good idea. What if your dad sends the whole nation to look for you? Absolutely not."

Nkosi: "I hate the idea that Sibonelo is still creeping around you. He should've backed off. He can't still be suspecting."

Me: "I don't know but what I do know is, I don't have to pretend with him anymore. You were right, I don't like him. He's despicable."

Nkosi: "Most royals are."

Me: "But you're not that horrible."

Nkosi: "I am. Just not to you."

Me: "I find that really hard to believe."

Nkosi: "Well, I don't know what to tell you."

Me: "Let me get up and have a coffee. I'll text you."

Nkosi: "Okay my love."

Me: "I love you."

Nkosi: "I love you too." I hung up, getting out of bed. After using the bathroom, I made myself a cup of coffee, got dressed in my usual leggings and t-shirt, made my bed and sat down with my school work. I wasn't in the mood for my assignment, yes I'd finished it but there was a lot of work in it that needed to be amended. It can't be today. I revised the work we learnt throughout the week, making some notes. Amahle walked in with Petu.

Me: "Morning."

Ama: "Hello."

Petu: "Hey love. Aren't you going to school?"

Me: "Not today. My classes are canceled."

Petu: "I so wish to be you. At least I'm coming out early. How about you Amy?"

Ama: "I've only one class today. Can Notha come here Sasa?"

Me: "I don't know Amy, Notha is your friend. She and I don't gel. I don't think she likes me."

Ama: "Notha doesn't like anyone but she also doesn't have class today."

Me: "Fine. We can try again but she needs to be a little more open."

Ama: "Unlikely but I'll pass the message on. I'm going to shower." She left for the bathroom.

Petu: "What are we doing later today?"

Me: "Hm.. I'm thinking maybe movies?"

Petu: "Indoors or cinema?" I thought about it carefully. I'm too scared to go outside. I only trusted Amahle and she would make the decision.

Me: "We'll ask Amahle. Maybe she has a different plan."

Petu: "Sure. Sooo, how was date night with Prince Bae." She giggled. "Everyone was talking about it. He's so romantic, him waiting outside for you, the flowers, opening your door. Ugh, I'm living."

Me: "I don't think there'll be any more date nights actually. We're not compatible."

Petu: "Oh no, I'm so sorry."

Me: "I'm not upset about it. Don't worry."

Petu: "Are you sure? You seem to really like him. Everytime you talk about him, your face lights up."

Me: "I'll get over it. Anyway, what's up with you. Have you eyed anyone yet?"

Petu: "Not anyone new. I don't think I can get over Mngqobi." She sighed, blushing at the mention of his name. I didn't know anymore. When it came to the Royals, I didn't trust them at all. Except of course Nkosi.

Me: "Do you wanna approach him?"

Petu: "Not yet. Everytime I see him, he says hi. I don't know if that's enough for me to approach him."

Me: "True. Yeah." I looked at my phone. "Sibonelo said something strange yesterday. Something about my friend telling him we're dating."

Petu: "Your friend? Why would I tell him you're dating him, that doesn't make sense."

Me: "Yeah, I don't think it was you."

Petu: "Who else knows? I know it's not Amahle. She doesn't like him much."

Me: "I think it's Zimmy."

Petu: "What? Why would she do that?" I shrugged.

Me: "Things have been strange between us lately. I think maybe after he approached us at the restaurant, she asked him. Since he hangs out with Khaya, maybe she knows him?"

Petu: "Oh my God, do you think she's sleeping with him?"

Me: "I don't know. It's not my problem anymore."

Petu: "No Thembisa, you let her take your man!?"

Me: "Petu, he's not my man."

Petu: "It's not right. That was bitchy behavior. No."

Me: "Let's just let it go okay? I've put Sibonelo behind me." Amahle came back, wrapped in a towel. "You'll find us at dining hall?"

Ama: "Yes, I won't be long." I took my phone, walking out with Petu. We got to dining hall, getting our breakfast before we sat in our table. Zimmy also walked in, getting her breakfast.

Me: "Please try not act different."

Petu: "I can't promise Sasa. I'm sorry I can't even pretend."

Me: "I'm honestly not going to be upset about Sibonelo, Petu. He's not that important."

Petu: "What happens to the next important one then? She's gonna approach him too?"

Me: "She's known these people longer than I have. I don't have a solid week with this person. I can't necessarily get upset." Zimmy came to the table and sat down.

Zimmy: "Ladies-"

Petu: "You're fucking unbelievable, do you know that?!"

Me: "Petu!"

Petu: "No. I tried. Zimmy, how can you go to Sibonelo and ask him about Sasa? Why would you do that? If you wanted him for yourself, why

involve her name!?" I ate my breakfast quietly. There's no way I'm getting heated over that person.

Zimmy: "What are you talking about?"

Petu: "Don't act so innocent please. Why did you go to Sibonelo?"

Zimmy: "I didn't. He came to me."

Petu: "Oh please. You expect us to believe that he magically came to you to tell you about Sasa? If you knew you were involved with him, why would you let your best friend date him?" Zimmy looked at me. I drank my juice and kept eating my food.

Zimmy: "Thembisa, I didn't approach Sibonelo. He came up to me. Yes there's history but it was only once off, a very long time ago. Way before you met him."

Me: "Why then talk about me?"

Zimmy: "He just asked where you are yesterday and I said it wasn't fair of him to make you hide him as her boyfriend. You deserve to be treated special. Then told him you went to do your laundry. That's all. I didn't approach him."

Petu: "It would've been fantastic if you just kept your mouth shut."

Zimmy: "What was wrong that I said? Sasa, you have to believe me. I wasn't being malicious. The reason I didn't tell you about the past is because it was almost a year ago. Only a one night stand. There's nothing to tell about that. It meant nothing."

Petu: "It doesn't matter now, you can have him."

Zimmy: "Can you stay out of this Petunia? Please."

Petu: "No, I can't stay out of it. I'm right there in the middle now."

Me: "Can we drop this please? I just want to finish my food and go study."

Zimmy: "I'm sorry Thembisa."

Me: "It's okay Zimmy." I sighed. "For future instances, please don't tell Sibonelo where I am. I don't want him near me."

Zimmy: "Please don't break up with him because of my stupid mistake."

Me: "It's not because of you. I just want him away from me. Can we drop this topic please?" Honestly, all I wanted was for him to stay away. I couldn't care less about anything else. Sibonelo seemed like a dangerous person and I hope last night was the last I hear of him.

## PRINCE POV\_

I'd spent most of my morning at the new res. I had a small working station, while the workers did the painting I had my pencil and paper sketching a rough draft of the mini shopping center. With the lay out of the land, the hole that had the lake water in I wanted to make it the middle of the center with some sort of attraction. A large fountain? A tree? A garden? The shops would half circle around it. I needed a large supermarket, maybe the locals can sell the vegetables they grow to it. I know Thembisa's family has their own garden and a few other families do too. This would benefit them alot. I made my notes on the notepad on the table. I looked up from my work. The Bathonga princess walked in with her two guards.

Samu: "Your Highness. Good day." I stared at her. "I hope you don't mind. I thought I'd pop in for a hello. Your father encouraged me to. This place looks beautiful." She looked around. "What are you working on." She walked toward me. My guard stepped forward. She stopped immediately.

Samu: "I'm sorry. Am I disturbing you?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Samu: "Oh. I was wondering maybe if you'd like to have lunch soon."

Nkosi: "I'm not hungry."

Samu: "Uhm. Okay." She looked around again before she looked at me. "I was hoping we'd get to know each other. We have similar interests and... I think you're an interesting person."

Nkosi: "I'm not."

Samu: "Still. I would appreciate having you join me for lunch." Mthunzi walked in.

Mthunzi: "My Prince. Princess Samu." She continued looking at me for an answer. I stared back at her.

Mthunzi: "Your Highness, we have a meeting in about 30. So... I'll bring the car around." He walked out.

Samu: "Maybe dinner then?"

Nkosi: "What about dinner?" She smiled.

Samu: "Can we have it together? Perhaps where you'd be comfortable. eNtabeni."

Nkosi: "I'll be working till very late."

Samu: "You have to eat eventually."

Nkosi: "Not really, I don't."

Samu: "I'm trying Prince Mehluli." I looked back down at my drawing. "That's beautiful. The shopping center?"

Nkosi: "Yes." I folded the paper. No one can see this yet. "I have to go to my meeting."

Samu: "Alright then. Have a productive day." She walked out. I took my work with me to the car waiting downstairs. Mthunzi got in after me, we drove off soon after.

Mthunzi: "What was that about? I could feel the ice in the air."

Nkosi: "She wants to have a meal."

Mthunzi: "Oh?"

Nkosi: "Hm."

Mthunzi: "What did you say?"

Nkosi: "I'm not hungry."

Mthunzi: "Nkosi-"

Nkosi: "No. You said I share a meal with the woman I'm interested in, and that is Thembisa. I'm not sharing a meal with another woman."

Mthunzi: "When the hell did I say that?"

Nkosi: "When I was still pursuing her. That's what you said. I asked why must I invite her to dinner and you said this."

Mthunzi: "Okay. We can bend the rules a little."

Nkosi: "I don't bend anything I'm not interested in breaking. So no."

Mthunzi: "Nkosi, this could be the perfect opportunity to get the royals and your father off your back."

Nkosi: "If I show fake interest in Samu, my father won't want to even meet Thembisa. I'm planning they meet this coming week."

Mthunzi: "Okay, I understand that but also, your father understands you are searching for a wife so you won't necessarily settle on the first one you see. Just to confuse him a little."

Nkosi: "No. I'm not allowing Thembisa to compete with a royal princess. It's her or nothing. I'm not even willing to entertain this any longer."

Mthunzi: "Fine." He sighed.

SASA POV\_

My morning with Nothando was a very quiet one. She sat very still on Amahle's bed, reading a book. I didn't want to disturb her or even annoy her. I know she hates talking so I'm not going to bother her much.

Notha: "What."

Me: "Hm?"

Notha: "You keep glaring at me. What is it?"

Me: "I'm not glaring at you."

Notha: "I've caught you twice. What is the problem?"

Me: "You're really loyal to Amahle, aren't you?"

Notha: "And?"

Me: "It's just strange. You do whatever she tells you to do."

Notha: "Wouldn't you do the same for Petu?"

Me: "I wouldn't be babysitting Petu's friends."

Notha: "What do you want to ask?"

Me: "Are you two dating?" I smiled.

Notha: "No."

Me: "Do you like her?"

Notha: "No."

Me: "Then what?"

Notha: "Why must there be a reason? If your friend asks you to do something, why ask questions?"

Me: "I ask a few questions."

Notha: "Then you're not a good friend."

Me: "I'm a very good friend."

Notha: "Your loyalty is conditional." She looked back at her book. Did she just insult me?

Me: "I have to ask questions, what if said friend wants me to do something illegal? Like dispose of a dead body? Or do fraud? Something that will land me in jail?"

Notha: "Conditions."

Me: "I'm just not trying to ruin my future. Maybe it's different for you because you're royal and you can't really go to jail."

Notha: "That's your excuse?"

Me: "It's not an excuse." She looked up at me.

Notha: "We're friends." She stated.

Me: "Okay. Are you seeing someone?"

Notha: "No."

Me: "Are you interested in someone?"

Notha: "No."

Me: "Why is that?"

Notha: "I have more important things to focus on."

Me: "Oh. I hear you."

Notha: "You don't want to hear the important things I focus on?"

Me: "Do you want to tell me?"

Notha: "No."

Me: "I expected that." She closed her book.

Notha: "Seeing someone would be a waste of my time. I'm already promised to a prince. Once I'm done with my degree, I get married and have his children. That's it."

Me: "Which prince?"

Notha: "Mnqobi Biyela."

Me: "Oh." My heart cracked a little for Petu.

Notha: "What?"

Me: "Nothing." She sighed.

Notha: "It has nothing to do with liking him or him liking me. It's a business transaction more than anything else."

Me: "I see." I faked a smile. "At least he's nicer than Sibonelo."

Notha: "That he is. But he's interested in someone else."

Me: "Does that bother you?"

Notha: "No. I don't care what he does in his spare time." I didn't even know what to say.

Me: "Do you think you'll grow to love him?"

Notha: "Unlikely but I can tolerate him." Someone knocked on the door. She got up to open. It was the security.

Security: "Hi, there's a visitor for Thembisa."

Notha: "She's not here."

Security: "That's not true. She's been inside all day."

Notha: "According to who?"

Security: "I know she didn't leave the building."

Notha: "And?" Who the hell was this visitor? I hope it's not Sibonelo. Why is he so irritating? Nothando closed the door and went back to bed.

Me: "Who do you think that might be?"

Notha: "Sibonelo obviously."

Me: "Why can't he just leave me alone?"

Notha: "Sibonelo is like a dog with a bone sometimes. He'll lose interest eventually." Another knock disturbed us. She rolled her eyes, walking to the door again. This time she stepped outside.

Notha: "Sibonelo."

Sibonelo: "Please ask Thembisa to step out for a second."

Notha: "She's not here. Like I said."

Sibonelo: "Nothando, this has nothing to do with you. Step in there and ask her to kindly attend to me."

Notha: "No." He chuckled.

Sibonelo: "You know. I may not have figured out how but I know you're all hiding something. There's no way in hell two royal princesses are protecting a commoner just for the mere sake of being her friend."

Notha: "Maybe because we know you're a super villain that ruins people's lives and we don't want that to happen to our friend."

Sibonelo: "If Thembisa won't come out to speak to me, I'm going to have to be drastic. I'm going to be the super villain you speak of and I'd hate that because I'm really trying to be nice."

Notha: "So what are you going to do? Push me to the side and walk in her room? Then what? She still won't want to talk to you. Please stop embarrassing yourself. Look at you. An entire prince with a bruised ego because a girl isn't impressed by your royalty. Use that as your opening line when you start therapy, it will save you time." She walked back inside the room.

KHAYA POV\_

I know I should've attended to my tutoring class but I was at a pub, downing my probably 11th shot. I wasn't in the mood to help students pass. My father had signed me up to tutor first year students against my will. Today in particular, I just couldn't anymore.

Khaya: "Just bring the bottle." I say to the manager. He gives me a worried look that I care nothing about. He won't deny me, that I know. "Phila, give me the bottle."

Phila: "Come on, Khaya, you're already wasted."

Khaya: "Is this not a bar? What the fuck is it? We're supposed to stare at each other and tell our fucked up life stories over juice? GIVE ME THE FUCKING BOTTLE!!!" Sibonelo sat down, with a bottle of whiskey.

Sibonelo: "Bring clean glasses."

Phila: "Yes boss." He hurried away.

Sibonelo: "You want to tell me why you're drinking yourself to death?"

Khaya: "No, Prince Sibonelo. I'm fine." Mngqobi sat down opposite me. Sometimes I envied them. They were extremely close despite the 7 year age difference. They were true brothers. Where Mngqobi was, you'd likely find Sibonelo. Their older brother was closer to their father than them. I sometimes wonder if I had a sibling would the life I live be as unbearable? Mngqobi was kind of like my brother though. He knew me through and through and that's probably how they found me here. He looked for me. Or Phila told them. They owned this place anyway.

Mngqobi: "Khaya."

Khaya: "I'm fine."

Sibonelo: "Alright then. Let's talk. Your friend, Sasa. She's protected. Why?" My hand was shaking so much, I had to hold it with my other hand.

Khaya: "I-i don't think she's protected. She's just a good friend."

Sibonelo: "That's a lie." Phila placed the glasses on the table. "Why are royal princesses and security following her around?"

Khaya: "Thembisa is a good, caring perso-"

Sibonelo: "I don't give a fuck what she is. Who. Is. Protecting. Her."

Khaya: "I don't know, Prince Sibonelo. I truly don't."

Sibonelo: "Is it Sikhosana? Is that why she's placed with Amahle?" My voice was stuck in my throat. I knew how valuable this information was. It could turn very badly for Thembisa if I said a word.

Khaya: "I've never seen her near him. I don't think she even knows him."  
I could feel his intense gaze on me.

Sibonelo: "Fine. Let's drown our sorrows I guess." He poured the whiskey giving me a glass, one to Mngqobi and one for himself. I drank the shot feeling it shoot straight up to my brain. I froze, my vision blurring dark with the faint voice of Mngqobi calling my name before I hit the floor.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 29

SASA POV\_

When Amahle came back from school with Petu, we went to watch the movies at the cinema. Nothando didn't want to go. I was beginning to understand her a little bit, as closed off as she was. Unlike Amahle, she wasn't willing to open up. I don't know if I could call her my friend so I just stick to her being Amahle's friend. We got takeaways and made our way back to res. Petu had planned to do my hair tonight. I loved how she braided me. Amahle would be as usual, reading her book. Maybe Nothando might join us with her book as well. We arrived at res, Petu started in her room to get her phone charger and change into a more comfortable tracksuit. I too changed into my black leggings and grey cartoon graphic t-shirt cut into a baggy crop tshirt. Amahle got in her comfortable pajamas, climbing into bed with her book.

Me: "You okay?"

Amahle: "No."

Me: "No? What's wrong?" I dropped what I was doing.

Amahle: "I can't see."

Me: "What do you mean? Like you're blind?"

Amahle: "No. I can't see." She repeated. I was so confused and starting to freak out.

Me: "Can't see how Amahle?"

Amahle: "Can't see what's about to happen. I just... I don't know." She shrugged, opening her book.

Me: "Is that bad?"

Amahle: "No. It happens sometimes."

Me: "That sounds bad. What if someone is blocking you from seeing something?" She chuckled.

Amahle: "No one knows I can see. They can't block me if they don't know."

Me: "Your family doesn't know you can see into the future?"

Amahle: "No."

Me: "Is there a reason why?"

Amahle: "No. It just never came up."

Me: "They only know you're immortal?"

Amahle: "Yes."

Me: "Have they figured out why you're immortal? There has to be a reason surely. You can't just not die forever. Clearly you're living for something. A purpose. Maybe once that purpose is fulfilled, your ancestors will let you go." She stared at me quietly for a very long time.

Amahle: "hmm." Petu came back in the room. Nothando followed behind her. I know Petu dragged her here because she did not look impressed.

Petu: "Now that we're all here. How about some soothing music."

Notha: "Why did you call me here?"

Petu: "You can't just lock yourself in your room all the time Nothando. It's not healthy."

Notha: "It was healthy for Thembisa all of last year. Why is it different for me?"

Me: "You knew me last year?"

Notha: "No. We live in the same building. I'm bound to see you sometime. You had a very loud roommate too. Always wondered how you coped."

Me: "Zimmy wasn't loud."

Notha: "You're too polite. Can I go back to my room now?"

Ama: "Phone." I looked at my phone but it didn't ring this time. She looked puzzled too. "Something is wrong." We heard an urgent knock on the door. Nothando opened. Zimmy barged in.

Zimmy: "Sasa." She cried.

Me: "Hey, what's wrong?"

Zimmy: "Khaya. He's... He's in ICU."

Me: "What?"

Zimmy: "He collapsed. He's currently in ICU. I just thought you'd want to know. I'm going there right now." I took my bag, slipping on my sneakers just as I was about to walk out, I stopped abruptly then looked at Amahle. She looked back at me.

Me: "What do I do?"

Ama: "He's your friend."

Me: "Yes but..."

Ama: "Go."

Me: "Amahle."

Ama: "Go."

Me: "I can't. I'm scared."

Petu: "I'll come with you. Let's go." She pulled my hand, rushing out after Zimmy.

When we arrived at the hospital, I left Petu behind as she was paying the cab driver. Zimmy and I rushed over to the ICU section of the hospital.

Zimmy: "Hi. We're looking for Khaya Solinga." The nurse looked at us.

Nurse: "And you are?"

Zimmy: "His friends."

Nurse: "Only family is allowed in."

Jimmy: "Please sister. Just to see if he's okay."

Nurse: "Only family." I stepped back feeling helpless.

Jimmy: "At least tell us he's okay. Is he stable? Is he getting better!" She carried on with her work, ignoring us. "WHY ARE YOU SUCH A BITCH!!!" She screamed.

Me: "Jimmy!!" I pulled her away from the desk. "I'm sure Khaya will be okay. Let's just wait here." Petu walked in with Mngqobi.

Jimmy: "Mngqobi, please talk to them. They won't let us see him. Is he okay?"

Mngqobi: "Hold on." He went to the nurse station and spoke to them. Jimmy wiped her tears pacing the floor, waiting on him. He walked back to us. "Come." We followed him to Khaya's room. He was laying on a bed with machines hooked up to him. Oh it was bad. He was really bad.

Me: "What happened to him?" No one answered. I stood next to the bed, holding his hand. "Khaya." The doctor walked in. He looked oddly familiar.

Mngqobi: "How is he, Zwe?" This was his older brother, Zwe? He was a doctor?

Zwe: "Stable. For now." He looked at me.

Me: "What happened to him?"

Zwe: "Alcohol poisoning." He looked like he was mad at me. I didn't feed him alcohol though? Why isn't he directing his disappointment to his mini him right next to him. He's Khaya's friend and always with him. I'm sure even now they were together.

Me: "Will he be okay?"

Zwe: "Depends."

Me: "On what, doctor?" I didn't know whether to call him Dr Prince or Biyela.

Zwe: "He needs to stop drinking. The amount of alcohol in his system isn't just because of today. His liver will start failing in no more than 6 months if he doesn't stop."

Me: "I'm sure we can manage that, right Mngqobi?"

Mnqobi: "Yeah." I looked back at Khaya.

Me: "Have you called his dad?" I didn't get an answer. I take that as a no. I looked at Mnqobi.

Mnqobi: "He wouldn't want his father here."

Me: "He almost died."

Mnqobi: "Trust me. He doesn't want him here." The hurt I felt was turning into rage. What kind of father wouldn't care about his son laying in ICU? I focused back on Khaya. The machine kept steady monitoring his pulse. He was still and cold. Reminding me of Amahle.

Me: "Is there anything warmer you can put on his hands and feet? He's cold."

Mnqobi: "Sure, I'll get warm things." He walked out. I looked up again, Zwe was still staring at me and at this point I was too annoyed to recognize him as royalty. I stared right back until he cracked into a grin before walking out. Jimmy was sitting in the chair staring at Khaya.

Me: "You okay?" She nodded. "He'll be fine. He'll be okay. You need to help Zee. You heard the doctor, he can't be drinking anymore. If he's not with Mnqobi, he's with you so you have to look out for him."

Jimmy: "I will." She whispered. Mnqobi came back with warm socks and hand mittens. Where on earth did he get these so fast. I put the socks on his feet and the mittens on his hands.

Me: "The room temperature is okay, he just needs to warm up. He's getting a cold." I felt his forehead. That's strange.

Mnqobi: "Thought you're studying law."

Me: "I am. Did your brother mention anything about his temperature? It's a little high." He shook his head, pressing the buzzer. "I didn't say call him."

Mnqobi: "You're concerned. You have the right to ask questions." Zwe walked in the room again. "Thembisa wanted to ask about his temperature. She thinks he's running a cold."

Me: "That's not what I said. I only asked if you mentioned anything about his temperature." Zwelethu walked over to Khaya, checking him.

Zwe: "Hm." He looked at me. "I'll monitor him over night." I can't help feel like I offended him. I don't know anything about medicine and human bodies, I should've just kept my mouth shut.

Zwe: "Khaya won't be awake for a couple of hours. Perhaps you should come back in the morning."

Me: "I don't mind waiting."

Zwe: "I'm not going to kill him. You can go home, he'll be awake when you come back."

Me: "That's an odd thing for a doctor to say."

Zwe: "You're the one looking at me suspiciously."

Me: "And why do you think that is, Doctor Biyela?" He looked at me for a second before walking out.

Mnqobi: "I'll just be outside, should I drive you guys back to res?"

Zimmy: "Yes please Mnqobi." She got up following him out with Petu. I was scared of leaving Khaya alone here. He was already alone in the world and now in a hospital with no one to care for him. That's really sad.

Me: "Please don't ever do this again Khaya. There's a number of us who actually care about you." I walked out the room, letting out a sigh of exhaustion. Why does God test me? Sibonelo stood in front me. "Why?"

Sibonelo: "Who do you think brought him here?"

Me: "What do you want from me Sibonelo?"

Sibonelo: "Answer me. Who?"

Me: "Okay ke siyabonga ngomusa wakho Sibonelo. Can I go now?" He smiled.

Sibonelo: "Sweet, sweet Sasa. You don't realize where you are, do you my love?"

Me: "Oh my. I've never seen a hospital before." I said sarcastically. He kept quiet, still smiling, waiting. I didn't get it. He had his hands in his pocket, smiling sweetly like he wasn't an asshole. Wait... I looked around me. Three guards stood behind me. I looked at him.

Me: "Sibonelo."

Sibonelo: "Finally. We're on the same page. There's never a time, I will not have access to you. When I want to see you. Avail yourself. If anything, my being around you is what is keeping you safe. Kings are watching you and some of them might actually want you dead. It's a good thing Khaya got here in time. I like him." He walked around me, followed by his guards. A shiver went down my spine. I actually felt cold to the core. Why is this happening to me? What would make it stop?

When we arrived at res, Amahle was still awake waiting.

Ama: "He's going to be okay."

Me: "The doctor says so too. Do you trust them?"

Ama: "I know they won't kill him. Khaya is like a brother to them. He basically grew up in that palace." I sat in my bed. Zimmy and Petu sat on the floor.

Me: "Sibonelo did it. He doesn't want to leave me alone. Amahle how can I make him leave me alone? He scares me."

Zimmy: "Haibo Sasa? Why didn't you say anything? I didn't know you were trying to get away from him. You said he was your boyfriend the other day. Why is he scaring you?"

Petu: "Mxim. Not you again."

Me: "I just want him to leave me alone. Please. This isn't even about anything other than, he scares the shit out of me. I don't know what he won't do to get to me. What if he hurts me? Does this mean now I must hide forever? Is that fair?"

Zimmy: "Do you think he hurt Khaya to lure you to the hospital?"

Me: "Yes!"

Zimmy: "Shit. Do you think the police will help if you file a report for harassment?"

Petu: "From a prince? Forget it."

Ama: "Speak to Zwe."

Me: "I'm not going anywhere near one of them. What if he snatches me this time?"

Ama: "Zwelethu won't hurt you."

Zimmy: "Who is Zwelethu?"

Me: "I don't know Amahle. I'm not so sure. I'm sorry."

Petu: "Isn't Zwe the doctor? That's what Mngqobi said right?"

Me: "Yeah."

Petu: "We need to strategize. The perpetrator is Sibonelo. The victim is Thembisa. We need to protect Thembisa by keeping her away from the perp. How do we do that?"

Zimmy: "Block access to the res. He shouldn't be allowed in."

Petu: "He's a royal. He can access anywhere he wants unfortunately."

Zimmy: "Not if there is a petition. We can collect all the girls to sign it and have him blocked from entering the building."

Ama: "Do you think the girls here hate seeing Sibonelo coming in and out?"

Zimmy: "They will if they know he is violent."

Petu: "Problem is he hasn't been violent."

Zimmy: "Yet. We can't wait till that happens. What if he tries to rape her? No, we have to do the work now."

Ama: "Again, do you think the girls here hate seeing Sibonelo? He's a royal prince. And I hate to admit, an attractive one at that. Financially and physically. Whose side would they take in this instance? Him or the ordinary girl he's harassing?"

Petu: "How many signatures do we need?"

Zimmy: "More than half the occupants of the res."

Petu: "So 60 signatures."

Me: "How will you get those signatures Petu."

Petu: "We'll pay them."

Me: "Petu that's illegal!!"

Petu: "And what he's doing isn't? Amahle, you're up for it? We can play again. The gain isn't for me, so it can't be cursed right?"

Zimmy: "How can you pay 60 people in one night? That's ridiculous."

Petu: "We will put together the funds, you can gather the people, can you do that?"

Zimmy: "I can do that but how will you pay this amount of money? What if they ask for 5000 each? You know the girls here."

Petu: "Cap it at R500. If you have to negotiate, don't go above R1000."

Zimmy: "You're telling me, you're going to make R60k in one night? I swear to God if you think of selling your body, I'll punch you in the fucking face."

Petu: "I'm not selling anything. Trust me."

Zimmy: "Fine. No illegal things either."

Petu: "Promise." Zimmy got up and walked out. "Now we wait."

Me: "Okay, then what happens when I have to go to school?"

Ama: "You can use my bodyguard."

Me: "That's going to be suspicious."

Ama: "Not if people know he's harassing you. If anything, he's going to be embarrassed. If he has any respect for himself and his name, he will leave you be."

Petu: "Perfect." She sighed. "So can we start with the Powerball thing now?"

Ama: "Uhm... We can't."

Petu: "Why not? It's not self enrichment. It's to protect someone. Surely that would be different?"

Ama: "That's not the problem. My gift has turned off for a bit. I can't... predict anything."

Petu: "WHAT? That can happen?"

Ama: "Occasionally yes. It's never bothered me before so I never paid attention to it."

Petu: "Oh my God. What are we going to do? With the paying? Do you think it can return by morning?"

Ama: "No. I do however have the 60k in my account. We can use that."

Me: "Absolutely not."

Ama: "It won't even dent me. It's basically collecting interest with no other use. Let's use it."

Me: "Amah-"

Ama: "I will call my brother and ask him for it then? He won't say no."

Me: "Can we just wait? We need to wait for a bit."

Ama: "Why are we waiting?"

Me: "What if the girls say no? Even with the bribe? Also, I'm not comfortable with that amount of money being used on me." She laughed.

Ama: "I wish I felt sorry for you but you'll get used to it." Zimmy came back into the room.

Zimmy: "I have 20 girls already. In dining hall. They've agreed to 800 each."

Ama: "I'll have to go to an ATM. I've got a 10k limit on my app." She got out of bed, wearing her shoes.

Zimmy: "A 10k limit?"

Ama: "Yes. I won't be able to transfer more than that, so I'd rather just withdraw everything at the ATM."

Zimmy: "No. That's not safe."

Ama: "I'll be fine. I have security." She walked out.

Zimmy: "Petunia, stop her!! She can't just go out of here to go get a bag of almost 20 thousand!!"

Petu: "Eish." She got up, following Amahle.

Zimmy: "Did he hurt you?" I shook my head. "Your roommate was right. None of the girls want to keep him out of here. They reckon they can bag him if you don't want him."

Me: "I thought you'd said you had 20 girls."

Zimmy: "I do. They agreed to the money. Everyone else said no. So we're gonna have to forge 40 signatures." I gasped.

Me: "Zimmy, that is illegal!"

Zimmy: "What choice do we have Thembisa?? That man came in here all smiles, asking where's his baby. If I don't tell him, someone else will. Everyone here saw you get into his car, going out to a date. They all think you're together. Now that we're in this predicament, they refuse to believe you. We don't have another choice here."

Me: "How will we forge the signatures?"

Zimmy: "Everytime we come register for res, we sign contracts for our stay. I just need to find a way into Linda's office. That way I can steal some of them."

Me: "What happens when you get caught?"

Zimmy: "Let's focus on not getting caught."

Me: "There's cameras all over the building."

Zimmy: "I know Sindi. She's in maintenance. I'll ask her to cut the power, while I go in there and take what I need."

Me: "Zimmy. Why would you risk your future here for me?"

Zimmy: "You're my best friend. Why wouldn't I do that for you? Besides, I'm the reason Sibonelo has crossed boundaries suddenly. I directed him to the laundry, I asked you to go out for dinner when we bumped into him and now the hospital too? What won't he do?"

Me: "It's not really your fault that he's a psychopath that doesn't understand no."

Zimmy: "If we're successful in keeping him out, don't you think we should speak to the university to let you attend classes online?"

Me: "Until when Zimmy? What if he never stops?"

Zimmy: "I still feel like we need to report him. To every person in authority willing to listen. It's disgusting that royals can do just about anything to us civilians and they can't be held accountable. That's not fair." Amahle came in with Petu. She dropped the stack of money on the bed.

Ama: "Done. Now the signatures?"

Zimmy: "They'll come here to sign then you can pay them. I'll let them know." She walked out.

For about two hours, girls came to our room to sign the petition and get their money. They didn't forget to let me know how stupid I was for not accepting the advances of a prince. Honestly I'd rather be stupid. Even if I wasn't with Nkosi, I don't think I'd be with Sibonelo. He was truly the biggest asshole I've ever come across.

Ama: "I have to sleep."

Petu: "Okay. Let me go to bed too."

Zimmy: "Yeah tonight has been exhausting."

Ama: "You're not hanging with your girls?"

Me: "No, I'm a little tired after tonight." I knew she was hiding something. I'd watched her quickly attend to a bleeding nose earlier. No one else had noticed. Maybe her gift was returning.

Petu: "Don't listen to those small minded girls Thembi. No matter how handsome and rich a man is, nothing is scarier than being harmed by him. You're a good girl and that's probably why he's being this asshole."

Zimmy: "True. Now that we've gotten this far, tomorrow we'll plan the rest. Don't worry." They walked out together. I locked behind them. My head was hurting badly.

Ama: "Haven't checked your phone."

Me: "Yeah, I got so busy." I changed into pajamas and got into bed. Nkosi had tried calling me. I called him back.

Nkosi: "Baby?"

Me: "Hey love. I was a little busy. Sorry I missed your call."

Nkosi: "No worries. Are you in bed now?"

Me: "Yes."

Nkosi: "Apparently, your res is abuzz tonight. There's a petition to keep royals out." I giggled.

Me: "Yeah, it's for Sibonelo."

Nkosi: "That's good. How far did you get?"

Me: "20 signatures. In need of 40 more. The girls are refusing."

Nkosi: "I expected that. You'll get the signatures by morning."

Me: "We'll see about that. Anyway, Khaya is in hospital."

Nkosi: "What happened?"

Me: "Sibonelo obviously."

Nkosi: "is this boy insane? Why would he harm his own friend?"

Me: "Truly a lunatic." I yawned. "He cornered me as I was leaving. He said when he wants access to me, I must avail myself. That's why the petition. Amahle said I should use her bodyguard. At least now that the whole res knows I'm scared of him, they won't really pay attention to why I need a bodyguard."

Nkosi: "Good thinking."

Me: "If shame doesn't overwhelm him then only God knows at this point." He chuckled. I yawned.

Nkosi: "Don't do that. Why are you so sleepy?"

Me: "I've been up all day."

Nkosi: "You bunked school remember? So what exactly did you do?" I giggled.

Me: "I didn't bunk. My classes were canceled."

Nkosi: "I'm playing with you love. I want to see you."

Me: "That can't be a good idea."

Nkosi: "It isn't. But I miss you. I miss just waking to watch you sleep."

Me: "I miss you too baby. Maybe things will get better after meeting your dad. Let's hope."

Nkosi: "I hope so. Where is Amahle?"

Me: "Asleep."

Nkosi: "okay. Let me let you sleep love. I'll talk to you in the morning."

Me: "I love you."

Nkosi: "I love you too my queen." I melted, hanging up the phone. This headache was persisting and I didn't have pain killers. Wait, Khaya once got me tablets the time I hurt my knee. I switched on the desk lamp and checked

my bag. Indeed there was the bottle of pills. I took one, drinking it with water. I looked over at Amahle. She was asleep?

Me: "Babe?" She didn't move. Maybe she's sleeping. I climbed back in bed, leaving the light on so I can read. I took my book and started. After the next two pages, I looked over at her again. Still sleeping. I too was getting sleepy suddenly. The headache wasn't getting any better though. I hate taking pills. Maybe the second pill will allow me to sleep quicker so I sat up again, reaching in my bag for the bottle. I took a second pill, gulping it down with water. Amahle moved in her sleep. Like she was struggling or looked like she was being held down or As if she was having a seizure. She kicked and kicked. Her arms glued to the bed, vomit popping out of her mouth. She was struggling to breath. I jumped to her grabbing her body, pulling her upright to prevent her from choking.

Me: "Amahle wake up. Amahle?" I shook her a little and hugged her tiny body. She was still limp, not responding. Then she gasped once again. Her whole body trembling. She looked at me with wide eyes. "You were having a seizure." My headache was piercing right now.

Ama: "I wasn't having a seizure." I looked at her arms. Her wounds reopened and started bleeding. "I was dying." ...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 30

SASA POV\_

Amahle and I sat in silence for a bit. I'd helped her change her pillow and sheets but now we just sat.

Me: "I'm going to need you to explain it Amahle. I was with you basically the whole day after you came home from school. You haven't left my sight at all. How is it then, you...were dying? I thought this happened when you overdosed." She stared at her hands quietly. "Amahle, you aren't killing yourself, are you?" A slow tear rolled down her cheek.

Ama: "I was scared. I would have dreams of people I don't know, telling me to tell my father messages. I would tell him but he brushed me off all the time. The people in the dreams got angrier. It got to a point my father sent me to boarding school. I couldn't sleep. I'd have painful nightmares. I then started to cut myself. At first I just wanted to feel something. Anything. I didn't have anyone. Everyone thought I was the weirdo. My family just pushed me aside. The twins are unbearable. They are different from us, Nkosi and I. They don't have our abilities and for the longest time, we weren't known to have any either. They tormented me, calling me the alien child. It got really bad. I just didn't want to be alive anymore. So when I went home, during holidays, I did it. In my room. I overdosed on pills. I died. For hours, I lay dead in my room. Nkosi was who found me. I woke up in his arms. We both didn't understand why and so we kept it a secret. Between us. He made me promise I'd never do it again. I didn't. The dreams stopped, the nightmares. Finally. But...this started. He didn't believe that I didn't try again. He didn't believe that I was not doing it to myself. That's why our relationship fell off. He doesn't trust me because he thinks I lied to him and I keep trying to kill myself. I've only tried once. It's the ancestors who keep punishing me for that one attempt. You're the first person it's ever happened in front of. They usually attack me when I'm alone." Oh My God.

Me: "So your ancestors make you relive your death over and over again? As a punishment?"

Ama: "Yes."

Me: "This is shocking. I am dizzy with shock. Have you tried to talk to them? This is a stupid question, I'm sorry."

Ama: "It's not stupid. I can't. They aren't appearing to me anymore."

Me: "Is your seeing gift, related to you dying? For example it stopped today, then this happened. Do you think you have to die for you to see again?"

Ama: "I don't think, I know I do. It will return when I awake."

Me: "So what must happen Amahle? I must just watch you die?"

Ama: "You can move in with Petu. I'll be okay."

Me: "I'm not going anywhere Amahle."

Ama: "I can't expect you to guide me into my death Thembisa. That's traumatizing."

Me: "I won't guide you into anything, I'll just be on standby. Do you wake up on your own or?"

Ama: "I wake up when I'm done, yes."

Me: "Okay. I'll just be here. Help with the clean up and get you some water. You must be dehydrated." I gave her a bottle.

Ama: "Thanks."

Me: "So, now we wait?"

Ama: "Not long." She lay back on her bed, closing her eyes. I resisted the urge to wipe her nose from the blood. I sat on my bed, unsure what to do while I waited for my friend to die.

KHAYA POV\_

My body felt warm, making it difficult for me to want to wake up. I was honestly enjoying this comfort. Before I opened my eyes I could hear hushed tones speaking and possibly angry at each other. I could recognize both voices. Zwe and Sboni. What was going on? My body felt so heavy.

Zwe: "How could you do this to your brother, Sbonelo? Khaya grew up with Mngqobi, he's basically our younger brother. Why would you do this?"

Sibonelo: "I wasn't going to kill him. I knew he'd get here in time. Calm down-"

Zwe: "I won't calm down! Khaya has absolutely nothing to do with your feud with Sikhosana. Leave him the fuck alone!! Do you understand me?"

Sibonelo: "I wouldn't hurt Khaya."

Zwe: "Look at him!! That isn't hurting him? Do you think it's nice laying in ICU unconscious? I swear Sibonelo. I fucking swear. You're going to leave Khaya alone."

Sibonelo: "I'm sorry. Okay? It's just... I know I'm close. Zwe, Sikhosana isn't supposed to be on that throne. You know that."

Zwe: "What I know is. Sikhosana is the rightful heir-"

Sibonelo: "That family has ruled for centuries! Why? What is so special about them that none of us have? Isn't that unfair? Why are they the superior royals? You hear them in royal court, they call themselves the original royals. The True Royals. What are they saying about us? We have the same blood as they do, why is it that they see themselves above us all? Aren't you sick of it?"

Zwe: "Boni, there's nothing we can do."

Sibonelo: "Yes there is. I know, he's in love with that girl. I saw it in his eyes Zwe. I heard him in my head. He said it in my head-"

Zwe: "Boni, Sikhosana is human, he can't possibly talk in your head."

Sibonelo: "I heard him!! I know I did. I'm not crazy."

Zwe: "Fine. Say you're right. That something about them is wrong. Why are you dragging innocent people? Why not directly attack Sikhosana?"

Sibonelo: "She is my direct attack. If I have her, he will lose it. Just watch."

Zwe: "Sibonelo, don't hurt this girl. I'm warning you."

Sibonelo: "I don't have to even hurt her."

Zwe: "What if you're wrong? What if... He doesn't want her? What if he's just playing with your mind."

Sibonelo: "Then I'll let her go."

Zwe: "I can't let you do this. That girl was here to care for her friend and you used that to your agenda. Khaya deserves someone who will stand by that bed and hold his hand, like she was doing yesterday. He deserves someone who cares about whether he's warm enough or he's woken up. Now she can't even come here because of you. That's incredibly selfish and you know that. Do you think Khaya deserves that?"

Sibonelo: "No."

Zwe: "Then fix it. He needs his friends here. If you're too busy obsessing over your enemies, the very least you can do for him is get him someone who cares."

Sibonelo: "Okay, I'll stay away from the hospital. You can call her and tell her that I'm not allowed in. I promise I won't come back."

Zwe: "Oh I know you won't come back in because I'm banning you myself."

Sibonelo: "Can I talk to him?"

Zwe: "2 minutes and I want you gone." He walked out. I felt warmth on my hand.

Sibonelo: "Khaya." He tried to kill me? All because of his jealousy? Yeah, we all don't like Sikhosana but Good God I wouldn't try to kill someone because of him. I stirred in the bed, eventually opening my eyes. "Hey bugg." This is supposed to be my big brother. I've always been his bug, but he tried to kill me at the drop of a hat.

Khaya: "hi."

Sibonelo: "I'm sorry. I know that's not enough. I know. I wasn't going to let you die bug, you know that."

Khaya: "okay."

Sibonelo: "You know..." He pulled the chair, sitting down. "You were 2 when you started talking. Your father was negotiating a deal between King Sikhosana and my dad. Somehow, your dad needed to go pick you up from day care and he brought you to the palace because he was running late. The helper took you to Mnqobi's room. You were best friends from that moment you entered his room. You fell asleep in his crib. When you had to leave, you would scream and so I'd take you, hold you in my arms and pat your back like how the nannies did. Then you'd go home with your dad. Your first word was Bobo." I looked down at my hands. "I'm sorry Khaya. I let this situation overpower me and my care for you. But trust me, I would never let you die. I shouldn't have gambled your life to begin with. Please forgive me my bug." Thing is, I knew Sibonelo. He's right. I've known him since I was two. He is brutal. Out of all the Biyela brothers, he is the most ruthless. He makes the decisions mostly on those who double cross them. And those people never survive. I know he loved me but I didn't trust him.

Khaya: "I forgive you."

Sibonelo: "Good. Now I'm going to leave. Hopefully your friends can come see you. I think Zwe will discharge you tomorrow though."

Something about your temperature rise. I'll see you soon." He got up, walking out.

SASA POV\_

It was a difficult weekend for me but I can't imagine how difficult it was for Amahle. She's let herself be vulnerable and I know she hated it. So I had to lock everyone else out. Our friends were worried but understood we needed our time alone.

Ama: "Khaya is being discharged today. You should go see him."

Me: "I don't think so. Sibonelo is probably there."

Ama: "He's not, Zwe has banned him from the hospital. I'll be fine, Sasa. Please go. Notha is here too." I heard the knock on the door. I opened for her. Nothando walked in with Petu and Zimmy.

Notha: "Smells nice in here."

Zimmy: "One thing about Sasa, she will light diffusers. She really believes in smelling nice."

Me: "It's just vanilla scented candles." Notha sat on the bed next to Amahle.

Zimmy: "Okay girls. I'll see you guys later."

Petu: "Where are you going?"

Zimmy: "Khaya is being discharged so I'm going to the hospital to help him go home."

Me: "I'm coming with you."

Zimmy: "Absolutely not. We can't risk Sibonelo again."

Me: "I'll be okay. Right Amy?"

Ama: "Yeah. Sibonelo is nowhere around."

Zimmy: "Are you sure?"

Me: "Yes." I changed into my jeans and a t-shirt.

Ama: "You can use my car and driver. Pretty sure he needs something to do. All he does is sit there."

Me: "Thank you Amahle. Let's go." Zimmy, Petu and I left the building. Indeed, Amahle's driver seemed delighted to have something to do. Petu sat in the front of the Jeep, Zimmy and I at the back. We were driven to hospital.

Zimmy: "Friend, I don't want to seem nosy ne? But Amahle? She comes from a wealthy family ne?"

Me: "Yeah." It was quite obvious honestly. I couldn't even lie about it.

Zimmy: "Damn. Is she from Golden Crown?"

Me: "Uhm, no."

Zimmy: "Ya no. For someone who's so quiet, you'd never expect it. Look at this car. She's humble. That's cute. Anyway, how are you? Barely saw you this weekend."

Me: "I'm okay. I think I just needed a recharge." I could feel a pain in my heart already. Everytime, I was away from Amahle this happened. When I went to dining hall to fetch our food both times it happened. I know something has happened. Something is wrong. It has somehow bound us together.

Zimmy: "That's good. The petition has been successful. All royal males have been banned from the property. Apparently we can't ban princesses. I understand though, because they haven't harassed us."

Me: "That's good. He hasn't called me since too. Hopefully that's a good sign." We arrived at the hospital, got out the car and walked in.

Zimmy: "He was moved out of ICU yesterday. Here's his ward." We walked in the area. Dr Biyela was standing by the nurses station with a clipboard in his hand.

Me: "Dr Biyela. Good morning." He looked up.

Zwe: "Good morning."

Zimmy: "We came for Khaya. He's being discharged today, right?" He looked at her then at me.

Zwe: "Yes. Room 2. He's ready." Zimmy and Petu walked to the room. "Thought you wouldn't come back."

Me: "Your brother was harassing me."

Zwe: "Well, you don't have to worry about him. He's not here."

Me: "Thank you."

Zwe: "No reason to thank me for doing my job." He looked back at his clipboard.

Me: "I meant thank you for having him banned." He looked at me again.

Zwe: "I didn't." I looked at him. He broke into a grin, looking back at his clipboard. "You're welcome." I began to walk away. "He doesn't mean to harm you, you know."

Me: "And what does he mean to do Dr Biyela?" I turned to look at him. "I'm not going to live in fear of him. If he comes to me again, I will fight." He walked up to me.

Zwe: "Between you and I? I wish you do. Scratch his face too so he can stop using his looks and start using his brains." He smiled, walking away. I walked to Room 2 where Khaya was.

Me: "Hey." He looked up, staring quietly at me. "How are you feeling?"

Khaya: "Why are you here?"

Me: "You're my friend Khaya."

Khaya: "Sasa what did I say to you?"

Me: "Khaya-"

Khaya: "NO!!" He flinched, probably hurting himself. "You can't be here, near me."

Me: "He's not going to hurt me again Khaya."

Khaya: "Thembis-"

Me: "Let's go. We'll talk about this later." Zwe walked in with Mngqobi.

Zwe: "Your twin signed for you. You can leave. Remember what we talked about Khaya? No drinking. I'm not going to see you here again."

Khaya: "Yes Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "Enjoy your Sunday. No school tomorrow and Tuesday." He walked out.

Mngqobi: "Let's go twinny." He helped Khaya, holding under his arm.

Khaya: "I can walk Mngqobi."

Mnqobi: "I'm not above carrying you bridal style. Let's go." We walked out, chuckling behind them.

Khaya's apartment as usual was clean. I took my phone texting Amahle. <What are you doing?> Sent. She replied: <Sleeping. -Notha> oh okay.

Me: "I hope you guys are hungry." I opened the fridge.

Mnqobi: "There's no food in this house. I have to go to the shops. Do you have a menu list?"

Khaya: "Do you even know where the grocery store is Mnqobi?"

Mnqobi: "No. But I have a driver, surely he should know." We laughed.

Me: "Do you know your way around a grocery shop first?"

Mnqobi: "They must have signs. I'm not clueless guys. I can do this."

Me: "Petu can help, right Petu? You guys can go shopping for food. I'll write a list."

Mnqobi: "Okay. Who is gonna move in also? I can't live outside the palace unfortunately. Unless Khaya comes to live in the palace."

Khaya: "Not happening. I can take care of myself. I don't need to be watched like a toddler. I know I'm not supposed to drink, and I won't."

Me: "I'd prefer you have someone here with you."

Mnqobi: "Zimmy? You're up for it?"

Zimmy: "I uhm..."

Mnqobi: "There's a guest room. Khaya won't bite you."

Zimmy: "Only if he's okay with it."

Khaya: "Yeah whatever. Can I have food please?"

Mnqobi: "Right. We can drop you at res to get your clothes and pick you back up once we're done with shopping."

Zimmy: "Okay." They got up, walking out.

Me: "Coffee?"

Khaya: "Hm." I stared at his coffee machine. Yeah, I obviously can't use it. He walked in the kitchen, pressing the machine. I took out the mugs. "Thembisa. It's not safe for you. I thought I told you this."

Me: "I know. Honestly Khaya, I don't want to live like a prisoner. I'll have to be alert yes but I can't stop living my life because Sibonelo Biyela is crazy."

Khaya: "He's not crazy. Come here." He pulled my hand, walking to the balcony. "This is the only place I trust. I don't know who's been in my apartment while I was in hospital. There is a silent war happening between the royals of this nation. A lot of them are against Sikhosana. Mostly because the family has been ruling the nation for centuries. As you've seen, I'm sure, they act superior to all others. The others aren't happy about that and will do anything to dethrone them. That's where you come in. It's not a matter of he thinks, it's a matter of he knows. Sibonelo knows that Sikhosana loves you. He knows where to push him. He knows Sasa."

Me: "What else does he know about them?"

Khaya: "I don't know and I'm not going to be anymore involved. He said something about Sikhosana speaking in his head. I don't want to be involved in this. The Biyela family practically raised me. I didn't want you involved in this. I just need you to be safe." ...

## PRINCE POV\_

I'd been feeling off for a bit now. My neck was stiff, I could hardly sleep. My morning run didn't help. I was now sitting on the bank of the river staring at the waters. My guide appeared, sitting next to me.

Nkosi: "Something is wrong."

Guide: "Nothing is wrong."

Nkosi: "Why do I feel like this then?"

Guide: "Maybe you need to focus a little bit."

Nkosi: "What does that mean." He kept silent.

"Son." I jumped up, spinning around to look where the voice came from. That can't be. No. I listened closely, focused.

Nkosi: "Papa?"

Papa: "You remember my voice, grandson."

Nkosi: "How... Where are you? I can't see you, I can only hear you."

Papa: "You're not supposed to see me. Let's have a seat." I sat back down. "Your journey to being King will not be easy. I need you to understand that now."

Nkosi: "Is it because of father?"

Papa: "Partly, yes. Your father is trying only to protect the throne. His methods will hurt you immensely but understand that it is the only way he knows."

Nkosi: "He is trying to dictate my life."

Papa: "As I did him. It is no fault of his own that he is the way he is. Losing love hardened my heart. I was hard on him. I brought you here to make things right. The nation needs you. It needs a good king. That is You Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "I understand that but I can't do it alone. I found someone I love. Someone who makes it bearable. I'm afraid he will chase her away."

Papa: "Having her cross your path was not coincidence. She is the one who was chosen to help you. It's not only your father that will make it difficult for you both. You need to be strong Nkosinhle. Her journey is to help you become a better person."

Nkosi: "Father doesn't believe that a human can handle being a Sikhosana."

Papa: "Again, that would be my doing."

Nkosi: "Then why send me Thembisa?"

Papa: "I know how hard it is to be in your position. What I wanted for you, was to at least feel the greatest love you could ever have. I needed you to experience what I felt that made my life worthwhile."

Nkosi: "What do you mean?"

Papa: "I married a woman like yours. She too was ordinary. Non royal, no abilities. I fell deeply in love with her. Unfortunately for me, I wasn't allowed to marry her. I didn't want anyone else. We married in secret. Then made your father. By the time my family found out, she was already too far along. They had no choice but to accept it. She was carrying their future King. Little did I know, my punishment was coming. Our ancestors don't play there. They make sure you feel it." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "What was your punishment?"

Papa: "She died after giving birth. The only reminder I had of her was our son. That broke me apart. My punishment was to live without her for the rest of my life and raise our child. I became bitter. I hated it all. The throne, the child. I was a cruel King and I raised your father to be too. He tried with you but I'd already seen my death before your birth, the moment I held you I whispered in your ear. The reminder. To be you. To be the good king. He can't ever take that from you. No one can. We were raised to think non royals cannot understand or even prosper in royalty. That has been a lie. In fact, humans can endure just as much if not more than we can. Your grandmother hung on to her life, so she could feed her baby for the first time. That is resilience. And she had no abilities to help her."

Nkosi: "So what's going to happen? Please don't hurt Thembisa. I don't think I can live without her."

Papa: "Thembisa." I could almost feel him smiling.

Nkosi: "She can be stubborn but she's a baby sometimes. You never know with her. One minute she's very angry and scolding the next she's crying in my arms." He chuckled.

Papa: "She will make you happy. It's already evident. She will make a victorious queen."

Nkosi: "Thank you papa. For her. I didn't know how much I needed her until I fell in love. Now I need to convince my father."

Papa: "Don't worry too much about your father. For now, a war is brewing. Parts of you will unravel, possibly confuse you. Keep your sister close."

Nkosi: "Amahle?"

Papa: "Yes. I have to go my son. This will be a tough journey. Don't give up. There will come a time, you will break apart but do not give in to it. Remember to have Faith."...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 31

SASA POV\_

I came back to res after helping Khaya settle. Petu and I had cooked for them to last a few days. Zimmy would go to school but Khaya would be home for the next two days and we wanted him to rest. He promised not to touch alcohol. Zimmy had all his cards too so he can't go buy anything without her. I trusted him though. I don't think he wants to hurt himself. He looked more lively with us around. Petu and I returned to res. She went to her room to prepare for the week and I did too. Amahle woke up when I arrived. Notha was reading on my bed.

Me: "Good afternoon, beauties."

Ama: "Hi."

Notha: "Hello. how is Khaya?"

Me: "He's fine. Zimmy will be staying with him."

Ama: "Hm." I checked my timetable, fixing my books and clothes as I usually did on Sundays.

Notha: "What are you doing?"

Me: "I like having a handle on my mornings so I'm preparing my clothes according to the weather."

Notha: "You do that every morning?"

Me: "No, only Sundays. I prepare for the whole week. I need to make sure I have clean appropriate clothes. Don't you ?"

Notha: "I have clean clothes delivered weekly. I don't have to worry about that."

Me: "You're blessed. Amahle, it's time to eat. Can I get you fruit?"

Ama: "Yes."

Notha: "I'll get the food. Do you want anything in specific?"

Ama: "No. Just fruit and water."

Notha: "Thembisa?"

Me: "Just water for me, thank you." She walked out. "Why is she being nice?"

Ama: "I don't know." I finished with my things.

Me: "Have you been eNtabeni?"

Ama: "Once. It's Nkosi's private villa. He hates having people there."

Me: "Hm."

Ama: "Why do you ask?"

Me: "Amahle, how long will you be punished? Your ancestors are obviously upset right? But they're not appearing to tell you what to do. So obviously you must go to them and find out. You have to apologize."

Ama: "Apologize?? For the suffering they gave me?!"

Me: "Look, I know it hurts. It's just... I think it's frustrating for you and them because you don't understand and they can't explain. We need to start over-"

Ama: "No!! You don't get it, Thembisa. They created me to only suffer!"

Me: "Then why must I suffer? They didn't create me Amahle!! Why is it that when I walk away from this room, from you, my heart bleeds?!" She hugged her knees, hiding her face. "It's not your fault but we need to reach out to them. I don't even know how." I sat down. This was honestly scary. I had a friend, who had a curse of dying. Now I may have disturbed it and it was affecting me.

Me: "We have to go to eNtabeni. When are the Bathonga people leaving?"

Ama: "I'm not going there."

Me: "Really? You want me to carry you up a mountain?" She looked up at me. "Just give it a try. Please."

Ama: "What if nothing changes? What if they become more angry? You don't understand those spirits and how powerful they are."

Me: "We'll have to risk it then. Come."

Ama: "Nkosi will freak out."

Me: "I'll handle Nkosi. Let's go." I changed into my favourite dress and a white headscarf.

Ama: "You like dressing up for everything?" I giggled.

Me: "Yes." Notha came in with fruit and water.

Notha: "Will you be back soon?"

Ama: "Probably not."

Notha: "Okay. See you in the morning." She walked back out. What an odd cat.

Ama: "I'm ready." We walked to her car outside. The driver drove us to eNtabeni. "Have you told Nkosi?"

Me: "You can predict the future but don't know if I snitched to your brother?" She chuckled.

Ama: "Yes."

Me: "This is our thing. He doesn't have to know. Your relationship is rocky to begin with, this won't make it any easy until we know how to fix it."

Ama: "We're going into his den. He will obviously find that out." I sighed. Nkosi needed to be calm for a second.

We arrived eNtabeni, no cars in the parking. I was mesmerized everytime I came here. I loved standing on that cliff and just stared at the city. It was mid afternoon, still sunny and beautiful. Amahle and I walked in the villa, I greeted the staff as usual. They had their usual expressions on. We walked out to the back garden, onto the path.

Ama: "Do you know the way?"

Me: "I think I can still remember." We made it to the edge of the garden where the gate was, we climbed down the stairs, joining the mountain and walking up. I'd worn my sneakers, thank goodness. The walk on its own was easy but I became anxious the closer we got. Snakes. Oh my God. The ancestors were represented by snakes. No, I'd have to wait for her in a distance. There's no way in hell I'm experiencing that again.

Ama: "You're scared."

Me: "Yes. There's quite a lot of snakes here."

Ama: "They didn't harm you the first time, they definitely won't harm you now."

Me: "Doesn't make me less scared. I'm really terrified of snakes. Anyway, let's talk about something else."

Ama: "Okay. What?"

Me: "since Notha is promised to a prince, does that mean you are too?"

Ama: "No. No one in my family is promised. That doesn't happen."

Me: "Oh. Is it because your family looks down on other royals?" I whispered.

Ama: "It's not a secret. Yes. My father doesn't want us to marry simply because he feels there is no one in our level."

Me: "But Nkosi has to marry."

Ama: " Yes to continue the bloodline. Since he's bound to have a number of kids, I don't really need to."

Me: "How many kids will he have?"

Ama: "5. Three boys and two girls." She sighed.

Me: "That's sweet. He'll make a great father."

Ama: "That is true."

Me: "Don't you think one day, you would also want to get married?"

Ama: "No. I don't get married. I don't even want to. My life is difficult as is."

Me: "I hear you."

Ama: "Have you always wanted to be married and have kids?"

Me: "Kind of yes. I've always thought my life would be school, career and marriage after. I want to graduate and work. Find myself in the world. Build a name for myself and Get married once we're both established and start a family. I want 3 children."

Ama: "Instead you fell in love with a future King of a nation." I smiled.

Me: "I think we'll have to go back to the children conversation. I am set with 3." she smiled faintly. "I think I can stop here. You're not far from the alter."

Ama: "I can't go there alone."

Me: "I'm not the person, my love. This is your family. They won't harm you."

Ama: "I don't know what to say."

Me: "Sit there and connect. Talk. Apologize. They'll appear."

Ama: "They won't."

Me: "Please try Amahle." She sighed walking up to the top of the mountain. I sat on the big rock and waited. It was quite hot here, I forgot to bring some water. I wonder where Nkosi is. I'd left my phone in the car, not that it would've worked here because I doubt there's signal. I waited for Amahle until what felt like hours passed but it was only one. She came back down.

Ama: "You have to come up here."

Me: "No Amahle, this is your journey."

Ama: "Please." I sighed, following her up. If they don't appear with her alone then surely there's not much I can do. We reached the top and I sat down. "What are you doing?"

Me: "Sitting. Why are you standing? Did you come here and just stand? Like that?" She had her arms folded over her chest. I couldn't help but laugh.

Ama: "What difference does it make?"

Me: "Please sit down." She sat in front of me.

Ama: "Now what?"

Me: "First of all, you need to calm down and let go of any negative feelings."

Ama: "I only have negative feelings."

Me: "Then let them go. Let's meditate."

Ama: "Meditate Thembisa? This is a waste of time." I held her hands closing my eyes.

Me: "Shhh. If you listen closely, you can hear the waterfall. Focus on the water." She kept quiet for a while. "Any negative feelings should flow out of you, like the waterfall is doing. Pour it all out." We sat in silence for quite some time. There was no movement around us. Not even a sign.

Me: "Elders, please do forgive our presence disturbing your sacred place. We have only come to apologize. We are only children and know nothing with no guidance. We only ask for forgiveness." I squeezed her hands.

Ama: "I don't know what to say." She whispered.

Me: "Acknowledge them. Call on them. Then apologize." I whispered back.

Ama: "Bantu abadala bakwa Sikhosana. Yimi uAmahle. Ingane yenu. Ngiyaxolisa. It's hard." I squeezed her hands softly encouraging her. "It's so hard being what you want me to be. My only destiny is to help others when I'm not alive myself. I died, years ago. I am only living for others. That hurts. It hurts me." She cried. "I had no one to guide me. No one had my gift before to understand me. Angina muntu oyedwa nje, to help me. I'm all alone. I didn't know I couldn't die and when I tried I was punished. Ngiyaxolisa. I can try to live with it but please, I can't take the punishment. It's not only physically draining but I'm a shell. I can no longer feel. Please restore me so I can be a better help." She let go of my hands, holding her face. I pulled her close to me, hugging her. I hope this will help. Honestly I was out of ideas now. Just then I felt the energy change.

Me: "Amahle." I whispered. She didn't respond. Oh no. "AMAHLE." I shook her slightly. She was limp, not moving. OH DEAR GOD, NO. I placed her on the ground and stared at her. I know the snakes were near me. I just knew they were there. I can't believe Amahle chose this very moment to abandon me. There was no use waking her up. I wasn't even sure if I could. Was she still alive? I couldn't even move. I was

literally paralyzed with fear. What if I moved and they attacked. I needed to wait this out. Besides, why the hell would I leave my friend in a mountain unconscious. Oh the Lord wanted to test me and he was passing with flying colours. I started crying silently and immediately the thunder roared through the sky.

Me: "Please God. I cannot." The rain poured. I wanted to scream. I took my headscarf off holding it on top of her face. I know I can't move her. I knew it because there was a heavy energy surrounding us. The very energy that refuses me to get up and run. I wish for once, fun things happened to me. But I brought myself to this one, I should've just minded my business. But she was suffering. I couldn't let her suffer. The rain subsided then completely stopped. I'd stopped crying, it was obviously useless. I touched her face again. We were both soaking wet but I could at least move. Nope, the presence was still here. Maybe they were having a meeting and I was disturbing them. I sat my ass quietly down holding her hand. The waterfall. Let's focus on the waterfall. I listened to the waters very far away, yawning.

## PRINCE POV\_

Sunday afternoon. Lunch with family. I was glad the Bathonga family were leaving today. My patience was no longer worn thin, it was torn apart and shriveled to dust. I couldn't even pretend anymore. We had our starter meal and main shortly after.

Sikhosana: "Tell me Princess Samu. Are you enjoying your stay at eNtabeni?"

Samu: "Very much my king. It's such a beautiful place. I was hoping to stay a few more days."

Sikhosana: "Absolutely. You don't mind that, right Mehluli?"

Nkosi: "I definitely mind it. I mind it alot."

Nobantu: "Mehluli that's rude."

Nkosi: "And overstaying your welcome isn't?"

Sikhosana: "Mehluli!!"

Nkosi: "No father. That is my private villa. For me. I built it myself so I can have time to myself. You invited your friends without my consent to my private space. I let them stay out of respect. But now? Now you're pushing it. Absolutely not. That's not a holiday destination. It's MY house."

Sikhosana: "That villa belongs to our fami-"

Nkosi: "No, this palace belongs to our family. That villa I built for me. I was kind enough to let our family access it. I too deserve my space father."

Bathonga: "I'm on the Prince's side on this one. We have infringed on his private space, it's only fair that he gets it back." The thunder was roaring outside and the rains started.

Nkosi: "Thank you King Bathonga." My father was seething in his seat, staring at me. Mthunzi walked to us.

Mthunzi: "Good Day, my King, King Bathonga and family, mothers, princesses and my Prince. I apologize for disturbing your lunch."

Sikhosana: "And why are you disturbing our lunch?"

Mthunzi: "I need the Prince, my King. I need to speak to him urgently."

Sikhosana: "Surely, work can wait. It's Sunday." I looked at Mthunzi. He looked very concerned, and Mthunzi never looks bothered. I got up. "Mehluli!"

Nkosi: "I apologize father, I won't be long."

Sikhosana: "You will not disrespect me any more than you have today."

Mthunzi: "It's fine, my Prince. I'll handle it." He rushed out the palace. Oh no. I just knew this had to do with Thembisa. He would never disturb me for work. For anything. Something was wrong. Very wrong. If Sibonelo even tried to -

Nkosi: "Shit." I ran out after Mthunzi.

Sikhosana: "What in God's name!!" Mthunzi had already driven off by the time I made it outside. I got in the driver seat of my own and sped after him. The drive was not calming me at all as I thought it would. Mthunzi was still far ahead of me and I suspect he was flying at this rate because my speed was ridiculous itself. I dialed his number. I know his phone is connected to the car and fortunately he answered.

Mthunzi: "My Prince."

Nkosi: "Where ?"

Mthunzi: "eNtabeni."

Nkosi: "I'm right behind you." I hung up, stepping on the accelerator. Why would Thembisa be eNtabeni? How did she get there? What happened then? The staff know her so they wouldn't let harm come to her. Did Sibonelo follow her there? I shouldn't have drove. My mind was reeling and I needed to slow down before I caused an accident. Eventually I reached the turn off point into eNtabeni and drove carefully up the cliff, the rain was still heavy and my heart was hammering in my chest not knowing what awaits me. I parked, jumping out the car and ran inside the building. Mthunzi was talking to the staff.

Nkosi: "What's going on?"

Mthunzi: "Where's your security? Did you drive here?"

Nkosi: "Just tell me what's wrong!!"

Mthunzi: "The staff says Thembisa went up the mountain. She went up with Amahle. They haven't come back."

Nkosi: "I'm going to kill her!!" He grabbed me before I stormed into the rain.

Mthunzi: "We don't know where they went Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I can find them-"

Mthunzi: "Not in this rain!!"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi I can't just let her be in the mountains through this weather!! What if she's stuck there? What if she slips and hurts herself?"

Mthunzi: "There's three trails."

Nkosi: "They're unlikely on the safer two. You know Amahle!"

Mthunzi: "Fine. Let's go up then." We walked out the back through the garden and a bolt of lightning struck right before me. Mthunzi jumped right in front of me. It missed him by a beat. "Are you fine?"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi!! Did you just jump in front of lightning? Are you stupid!"

Mthunzi: "I don't think it's safe to go up." My whole body was shaking. I couldn't help thinking how she was doing. Stuck in a mountain. Around

snakes. She hates snakes, she could have fainted. Mthunzi held me back again. "No."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi. Let go of me."

Mthunzi: "No, Nkosi!! We have to wait!!"

Nkosi: "I would rather die. Don't make me put my weight on you."

Mthunzi: "Rather do that!!"

Sikhosana: "What the hell is going on here!?" I looked back. He stood at the door, his bodyguard holding an umbrella for him. I can't believe he followed me. "Well? Why are you arguing in the rain!?" Mthunzi pulled me into the building. Great, the entire family was here.

Nobantu: "Mehluli, what's the meaning of this? What's going on? Your father was worried the way you left, you'd swear this place was burning down."

Nkosi: "Uhm. We're dealing with a sensitive matter. I'd really appreciate some privacy."

Sikhosana: "You ran out the house without a single bodyguard and drove all the way here at dangerous speed for a sensitive matter? What is it?"

Nkosi: "I can't say." I was at a loss for words. Without even thinking, I'd neglected everything and ran here disregarding my own safety. My father couldn't find out. He had to leave. "I uhm... Mthunzi and I have this sorted father. I'll update you soon as I'm home. I'll be home soon." My father stared at me, not believing a word I said. Everyone stood still. The rain finally stopped. My heart was beating slowly and painfully. I looked at the door. I had to. I'm sorry. Mthunzi held my arm.

Nkosi: "Let me go." I hissed.

Mthunzi: "My prince, I can handle matters from this point. At least it's not flooded. I can handle everything from here."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi." I didn't wish to voice the pain in my tone but it was hard to miss.

Mthunzi: "I promise. I will sort everything out." I looked up at the door. Oh thank God.

Thembisa: "One more step. Almost there." She held Amahle, helping her walk in. My heart skipped several beats blinding my vision. I held her tight in my arms, finally breathing a sigh of relief.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 32

PRINCE POV\_

I held her tight in my arms not giving her a chance to slip from me again.

Sasa: "Nkosi." She whispered.

Nkosi: "Sorry, am I holding you too tight?" I let go a little, holding her face gently instead.

Sasa: "I'm fine. Uhm. Isn't that your family behind you?"

Shit.

Nkosi: "Yes. They're still there?"

Sasa: "Yeah. Any chance we could evaporate into thin air? My hair looks a mess." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "That's your only concern? I'm wet because of you."

Sasa: "Really? You're wet?"

Nkosi: "Why were you in the rain anyway? Do you know how dangerous that is?"

Sasa: "Nkosi please turn around before your father whips us both." I turned around trying to hold in the laugh I had. Why was she like this?

Nkosi: "Uhm. Father, this is Thembisa. We've been dating a few weeks." She stepped next to me and bowed.

Sasa: "Good evening Your Majesty." She kept her head low, not once looking at his eye. My father stared at her then back at me. He turned around walking back out to his car. Okay, not bad. The family followed right after him. I sighed. I'll deal with that later.

Nkosi: "I need to get you warm. Look at you, shivering like a leaf in autumn." I hugged her again.

Sasa: "That's what you're worried about? Nkosi your dad looks very angry."

Nkosi: "Don't worry about him. He'll be fine."

Sasa: "Where is Amahle?"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi took her." I held her hand to the bedroom. "Sit right here." She sat on the chair. I kneeled on the floor, taking off her muddy sneakers. These are obviously ruined. "I'm going to run you a bath." She stood up.

Sasa: "I need to see Amahle."

Nkosi: "Sit Thembisa. Amahle is fine." I went into the bathroom, running the water in the bath. There was a calming salt in the cupboard I usually used to relax. After pouring a cup of it, I watched the water fill then went back out the bathroom. The chair was empty. I looked through the suite, opening the sliding door, checking the deck and pool. No sign of her. I walked back out the suite down the passage to the guest room on the other side. I opened the door, walking in. Thembisa was curled in the bed next to Amahle. Mthunzi sat on the couch staring at them, confused as well.

Nkosi: "What happened? I turned around to go run a bath and she was gone."

Mthunzi: "She walked in and got in bed without a word. How did she even know we're in here?" I swallowed. She was asleep too. How? Running a bath is 3 minutes or 5 at most.

Nkosi: "I don't know Mthunzi. What is this?"

Mthunzi: "Do you think something happened on the mountain?"

Nkosi: "Probably? I don't know." I stared at them both, fast asleep cocooned together. I had a slight hint of envy right about now. What could have possibly brought them this close? And why?

SASA POV\_

I was running through the field with Amahle. She was a fast runner, I couldn't keep up.

Me: "Absolutely not. You're Usain Bolt. I thought we were soaking in the sun." I sat down on the grass. She laughed sitting next to me. We both lay down on our backs looking up at the clear blue sky.

Me: "Babu Nkanyamba."

Ama: "Yoh he's heavy." I giggled. The snake slithered on to the grass, sitting in its place.

Me: "This is nice."

Ama: "Yeah."

Me: "Do we have to go back?"

Ama: "Yes, unfortunately. I feel better. Are you cold?"

Me: "No. Let's go." We stood up, walking in the field once again.

I woke up, stretching my arms out. I sat up. Amahle opened her eyes rubbing them then looked across the room. Mthunzi and Nkosi were sitting on the chairs staring at us.

Me: "Hello."

Nkosi: "Hi." I couldn't tell whether he was upset or what. He looked indifferent.

Me: "How long have we been asleep?"

Nkosi: "Two hours."

Me: "That long huh."

Nkosi: "Your father is calling you home Amahle."

Me: "No!"

Ama: "No!" We said together. They looked at each other.

Nkosi: "No?"

Me: "no."

Mthunzi: "This is not something we can help. The King has requested her home. So we have to go." I looked at Amahle.

Me: "You're gonna be okay?" She nodded. "I'll see you tomorrow."

Ama: "Okay." I hugged her then got out of bed. Nkosi walked out, I followed him to our suite.

Nkosi: "Your water is cold by now."

Me: "My water isn't the only thing cold." I mumbled.

Nkosi: "Oh you mean me?" He heard me?

Me: "Are you mad at me?"

Nkosi: "No, I'm not mad at you. I'm just confused. What's going on?"

Me: "A lot is going on. You might have to sit down. Maybe having Amahle here will help-"

Nkosi: "No. Amahle needs to go home. You can tell me what's going on."

Me: "Okay. Let's sit."

Nkosi: "You're still damp. You need to wash off the mud on your feet. Come." He took me into the bathroom this time, probably afraid I'll disappear again. I didn't even disappear. I said I'm going to Amahle. He ran me a bath, helping me inside. "Are you hungry?"

Me: "Starving. And very thirsty."

Nkosi: "Okay. I'll order food." He walked to the bedroom. I used the scrub, washing off my body. I rinsed myself before getting out and letting the water out, washing the bath. I walked to the bedroom in a towel. Nkosi was not in the suite. I took the time to moisturize and wore the warm satin robe in the wardrobe. He walked in followed by the lady with a tray. She set the table as she does and bowed before walking out. I sat on the chair, starting to eat. On my first swallow, I looked to where he was standing.

Me: "You're not joining me?"

Nkosi: "No. I'll wait until you finish."

Me: "I can't eat alone." He sighed, coming to sit down. We silently ate our dinner. I was nervous about what I had to tell him. How would he receive it? We went to sit on the couch after a glass of red wine.

Me: "Amahle died again." He stared at me quietly, clenching his door. "I watched her die." He exhaled, looking away. "She didn't kill herself."

Nkosi: "And what does that mean?"

Me: "I had been with her all day. She fell asleep before me. I was talking to you on the phone when she fell asleep. She hadn't left my sight. I had a terrible headache, suddenly. One that couldn't let me sleep. I sat up and drank a pain killer. Then a second one because the first didn't work. I looked over at her and she started convulsing. Vomiting, she looked like she was being held down by an invisible force. I got up and sat her up, holding her. Then she woke up. Turns out, when I touched her, she stopped dying. Her self harm wounds just reopened and bled on their own without being touched. Nkosi. Amahle, isn't killing herself. She's being punished. She only attempted once and that is the time you found her. She never did it again. It is the ancestors that punished her by having her relive her death. Apparently it has never happened in front of anyone, it only happens when she's alone. But this time, I was there. And so that's why I spent the weekend in our room alone with her. Everytime I leave her behind, my heart tears. We went up to the mountain. I thought it would be better if she apologized. We arrived and spoke to amadlozi. They welcomed her. It rained heavily for just a few minutes then it stopped. We fell asleep up there because she'd become unconscious and I couldn't leave her by herself. We woke up and came down."

Nkosi: "You fell asleep on the alter?"

Me: "Yes. The elders were there with us."

Nkosi: "What elders Thembisa?"

Me: "Well.." I looked at my fingers. "Babu Nkanyamba, Babu Mhlaba, The Royal Guards, AboHlalo and Mkhambi." He stared at me, standing up.

Nkosi: "You can't know those names. I've never told you those names."

Me: "Well, that's how they introduced themselves to us."

Nkosi: "How does Nkanyamba look?"

Me: "He is an old man with silver hair and beard. He has two small warts on the left of his face." He stared at me, shocked.

Nkosi: "How is this possible Thembisa? Why?" I shrugged. "So what is binding you with Amahle."

Me: "She's my protector." He sat back down.

Nkosi: "So she was telling the truth. She couldn't help it, she wasn't killing herself. She had no control?"

Me: "Yeah."

Nkosi: "I feel horrible. Do you know how I berated her? That was cruel of me."

Me: "If it helps, she's not mad at you."

Nkosi: "It doesn't help at all Thembisa because I should've believed her. I am connected to her by blood. It took another person who doesn't even have our blood to understand her. Do you know why it happened in front of you?"

Me: "No."

Nkosi: "Because you believed her the very first time. You took care of her, the first time. I know this wasn't the second incident because Amahle usually dies every week." He sighed. "Fuck." I crawled over to him, sitting on his lap.

Me: "Don't be too hard on yourself. This is a chance to make things right. Also. There's a more urgent and worse problem we need to start dealing with."

Nkosi: "Okay. Now you're scaring me."

Me: "Sibonelo-"

Nkosi: "I should've known. What did he do."

Me: "Nkosi. Please calm down. This can't be solved or thought through on high emotions." He huffed looking away. I kiss his chin. "Sibonelo is not the only one who is after you."

Nkosi: "What does that mean?"

Me: "The other royals are not happy that your family has the highest seat. They think it is not fair and they are looking for ways to dethrone you." He stared at me quietly.

Nkosi: "How do you know this?"

Me: "Khaya kind of gave the light version. Apparently he woke up to Sibonelo and Zwe arguing. Sibonelo is siding with the other royals. He says he knows, first that you love me and that you spoke in his head. Did you whisper to Sibonelo?"

Nkosi: "At the reed dance."

Me: "What would happen if they found out your family has abilities?"

Nkosi: "A war would happen. They would most likely turn the people against us. Tear the nation apart. They would make everyone believe we're there as dictators who want to harm them instead of Lead." He held two fingers at his temple, massaging it.

Me: "So they can't find out."

Nkosi: "Absolutely not. Not only dethroning us, we could be chased out of the nation. As much as I would love nothing more than to leave all this royal shit behind. I have to think for the people. There's not a single royal out there who would look out for you all. Not one."

Me: "Zwe seems nice."

Nkosi: "Zwe is nice but he only listens to his father. As you can see, he is a doctor, that's all he's dedicated to. He would never rule as king. Let's not even start on Sibonelo. Mngqobi is influenced by Sibonelo. Would do anything he says."

Me: "The Phakamisa's currently have Nothando, her brother is still young. She's also promised to Mngqobi."

Nkosi: "This isn't good. I need to think."

Me: "One way to win people over is being closer to them. On their side. Abilities or not, humans are loyal to those who show care and humility to them."

Nkosi: "Not all humans."

Me: "Sure, that's true but alot of them. The lot you need on your side."

Nkosi: "Thembisa, I don't want to push but I need you to understand the more aggravated the other royals get, the more they'll try get to you. It's bad. I left home without my guards and drove here, speeding because I thought something bad had happened to you. Unfortunately, the Bathonga family was having lunch with my family and they saw that. It can no longer be a secret that I'm in love with you. As much as I hope they'd keep it to themselves, Princess Samu is most probably bitter with hate at this moment and will do anything to disgrace you. I need to protect you Thembisa. I can do that properly if you're my wife." I gave it some thought. The end result is obvious, I want be his wife. Whether it

happens now or in two years. So what will happen with my dreams of finishing school? Graduating? Besides making my father proud, myself ? I wanted to make myself proud. I wanted to have something besides my husband. What would be my purpose? Just being a wife?

Me: "Nkosi, if I agree to marry you, do I still get to finish school? Do I get to graduate? What else, besides being your wife, do I get for myself? Believe me, I love you. I love you with my entire soul and heart. I don't want to lose myself in that process of loving you because I don't know if I'd still be loving you if I wasn't me." He held me closer.

Nkosi: "You know I'd never lie to you. Being my wife, you won't be an ordinary person anymore. Everything will change. You won't be able to live in res. You won't be able to attend school physically. Even the friends you have, can no longer be your friends. Your family will only be allowed to visit once, they can't frequent the palace and you can't be outside often." He sighed. My heart broke into pieces. So if I choose him, I lose my whole life that I've built and begun. I got off his lap, sitting next to him. I've never felt so conflicted in my whole life.

Me: "I have to go see my family."

Nkosi: "Okay baby. Let's go to bed." He scooped me up, walking to bed.

## PRINCE POV\_

I didn't sleep at all last night. Not a wink. I lay in bed just staring at nothing and thinking. I was thinking alot. So much I took a walk out in the garden to clear my head but came back with the same problems. There was way too much happening at the same time. My first stress was the sibling I hurt. The one I should've protected and trusted. The one who always has my back. I pushed her away. I was 10 when Amahle was born. It was quite the celebration. Which was quite strange for me because my two sisters before her, the twins weren't as celebrated. Everyone was happy, sure but not the way with Amahle. Even I didn't get that surely. I was tasked with naming her and months before she was born, I dreamt of Nkanyamba. He told me to name her Mehl'amahle Sikhosana. I named her exactly that and she came out with eyes identical to mine. My father found it hilarious and everyone was convinced I cursed the child. The only person who had understood the

name was oddly, Zwelethu. That was when we were still friends. Before my father's paranoia that someone in the royals is trying to kill me. I should've protected her and now I don't know how to make things right. Mthunzi should know, he knows everything. Now that's sorted, what am I going to do with the royals. If I attack Biyela, that would cement our end. It would turn into chaos. I don't want to participate in a war, in fact, I don't want it to happen at all. The people who would get hurt the most, will be our citizens. We can recover. We have a string of wealth. What about the people who depend on this city and the neighboring cities to put bread on the table? What will happen to them if it burns to ashes all because of this? And most important of all, Thembisa. I can't let her go. I pray she doesn't let me go. It's so unfair of me to expect her to leave her entire life behind just for me. She would be miserable in that palace. Okay, I need Mthunzi. I got up from bed, quickly putting on my clothes and walked to his suite. I knocked on the door. Is he still asleep? Why? It's almost sunrise. I knocked again. He opened the door, staring at me coldly.

Nkosi: "I need to talk."

Mthunzi: "At 4 in the morning?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Obviously, that's why I came now."

Mthunzi: "I'll find you at the bar."

Nkosi: "Okay." I went to the bar in the restaurant. It seemed so sad with the lights off. In reality, all bars look sad when they're empty. I switched the lights on and went behind the bar starting the coffee machine.

Mthunzi will need it if I want him to be polite. He walked in just as it finished.

Mthunzi: "You're making me coffee? You obviously want something." He sat on the high chair, leaning on the bar, yawning.

Nkosi: "True. I want to talk." I gave him his coffee. He stared at it funny.

Mthunzi: "What do you want to talk about?" He came behind the counter to pour it down the drain and make a new one. I wasn't offended, I can do a lot of things. Making coffee is not in my top 50 of things I can do.

Nkosi: "Let's start with the Royals. They want me out. Well, my family out."

Mthunzi: "As in off the throne?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Apparently it's not only Sibonelo. Most of them think this way."

Mthunzi: "This isn't good Nkosi. This is not good at all. We need to do something."

Nkosi: "I've been thinking all night. What is something? Thembisa suggested being closer to the people. Try and win them over."

Mthunzi: "But the people can't help. They don't decide who rules. Your father does. If not him, the royal court." I sighed.

Nkosi: "And that's one of the reasons people don't like us."

Mthunzi: "People adore you."

Nkosi: "They're obliged. They don't have a choice. And if someone doesn't have a choice but to love you, what makes you think they will?"

Mthunzi: "Ey nawe ke with your wiseman words so early in the morning. He drank his coffee. "Fine, we can do more developments? In the villages."

Nkosi: "That's already in the cards but how about involving the public. These developments shouldn't only be for our gain as Sikhosana. They not only need to benefit the people now but build them better lives for their future generations."

Mthunzi: "I remember in our last meeting you spoke about only having local products and services in the shopping center eMthinomkhulu. So, as the supermarket, the villagers sell their products to us, for us to sell back to them?"

Nkosi: "Not exactly like that. Them selling to the supermarket doesn't mean their small business shuts down. They will continue to sell to the other villagers, remember our target is mostly tourists. The supermarket will only be there to provide variety. Maybe some villagers don't want Mthunzi's milk, maybe some are allergic, maybe some just want to taste a brand they've seen on tv. The supermarket cannot fail because the village businesses won't even make up half of the products on shelf."

Mthunzi: "Okay. I'm starting to understand but realistically, we can't build shopping centers in every village Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Yes. That's where I'm still stuck. We'll find something." He thought into his coffee before sipping it.

Mthunzi: "What do you think about inviting other royals on village visits? Give them a say or hear their ideas. Up side, they may have good ideas. Down side, they piss the villagers off." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "See how sharp your mind is at 4 in the morning." He chuckled.

Mthunzi: "One of these days, I'm not opening the door for you."

Nkosi: "I'm placing my blessings and plea with the Gods that it will only be because you're tired. I cannot lose you anytime soon."

Mthunzi: "Thank you for the blessings my Prince."

I had to go home and face the music. I know it was loud. My father was pissed. It was difficult for me to let Amahle's bodyguard take Thembisa to res and school but I didn't have a choice. I made my way to the palace mid morning. I walked in, hearing voices further down the halls. If I can sneak upstairs to my room at least to change.

Nolwazi: "There you are!!!" Damn.

Nkosi: "Mother."

Nolwazi: "Mother is all you can say?! Walk to that lounge and see your father. NOW!" I walked down to the lounge where my whole family had gathered. Why is Princess Samukelisiwe still here? Surely this is bad manners.

Nkosi: "Good morning father." He looked up at me.

Sikhosana: "How could you."

Nkosi: "How could I what?"

Sikhosana: "Not only did you fall in love with a common witch but you took her up to our sacred mountain!!!" He screamed. "Do you realize the damage you've done!?"

Nkosi: "First of all, Thembisa is not a witch-"

Sikhosana: "There is no way in HELL, an ordinary human can go up that mountain!! YOU KNOW THAT!!"

Nkosi: "An ordinary human that isn't good."

Sikhosana: "Mehluli. Do not make me any more angry than I am. I beg just that of you."

Nkosi: "Father, Thembisa is the woman that I've chosen."

Sikhosana: "Over my fucking dead body!!" He hissed. I've never heard my father swear like that or angry like this. "You are NOT bringing that thing into my palace. If I so much as smell her near you, you'll collect her remains in hell. I promise you that." There was no getting through to my father. Not right now anyway. I could go the route my grandfather took and just marry her behind his back but that won't stop them from hurting her. That why grandfather was ruthless. They broke him even after he gave the family an heir. I can't let that happen. I went up to my office. I just needed to find a way to protect Thembisa. From everyone at this point. The door closed behind me. I looked back, finding Princess Samu standing there.

Samu: "My Prince."

Nkosi: "Samukelisiwe, I have nothing for you. Absolutely nothing."

Samu: "I know." She sighed. "However, the fact is, you can't have her."

Nkosi: "That's what you think?" I chuckled.

Samu: "Your father has already put up sanctions all over the city. She's being watched. If you go anywhere near her, she will be dead. I don't need to tell you, who your father is."

Nkosi: "What do you want."

Samu: "I can help."

Nkosi: "Right. Ngicel unghumele."

Samu: "There's obviously a catch, that I won't deny but I believe this will be an ideal agreement for all of us. You, the most." I stared at her. "Marry me." I laughed.

Nkosi: "I don't care if I have to kill him myself. I'm not staying away from Thembisa."

Samu: "That wouldn't be wise. And no one is saying you'd have to stay away from Thembisa. I would merely be your first wife. I can make way for her to be the second. After your coronation. You can have this in writing if you wish. Your father can't make any decisions on your behalf, once you're the King. On top of all of this, I can of course secure alliance with my kingdom, the Mufhuwalo family because my younger sister is promised to them and the Mpondo family as my youngest brother was

promised one of their princesses. That is four kingdoms as your allies. Any enemy, will be destroyed as they stand. You won't have to lift a finger. You'd be the most powerful king in history. And of course, the love of your life, will be safe, right beside you. All of this, can be guaranteed."

Nkosi: "I will never marry a woman that is not Thembisa Ntaka."

Samu: "I understand. What I also understand is. Your father will make good on his threat. It's either me and her or she's dead. Your choice." ....

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 33

PRINCE POV\_

This reeks of suspicion. I didn't even care for what because my answer will not change.

Nkosi: "I'm sure you're a good woman, Princess Samukelisiwe. The man who will marry you one day will be lucky but That man will not be me though. Please open the door and see yourself out."

Samu: "Well, my offer will stand regardless." She walked out my office. Mthunzi was already organizing more security for Thembisa. And also her own bodyguard that has never been hired by my father. I left my office going to my room but I stopped halfway. Amahle's room was the closest to mine. Maybe she and I needed to talk abit. She was the only person who understood how I feel. I knocked on her door, waiting for her to let me in. She opened, standing at the door.

Ama: "Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "Let me in." She stared at me. "Please." She opened the door for me to walk in. Surely my mother gave birth to me twice. Her room was smaller than mine but dark in colour. She loved forest green as a colour, black too.

Ama: "What?"

Nkosi: "Thembisa told me everything." I sat on the couch. She only stood there staring at me. Why are her eyes so scary. Mine can't look like that, I refuse to believe it. "I'm sorry. That I didn't believe you."

Ama: "Why are you here?"

Nkosi: "I hate that it ruined our relationship. I'd like to know what I can do to fix it."

Ama: "You can't fix it. It's the past."

Nkosi: "I'd like to do better then. For the present and future." She finally sat down next to me.

Ama: "Okay." We sat in silence. As we usually did in the past. Not that there wasn't anything to say, we just preferred not to say it out loud. She's the only one I can whisper to and it doesn't affect her. Or was she only saying it to make me feel better since it was our bond?

Nkosi: "Does my whispering hurt you?"

Ama: "No."

Nkosi: "Are you saying that to make me feel better?"

Ama: "When has our relationship ever been based on lies?"

Nkosi: "True. I just thought maybe..."

Ama: "I can also see."

Nkosi: "See what?"

Ama: "The immediate future. Now that we're back from the mountain, I can see choice futures." She smiled.

Nkosi: "What does that mean?"

Ama: "I no longer only see what's going to happen, but I see what would happen in different realities. I can see the outcome for all of the possible choices."

Nkosi: "That's great."

Ama: "Still a work in progress. Samu wants to marry you."

Nkosi: "Yeah."

Ama: "She's always had a crush on you."

Nkosi: "I know."

Ama: "You're not even considering it."

Nkosi: "You know me better than I know myself."

Ama: "Well, do you want to hear how your future with her will go if you did?"

Nkosi: "I don't think I care enough."

Ama: "I'll tell you anyway. Samu will align you with the kingdoms she has promised, that's true. What's also true is that you will be a powerful king. She will obviously have to keep the agreement for you to marry Thembisa because you will refuse to touch her at all. Thembisa will not agree to be your second wife, ultimately breaking up with you. You will hurt like you've never hurt in your life. This will break you apart. Samu will take advantage of this pain, lure you to her. You get her pregnant and your life will continue as a king who rules. That's it."

Nkosi: "What happens if I marry Thembisa right now."

Ama: "She dies."

Nkosi: "I can protect her-"

Ama: "Bodyguards won't help. Your father is king. His decision rules over yours currently. They'd listen to him more than you."

Nkosi: "So what do I do? Seems like I lose Thembisa either way."

Ama: "For now let's wait it out. Once you become King, your father cannot overrule you."

Nkosi: "That's months away. How will I stay away from Thembisa that long?"

Ama: "Long distance relationships work well if both parties are loyal to each other."

Nkosi: "I don't think you understand that I cannot physically be away from her too long. I'm not letting my woman cry for me."

Ama: "We'll make a plan Nkosi."

Nkosi: "When are you going back to Res?"

Ama: "When your father approves." She sighed. "He's scared."

Nkosi: "Why is he scared?"

Ama: "He never made it to the alter of the mountain."

## SASA POV\_

My morning was a really weird one. Yes I now had a visible bodyguard. I was briefed that I will only travel with him and in a bullet proof car. I don't eat from the cafeteria anymore, I get food delivered but it would be inspected thoroughly. Everyone was looking at me strangely. No, rephrase. They looked at me like I was the enemy. Did they know about me and Nkosi already? Petu had come to my room but the bodyguard couldn't let her in. School was even worse. He had to be inside the lecture room. This obviously irritated everyone else. I had to put my foot down eventually. He could wait outside surely. I sent a message to Amahle: <Hey, I'm the social pariah once again. No one can talk to me. They looking at me like I threatened their mothers.> I sent it. She replied: <I'm sorry. It will get much worse when they find out why.> So this is how they feel before finding out it's for Nkosinhle? I went to the HOD. After a few knocks, he invited me in. I walked in and sat in the chair. He stared at my bodyguard.

Me: "Mr Mafani. Good day. I'm so sorry for coming without an appointment."

Mafani: "That's....fine. You're royal?"

Me: "No."

Mafani: "You have a bodyguard following you with Sikhosana colours on his shoulder." That's visible??? Like people know who's bodyguard is who's? Oh my life is about to be hell. I looked at the bodyguard. Purple, Black and Gold. I sighed turning to look back at my HOD.

Me: "I can't. I don't feel safe. Everyone is staring. And they're not happy. Is it possible that I attended my lectures online?" I looked at my hands, defeated.

Mafani: "Sure. You can do that starting tomorrow. You'll of course need a bigger room, I can't imagine being stuck in a small room for weeks."

Me: "There's bigger rooms?"

Mafani: "Yes, for final year students but we can make a plan with your Resident leader."

Me: "I don't mind my room. It's okay."

Mafani: "Are you sure?" I nodded. "Let your resident leader know when you change your mind. For now, I'm ordering your laptop and connection system. They should be delivered to your res in the early morning. Someone will help you set up."

Me: "Thank you Mr Mafani. I appreciate this."

Mafani: "You're welcome. Perhaps, take the day off today. I'm sure you will catch up tomorrow." I get up, leaving his office after thanking him. My bodyguard drove me back to res.

Me: "What's your name?" He didn't respond. Eh. Okay. We'll see how that works out for you. I took out my phone, playing a game. He parked in our parking lot, coming to open the door. I sat quietly focused on my game. He stared at me. I'm not going to be around a person who doesn't speak. I'm having a difficult day as is.

Him: "Miss."

Me: "Oh so you can speak?" I carried on my phone.

Him: "Qhama."

Me: "Was that difficult?"

Qhama: "No."

Me: "Exactly. There's no need for us to pretend we don't know each other. We're on the same team. I can't just bark at you to do things. I need to address you respectfully and with your name." I got out the car, walking to my room. Our first holidays were coming up in just 4 weeks. I know I didn't want to go home at first but now I had to. Qhama stood in front of me, suddenly. What is it noooww.

Me: "What's going on?"

Qhama: "There's different guards at your door."

Me: "Biyela?"

Qhama: "No. Bathonga. Turn back."

Me: "Bathonga? They don't know me. Why would anyone from Bathonga want to talk to me."

"Thembisa." A lady called out to me. I stopped, looking back at her. So she's a princess. This was obvious.

Qhama: "Let's go-"

Samu: "I won't harm you. I promise."

Qhama: "NOW!"

Samu: "Guards stand your weapons down and kick them over. Close your eyes and turn away facing the wall." They did exactly as she said. Qhama stood next to me.

Me: "What can I help you with, princess? I don't believe we've met."

Samu: "A dingy passageway is the last place I'd like to have a conversation."

Me: "Forgive me but I don't know you and I don't trust you."

Samu: "Your guard has all the weapons. He can aim at mine who are currently against a wall. You and I will be in your room to chat. If he hears a struggle, he has my permission to shoot them all." Qhama took his gun out aiming at the men against the wall. I walked into my room with the Bathonga princess.

Me: "Alright princess. What can I help you with?"

Samu: "As you may know. The King doesn't want you near the Prince. He has put up sanctions all around you, watching you. If Mehluli so much as comes near you, the king will have you killed. That's why the bodyguard."

Me: "Okay."

Samu: "I don't know why. However, Mehluli loves you and will do anything to be with you."

Me: "And you want to help him I guess?"

Samu: "I want to help myself and him. I gave him an option. If you want to be with him, if you want the king to leave you alone. You have to encourage him to accept it."

Me: "What is the option?"

Samu: "He marries me. Once he marries me, we wait until his coronation and then he marries you as a second wife. Once Mehluli is King no one can overrule him. Not even his father, he won't be able to hurt you. This works better for everyone. He still has you as a wife and you don't have to completely abandon your life. You can live normally, carry on studying, work. All with the love of your life by your side and not the responsibility of being a Queen of an entire nation."

Me: "And you'll be queen? Because you want the responsibility of the entire nation?"

Samu: "Yes Thembisa. I've been royalty all my life, I can handle it much better than you would. The only thing you and I will share is a husband. And of course, children. Think about it." She walked out the room. Qhama came straight in, checking me.

Me: "I'm fine, Qhama."

KHAYA POV\_

It's been a boring Monday. I hated being in this apartment alone and I wasn't about to invite a girl here that would annoy me. All the girls I've been with, all of them, irritated me. There's not a single interesting person. I feel like they put up this persona just so they can trick me into a relationship. That won't happen now or ever. Mngqobi was probably at school. I called Sibonelo.

Sibo: "My bug."

Khaya: "Hi. Where are you?"

Sibo: "My bar. Why?"

Khaya: "I'm bored."

Sibo: "I'm a little busy so I can't come immediately and I don't want you here. I'll call you in an hour."

Khaya: "I can be around alcohol, I'm just not allowed to drink it and I'm fine with that."

Sibo: "Fine. Come." I hung up. I mean sure, life sucked but I wouldn't want to die slowly and painfully because of liver problems. Anything but

that. I took my keys leaving my apartment. I drove to the bar that I almost died in just a few days ago. I walked in. Sibonelo was sitting on the couch with his laptop.

Khaya: "Brother."

Sibo: "Hey there." He lifted his hand for the manager.

Phila: "Khaya."

Khaya: "Hi Phila. Just a coke and maybe some chips from the kitchen."

Phila: "Got you." He walked away. I sat on the couch next to Sibonelo while he worked.

Khaya: "What you working on?" I took out my phone scrolling through socials.

Sibo: "Father wants to expand the network over to Golden Crown. I'm creating a proposal for King Phakamisa."

Khaya: "Oh that's cool."

Sibo: "Yeah, cool. Just hope he accepts."

Khaya: "You have Nakhamula on your side, wouldn't that work in your favour."

Sibo: "It's actually working against us. Nakhamula isn't friendly with Sikhosana. Phakamisa is Sikhosana's favorite people."

Khaya: "Oh damn. I thought your family were the favorites."

Sibo: "That's Sikhosana for you. He decides when he's done with you and there's nothing you can do about it. How are you feeling."

Khaya: "The meds help I guess. I get these shivers at times but overall fine."

Sibo: "Hmm. Are you drinking your water and eating healthy?"

Khaya: "Now you sound like Zwe." I chuckled.

Sibo: "Yeah he's annoying but I can't deny he knows what he's doing. I've gotten much better taking his advice than actually avoiding it. He's a good doctor."

Khaya: "Yeah." Phila brought our drinks and some potato chips for me. I started munching on them instantly. Sibonelo stared at me.

Sibo: "That's healthy?" I smiled. The doors opened, all of us looked. It was morning, no one came here at this time, it wasn't open yet. I know this guy. He was at the ice cream parlour when I went with Thembisa. "Ahh. The most important non royal person in the land. Oh should I say, second most important now? How are you Mthunzi?"

Mthunzi: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "What can I do for you?"

Mthunzi: "The royal Prince has invited you on a village visit. This is part of his future ruling, to include all royals in the nation with decisions and ideas. If you are interested, please do report to the palace by midday." Sibonelo laughed.

Sibo: "Please. Include all royals? That's not true. In fact, it's not true because you stood there and called him THE royal prince. As if I'm not. Sir, please. Both you and Sikhosana have no shame." Mthunzi walked out. "Can you believe him? What does he think this is? When has Sikhosana ever wanted to include us? This is obviously suspicious."

Khaya: "Uhm.. Sbo, don't you think this is a good idea? If you attend then it will obviously make the news, this can help you with the Phakamisa's. Maybe once they see how involved you are with Sikhosana, they won't hesitate to give you a chance. Also, perhaps before going to Golden Crown, offer your network to the villages. This way, you have full control of communication at any point you wish."

Sibo: "You're pretty smart, aren't you?" He took his drink and gulped it down. "We need to get you dressed. It's an hour to their palace. Let's go."

Khaya: "Me? Where am I going? I'm not allowed there." I've never been to the Sikhosana palace. Outsiders are not allowed there. I've only been to Biyela's mostly because I kind of grew up there and King Biyela likes me. I can't go to the Sikhosana palace. No way.

Sibo: "As an ordinary person, sure. But you're my advisor now. Therefore, you go where I go. A royal prince must have a smart advisor. Come." He smiled, getting up. Oh dear God, what have I done.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

## PRINCE POV\_

I stood in front of the mirror on the pedestal while the tailor fitted my suit on me and altered it a bit. I was waiting for Mthunzi to arrive. I also needed feedback on how the draining was going in Mthinomkhulu village. The news were all over it. It made headlines in the early morning. Mthunzi walked in the design room as I called it. This is where the tailor worked or took my measurements.

Mthunzi: "My prince."

Nkosi: "Well?"

Mthunzi: "So...don't be mad." I'm already mad.

Nkosi: "What is it."

Mthunzi: "Zwe wasn't available. He has a busy schedule at the hospital. So I got another Biyel-"

Nkosi: "I hope it's the last brother."

Mthunzi: "It would've been but he's at school. So.."

Nkosi: "So I'm stuck with Sibonelo all day?"

Mthunzi: "Yes. But it's good because then he won't be hovering near Thembisa." I sighed. I wasn't too sure of this plan. A part of me was relieved that Zwe was busy. I don't know what I'd say to him. We were friends and grew up together before our friendship was cut at 10 years old. I always felt guilty about it but there was nothing I could do. What would I say to him now? Do we carry on like we don't know each other? I don't know how to be friends anymore. I don't have none except for Mthunzi. Do I even want friends? Absolutely not. I don't need any more humans to stress me.

Mthunzi: "Are you mad? Alot is happening on your face." I looked at him.

Nkosi: "I'm not mad. One day with Sibonelo won't be too bad."

Mthunzi: "You wished to kill him last week."

Nkosi: "And if he pushes it, my wish will be granted." I stepped off the pedestal.

Mthunzi: "Okay. One more thing."

Nkosi: "Is it going to irritate me? I'm having a bad day."

Mthunzi: "Yes but it's better that you know. Samu was at res. Qhama said she spoke to Thembisa." The anger sizzled in my muscle, tissue and bones.

Nkosi: "Ok."

Mthunzi: "Another thin-"

Nkosi: "MTHUNZI."

Mthunzi: "Last one, I swear. Uhm. Your dad is waiting on you downstairs for lunch."

Nkosi: "I'm not interested in seeing him."

Mthunzi: "I would understand but he will not stop."

Nkosi: "I don't care what he does, I'm not talking to him. Can we get a move on?"

Mthunzi: "Well, it's only half past eleven."

Nkosi: "And? Sibonelo will not come here. Let's go." I walked out the room, down the passage and stairs. What the hell?

Mthunzi: "Oh. He's early."

Sibonelo: "Your Highness. I'm honored to receive your invite." I looked next to him. How low could Sibonelo go?

Mthunzi: "What is he doing here? You know commoners are not allowed in the palace."

Sibonelo: "Commoners?" He chuckled looking at me. "This is my advisor." He smiled proudly.

Mthunzi: "Advisor? Really?"

Sibonelo: "Yes. I found myself needing one. Khaya is perfect. Not only does he have my best interests at heart, but he's also studying law." My eyes never left Khaya. He was staring at his feet. Advisor? He can barely look at me, he's shaking in that suit.

Sikhosana: "Aha. I thought I heard some voices."

Sibonelo: "King Sikhosana." He bowed. "What a pleasure to be in your palace. The prince has invited me to join him for a village visit."

Sikhosana: "Is that so? I didn't know about that Mehluli." I walked out the palace, getting in my car. Honest to God, he will talk to himself for eternity if I can help it. Mthunzi got in next to me, the driver driving off.

Mthunzi: "He won't take that kindly."

Nkosi: "Kindness is the last thing he'll receive from me for as long as I live. If he values his kingship and dignity, he ought to leave me alone."

KHAYA POV\_

I've met Sikhosana before. My dad is his lawyer. We've never interacted beyond me saying hello. I always have to greet him but he never responded. Not that it matters, it seems he never responds to anyone. Not even Sibonelo. And now, not even his own father. I hate that amused me. So he's just like that to everyone? How the hell did Thembisa fall in love with that person? And his name is Mehluli? I've never heard it before today. I can't lie, it suits him. Sibonelo and I rode behind their car in our own. For once, he let a guard drive us. Sibonelo enjoys driving himself but I figure he's trying to imitate Mehluli. I chuckled.

Sibo: "What?"

Khaya: "His name is Mehluli?" He laughed.

Sibo: "I was not expecting it. I thought his name was Nkosi. That's what Zwe used to call him."

Khaya: "Nkosi? Maybe because he's the future King?" He took out his phone, hopping on to Google.

Sibo: "Probably. In fact, let me Google his name."

Khaya: "It would make sense though, that he's Nkosi."

Sibo: "That would be overkill." The search results came up. "Well, I'll be damned. His name is Nkosinhle Mehluli Sikhosana."

Khaya: "And you didn't know that?"

Sibo: "He's not my friend, why would I know his name. Only Zwe knew it and maybe our parents. I just called him Your Highness because he acts like a cunt."

Khaya: "Which village are we visiting?"

Sibo: "Not sure and I don't care. I'm just interested in seeing how he interacts with people."

Khaya: "He didn't even respond to his father. Sbo, are you sure he's not mute? No disrespect."

Sibo: "Oh he can definitely talk. He prefers not to. He has responded to me a few times."

Khaya: "And? He's just cold?"

Sibo: "Cold is him." That's just crazy. I don't understand why Thembisa would fall for someone like that when she herself is expressive with her emotions. She will let you know exactly what she feels and thinks. How does that work if the person you're talking to isn't willing to respond? The village was an hour away. When we arrived at the Chief's homestead. We watched the car before us park and Mthunzi got out first. The second door was opened by a guard, I only caught a glimpse of his shoe before they surrounded him. Wow. Sibonelo and I got off our car with the four Biyela guards walking behind us.

Mthunzi: "Chief Mangozi. Thank you for welcoming us to your village. The Prince has invited another royal family to join us today. This is Prince Sibonelo Biyela and ...his advisor." He sounded bored with my presence and I couldn't care. I was just as important as he was right now. Okay maybe a little less important but I had a job to do.

Chief: "We are truly blessed to have you all. Thank you Your Highness for gracing us. We appreciate your presence, Prince Biyela." Sibonelo stepped forward.

Sibo: "The pleasure is mine, Chief Mangozi. You have a beautiful village." The chief smiled, bowing.

Chief: "Thank you My Prince. We can all head to the community hall just a few meters away." He looked so excited, he could actually explode. We made it to the community hall and it was full. Some people were outside. Sikhosana got in first and we followed after his guards. The community was singing loudly. This was crazy. Werent they supposed to

bow to him? He sat up on the stage, Mthunzi next to him. Sibonelo sat next to them. I sat in the front row with the people. The royal speaker got to the podium and lifted her hand to calm them down. She was gorgeous. The crowd settled down.

Speaker: "Community of Vamani village. We thank you for coming in your numbers to see us today. The Royal Prince..." She looked back at them but quickly looked at the crowd. "Princes, appreciate your presence. We-"

"Mana Sesi!! All hail the king nabantu bakhe, siyaba bongela. We want to know what will be done for our village too? Mthinomkhulu is hours and hours away. They get their children's bodies back and the lake is being drained. They're getting new roads. What will happen with our village? We've been struggling with electricity since it was invented. We don't have towers. Did you know you need towers to make a phone call? We have to travel to town for that! The school doesn't have a roof. This is only a few of our problems! We also want a royal tour in our homes!" Mthunzi looked at Sibonelo, saying something to him that I couldn't hear. Sibonelo spoke back to him. Is Mehluli going to address these people or not? He didn't look like he would move. I knew though, he only did that much for Mthinomkhulu because of Thembisa. Fucking pretentious. I shook my head. He stood up, tapping the speaker's shoulder. She stepped aside. No fucking way.

Nkosi: "Good day. What is your name sir?"

Him: "My Prince, my name is Zakhe." He bowed down graciously.

Nkosi: "Zakhe. My plans are to do much more for all the villages. Mthinomkhulu was neglected and that had been on me. I did encourage your chief to write all the issues the village is facing and so we can all be here together finding a solution for them today. I would like the community to be as involved in improving the village because that way, it would be difficult for you to not then take care of it in the coming future. As I'm hearing your complaint, the school and electricity issue will take priority. I would appreciate respect in addressing each other as we move further along today. Thank you." He sat back down. Wow. I don't know what I expected him to sound like but he had a dangerous element in his tone. His voice carried through the room as an obvious king would. I can't say I don't envy it. I would be lying.

## SASA POV\_

Since I'd had a day off from school, I spent my day in my room. I did ask Qhama to let Petu in at least. I can't survive here alone. Especially because I don't know when Amahle will be back. It was early evening and I'd managed to finish my assignment that I kept putting off. Now I needed to wait for my laptop so I can type it out properly. Ordinarily I'd use the computer lab but that can't happen now can it. I took my phone, dialing for my father. He answered after a few rings. Was he busy? The goats should be in by now.

Xolani: "Hello my child."

Me: "Hello Tata, how are you?"

Xolani: "I'm well and yourself?"

Me: "I'm okay. Are you busy?"

Xolani: "I just walked in the house."

Me: "Oh, are the goats giving you trouble?"

Xolani: "No, I was at the lake."

Me: "Doing what there?"

Xolani: "We were helping the workers drain the lake. The whole community was there."

Me: "Oh. How did that go?"

Xolani: "For a first day, it was good my child. They did a very good job. It's not too visible because it's a very big and deep lake but it was a job well done for the first day."

Me: "That's good. Maybe when I come for Easter holidays it will be halfway done."

Xolani: "You're coming down for holidays?"

Me: "Yes tata."

Xolani: "Oh that's great news. I'm happy to hear that mntanam."

Me: "Where is mama and Nele?"

Xolani: "Your mother is in town. I'm not sure where Nele is, maybe she's with her friends. Tell me about school." I couldn't tell my father I'm not attending anymore and instead only doing online lectures. He'd obviously order me home if that's the case.

Me: "School is great. I'm coping well, I've finished two assignments and I'm studying for a test that I'm writing this Wednesday."

Xolani: "That's good. I'm proud of you my angel. You're a very smart and responsible child. You're going to make a fantastic lawyer one day. Zanele will learn a lot from you. These days she's obsessed with friends and there's a boy involved. Maybe you coming home for holidays will remind her that boys are not important in life. This child stresses me."

Me: "Who is the boy?"

Xolani: "This juvenile delinquent, Aphiwe from next door." I almost laughed.

Me: "I thought she hated him."

Xolani: "Not anymore. Do you know he stole a pig from Ndumenze? What a naughty child."

Me: "Haibo Tata. What is he going to do with a pig?"

Xolani: "What he DID is eat with his friends. Imagine." I laughed.

Me: "It can't be that easy to steal a pig and cook it."

Xolani: "Apparently, they braai it. Trust me, I'm just as shocked." He chuckled. "They tried with my chickens the other day, I caught one of them and whipped him to come short. They keep very far from my house now. Imagine me, being robbed by little children."

Me: "Ey, tata." I chuckled.

Xolani: "Anyway, are you staying away from that man we spoke about?"

Me: "Tata."

Xolani: "No Thembisa. I thought I made myself clear."

Me: "Can we talk about it when I'm home?"

Xolani: "What is there to talk about? Thembisa I'm not going to allow that man to manipulate you. You've come this far. You're in a prestigious school. What would he want from you? That man is probably promised

to a princess. There is no future with him. He will not marry you." I sighed.

Me: "Okay tata."

Xolani: "I'm not trying to be mean to you. I know you see a handsome man who has it all but this path is not for you my child. I'm even willing to accept that other one with big ears. Not a prince. He will break your heart along with your virginity and you'll be left pregnant and alone. Are you listening to me?"

Me: "Yes tata."

Xolani: "Good. Your mother will call you when she's home. I love you my child. Stay safe and good."

Me: "I love you too tata." I hung up the phone. I was trying to forget about this situation all day. Since Princess Bathonga had come to my room, I'd been overthinking. I would never be a second wife. Not even to a king. But I love him sooo much. What would life be without him? Would I survive not being his? But there will be another woman. His first. Oh father God. How I do not wish this even on my worst enemy. Qhama knocked on my door.

Me: "Come in." He opened, coming in with Petu. She was carrying a pizza and drinks. "It's okay Qhama. Petu is safe."

Qhama: "I still have to check."

Me: "We're going to be eating the same pizza and drinking the same drinks. She's obviously not trying to poison herself. Please go!" He walked out.

Petu: "And then?"

Me: "I'm just so tired Petu. Of all this." She massaged my shoulders.

Petu: "I'm sorry. Has he tried to harm you again? USibonelo?"

Me: "No. The threat is much bigger than Sibonelo."

Petu: "What do you mean?" I sighed. She sat next to me.

Me: "I wasn't dating Sibonelo, Petu. In fact, I saw him for the first time at the reed dance. That's the first time he spoke to me."

Petu: "But...you said."

Me: "I know. I lied, actually avoided telling you the truth. The car that you were seeing picking me up wasn't his."

Petu: "Okaaaay. Who else would it be? The other royals are too far to frequent Mountain Peak. Oh... It's Mngqobi?"

Me: "No-"

Petu: "Zwe? Oh my Goodness. That's so cute! Zwe is adorable, okay? What a humble gent."

Me: "Petunia, I need you to calm down. It's not Zwe."

Petu: "You're keeping me in suspense, who is it? Is it a king?" She gasped. "It's a king, isn't it? Oh you dirty little girl." I giggled.

Me: "You're making this so much easier for me. It's Nkosinhle."

Petu: "Who's that?"

Me: "The royal heir."

Petu: "OH." she held her mouth in shock.

Me: "I couldn't tell you or anyone for that matter. Please keep this to yourself."

Petu: "Oh. My. God." I just looked at my hands quietly. Sooner rather than later she's going to find out. Now that the king is trying to kill me and I have a bodyguard, it's bound to come out. "Thembisa, HOW. Tell me everything. OH MY GOD. You're playing with me aren't you? Oh my, he is Amahle's brother!! Did she know?"

Me: "Yes, she knew. From the beginning."

Petu: "Thembisa!!" She gasped. "How did this happen? Did Amahle introduce you?"

Me: "No. I saw him once in the club then again at Amelia's. I didn't know then, that he's a Prince. He then looked for me, got my number and started texting. Then I saw him a third time at Amelia's. On all occasions, he didn't speak. I was with my dad and my dad noticed him looking at me so he confronted him. It was a whole thing. Later that night, he came to apologize and ask me out to dinner."

Petu: "No man, you're joking. He can speak? You're lying Thembisa."

Me: "He can. He just doesn't like to."

Petu: "Yeah like his little sister. Oh my goodness. So...you have a whole bodyguard now, does that mean you're taking it to the next level?" She squealed excitedly. "My friend is going to be queen? Oh my God!!" I smiled faintly.

Me: "Actually not."

Petu: "What? What do you mean?"

Me: "The current King, his father, doesn't like me and doesn't want me near him. He has since threatened my life." She gasped.

Petu: "What the hell!! Why?"

Me: "No clue. Maybe he wants him to marry the Bathonga princess." I sighed. "She came here."

Petu: "No Thembisa! Did she threaten you?"

Me: "No. She asked me to encourage him to marry her. Once he marries her, they'll wait until his coronation and then he can marry a second wife, me. That way, his father doesn't have a say since he will be king and he and I can be together."

Petu: "But you won't be together. There will be three of you. You can't accept that Thembisa. You have to fight for your man!"

Me: "I would, if I wasn't being threatened with death. Petu, I don't want to die. I love him sooo much but I have a lot I still need to live for. I don't know if it's worth risking my life."

Petu: "Thembisa, only your heart knows how much it loves him. What would life be without him?"

Me: "It would be hell. But it would hurt even more knowing he has another woman." My heart was hurting as is. Imagine if he was married to someone else? No I'd have to obviously die.

Petu: "So what will you do?"

Me: "I don't know my friend. Truly I don't. Either way, I lose. It's my life or him." I looked at my phone, seeing a new message from Nkosi: <I love you and nothing will get in the way of that. Ndiyakuthembisa. I'm going to love you forever.>

Petu: "You're really in love with him ne?" I looked up at her. "I just know that's him, I see it on your face. You really love this man."

Me: "I really do Petu. It's scary because we haven't even been together that long."

Petu: "That means nothing. We need a plan."

Me: "A plan?"

Petu: "Little princess lady has given you information that you can use to your advantage."

Me: "And that is?"

Petu: "Sweetheart, once he becomes King, no one can overrule his decisions. So if he remains unmarried until then, he can still be yours and yours alone. All we have to do, is dodge bullets from the king." I giggled.

Me: "You are something else, you know that? How are you talking about dodging bullets when my life is at risk?" I laughed.

Petu: "Please Thembisa, we're talking about a future king here. What's a little death for love? Romeo and Juliet did it too." I couldn't stop laughing.

Me: "Where did I find you?"

Petu: "You need me. All of us. Take out a pen and paper. We need a schedule. We need an invisible car."

Me: "What the hell is an invisible car?"

Petu: "A car that can't be detected or noticed. Something that's too ordinary. We need disguises. Maybe even a hideout."

Me: "A hideout?"

Petu: "Yes of course, how else are you to see your man?"

Me: "Okay. Let's plan this in detail."

Petu: "Amahle with help with the more intricate details. Who else knows about you and him?" I sighed.

Me: "Khaya."

Petu: "That's tricky. He is loyal to Biyela. We'll work around it. Let's get to work Mrs Sikhosana." ....

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

## Chapter 35

\*\*4 weeks later.

### PRINCE POV\_

I haven't been able to see Thembisa for the past month and I was damn near losing my mind. Sure, we had video calls and spoke every minute of every day but it wasn't enough. I needed to hold her and come hell or high waters, that would be happening today. I couldn't help smiling at the thought of seeing her beautiful face. It will be extra special because, it will be in her village. She was going home today for the holidays. I had my village visit scheduled to be Mthinomkhulu because I needed to check the lake and give an update. After getting dressed, I made my way to Amahle's room. I knocked before walking in.

Ama: "Hey."

Nkosi: "Hi." I closed the door behind me. "Are you coming with me?"

Ama: "Not this time. You two need time alone."

Nkosi: "What are you seeing?"

Ama: "Try very hard to control your urges please. We're not ready for a baby shower." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "How's your holidays looking?"

Ama: "I've been on holiday for 4 weeks. Any idea when your father wants to release me from this jail that is this palace?"

Nkosi: "I'm not talking to him, remember?"

Ama: "Yeah, he's pissed about that. If you don't wish to have him follow you to Mthinomkhulu, maybe you should entertain him for a few minutes."

Nkosi: "Hm." I got up. "Alright then, let me get going."

Ama: "Say hi to her for me."

Nkosi: "Will do." I walked out, making my way to the dining room where the rest of the family was. I haven't sat at this table for weeks.

Nobantu: "Mehluli, my son. Thank you for joining us." I sat down.

Nkosi: "Morning." My father stared at me.

Nolwazi: "How are you Mehluli? We haven't seen you in a very long time."

Nkosi: "Busy."

Sikhosana: "It better not be with that girl."

Nobantu: "My King, I'm sure the Prince was only just exploring. He is a man after all. You need to be a little more understanding to his urges." She giggled. This was uncomfortable.

Sikhosana: "If that's the case then, all is well. What you need by your side is a respectable woman. Not some loose university girl."

Nkosi: "Thought she was a witch." I bit into my toast.

Sikhosana: "Very much so. Why would she be going up your family mountain? What would she gain? Don't worry though, the healer has fixed everything."

Nkosi: "Didn't your healer find 'nothing' on Amahle? Yet you've kept her hostage for weeks. Either he is lying or doesn't know what he's doing."

Sikhosana: "Mehluli." I looked at him biting my toast.

Nkosi: "Father."

Sikhosana: "I am only trying to protect you here." I focused on my breakfast. "I hear you're going to Mthinomkhulu for a few days." I looked at him and back at my food.

Nkosi: "I have a project there."

Sikhosana: "Well... Princess Samu will be joining you there. She's closer to the village. I'm sure there's plenty you two can talk about. Especially when doing your royal visit. Those have been a success hey?"

Nkosi: "That would be nice. Looking forward to seeing her."

Sikhosana: "Really?" His face lit up. Shame.

Nkosi: "Yeah. Should I reserve a room for her at our guesthouse or she has her reservations already?"

Sikhosana: "I'm sure you can reserve a room for her, she can cancel her reservations. See, this is what I want for you."

Nkosi: "Would be easier if I wasn't being followed by an entire army."

Sikhosana: "They'll remain behind for this trip. Make me proud son."

Nkosi: "I intend to." I smiled, getting up and walking out.

Nolwazi: "I don't know. I don't trust that smile. Mehluli doesn't smile."

Sikhosana: "He's finally seen the light. We need to give him this opportunity. He can't do anything out there with the whole public looking at him."

Nolwazi: "Have you forgotten your son's ability?"

Sikhosana: "It cannot work on hundreds of people." He smiled.

## SASA POV\_

Today was my day to go home. I honestly wanted to get into a bus but this wasn't possible. Why? Not sure. Also, I told my dad I'd be arriving tomorrow so I could spend the afternoon and night with Nkosi in secret. This was funny. It was like living in a movie. I packed a small bag with clothes to last me a week and a half. I'd bought a new dress just for this occasion. It was a short baby doll dress pink and white in colour. Petu had done medium braids on my hair just yesterday. She was so excited. I tied up my braids in a bun then wore my new sneakers that were delivered 4 weeks ago. I had ruined my pair when I'd gone up the mountain, so Nkosi ordered me five pairs. Two of them being hiking boots. It was a bit excessive but I appreciated the gesture. Qhama knocked on the door.

Me: "Come in." He opened, Petu came in. He no longer searched her now, thank goodness.

Petu: "FRIEND."

Me: "How do I look?"

Petu: "Absolutely gorgeous but I have bad news."

Me: "What?"

Petu: "Sibonelo is outside." I got an immediate headache.

Me: "What is he doing here?"

Petu: "I think he's expecting you to be leaving today."

Me: "And?"

Petu: "I think he might know that Nkosi His Highness, will be going to the village today." I couldn't not laugh at how Petu addressed Nkosi. She always calls him that. Nkosi His Highness.

Me: "So what do we do?"

Petu: "I don't know."

Me: "He's blocking the gate again, isn't he?" That's the only gate. Even if I were to hide, he'd find me.

Petu: "Yeah."

Me: "Then let's go out. Let's have some lunch at a place nearby. When he least expects it, I disappear."

Petu: "What about your bag?"

Me: "Someone will have to pick it up and drop it in the car while we're in the restaurant."

Petu: "Get Qhama to give you the keys."

Me: "He would never do that."

Petu: "It's not like you'll drive away, he'd be next to you at all times. Do you think Khaya will help?"

Me: "Ohh.. I don't think so."

Petu: "We can try him. I'll talk to him. He wants Sibonelo away from you as much as we all do."

Me: "Fine. This is all my luggage that I'm taking." I placed the bag on my bed, taking my small purse. We walked out to the car with Qhama.

Qhama: "Should I call reinforcements?"

Me: "If he's difficult, yes. For now we're going to Zoulah's for a light brunch and drinks." We got in the car, he drove to the gate. Sibonelo stood there, not moving an inch. I sighed getting out the car.

Me: "Please move your car."

Sibo: "Not even a kiss first?"

Me: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "At least a hello? I haven't seen you in weeks. Please baby? Just a little hello?" I looked around, there was already a crowd forming. "I am willing to forgive you for cheating on me. We can move past it. Please. I miss you." I stared at him, perplexed.

Me: "I didn't cheat on you! I'm not even dating you!"

Sibo: "Then tell me what happened. Between you and-"

Me: "Sibonelo. Stop it. What is wrong with you? You're not even allowed to be here."

Sibo: "And what are they gonna do? Call the cops? I dare them. They can use my phone even."

Me: "What do you want?"

Sibo: "Alot Thembisa. The truth is a small part of it."

Me: "Okay. Can I at least have breakfast with my friends. I haven't been outside in a while and I'd like to enjoy my day before dealing with you."

Sibo: "When can I pick you up baby?"

Me: "Stop calling my baby. I'll call you, please move your car." He smiled, getting into his car then driving off. The fucking nerve of Sibonelo Biyela.

We arrived at the restaurant, getting a table. I'd asked Qhama for the car keys and he blatantly refused. He wasn't even entertaining it.

Me: "So what do we do."

Petu: "I've texted Khaya. He'll be here in a bit."

Me: "I need a drink for this. Sibonelo has a nerve." I hissed.

Petu: "Don't let him get to you." The waiter took our drinks order. I opted for a mimosa. It can't be as bad as gin cocktails right? Khaya arrived as our drinks were brought.

Khaya: "Hello."

Me: "Hey."

Petu: "Hi Khaya. We have a situation."

Khaya: "What?"

Me: "Sibonelo is following me. I need to go home."

Khaya: "You need to go to Sikhosana."

Me: "Come on Khaya, not this now. Your friend is literally harassing me and that's what you care about?"

Khaya: "Fine. What do you need help with?"

Me: "I need to get out of here. I can't do that while he's watching me. I even left my bag at res because of him."

Khaya: "It will be difficult to make him go away but I do have a plan."

Me: "Okay. What do we do?" He called the waiter.

Khaya: "Double shot of whiskey please-"

Me: "Absolutely not! Khaya, you're not allowed to drink!"

Khaya: "You want to get out of this or not?"

Me: "Not with getting you sick!"

Khaya: "I'm only having one drink. I'm not going to be sick. I just need a little alcohol in my system so I can get to Zwe. That's who will call Sibonelo, that way he won't suspect that he's being tricked."

Me: "Okay. But do you have to drink?"

Khaya: "Yeah. When he tests me there must be alcohol, he will then want to assign me a guardian. Knowing Mngqobi gives into my demands, his next option is Sibonelo." I held his hand.

Me: "Thank you. But one is enough. I don't want you back in hospital." He smiled.

Khaya: "Another thing. Switch your phone off."

Me: "Why?"

Khaya: "You're trying to escape a person who owns a telecoms company. He's in charge of the entire network. He can find you any minute he chooses. The minute your location moves, he will notice."

Me: "Are you serious? How will I communicate with anyone with my phone off."

Khaya: "Only until you get to your village. Once you're there, he can't do anything. He will never go near Sikhosana for no reason." His drink was brought to the table. He stared at it for a few seconds and downed the shot quickly. "That's strong." He squeezed my hand. "Once I'm at hospital and he arrives, I text Petu. Don't waste a second. Move immediately. Do you hear?"

Me: "Yes. Thank you Khaya."

Khaya: "You're welcome."

Petu: "How is Zimmy?"

Khaya: "She's okay. Not bad a housemate actually." He ate the peanuts on the table.

Petu: "I haven't seen her in a while."

Khaya: "Yeah she's fully enjoying my lounge and TV. I barely get to watch my shows unless I'm in the bedroom. She tried to trick me into liking some reality TV. I keep telling her it's not reality but she won't hear none of it. We almost fought that day." We laughed.

Me: "At least you could've watched it?"

Khaya: "Oh I did. It was definitely not reality. How is it that these people daily lives only include outings and dinner parties? Please."

Petu: "But it's their reality."

Khaya: "That's a lie. No one's reality is that perfect. Let me get moving now, so we can get the ball rolling. Travel safely, Sasa." He hugged me then Petu before he walked out.

Petu: "He's not bad shame."

Me: "Yeah."

Petu: "Anyway, let's talk about your travels. You do remember you'll be changing cars halfway?"

Me: "Yes I know."

Petu: "What do you have planned when you arrive eMthinomkhulu?"

Me: "Nothing really. We can't go out anywhere because he is who he is. I don't care though, the time alone is all I need."

Petu: "That's so sweet." She blushed. "Have you spoken to Amahle?"

Me: "Yeah, we spoke in the morning."

Petu: "I miss her so much. I hope she comes back after the holidays."

Me: "Where will you be spending yours?"

Petu: "Uhm... I think I'll stay at res for a bit." She smiled.

Me: "Res? Why don't you visit your sister?"

Petu: "I just need some time alone."

Me: "But you'll be alone. I won't be there or Amahle."

Petu: "Notha will be around. She told me this morning she won't be going anywhere for holidays."

Me: "Hm... Nothando though?"

Petu: "I know she doesn't say much but I won't be alone."

Me: "Okay then."

KHAYA POV\_

I arrived at the hospital, walking straight in to Zwe's station. He was working on the computer, he looked up at me.

Khaya: "Bhut Zwe." He stood up, coming straight to me.

Zwe: "Khaya. Have you been drinking?"

Khaya: "I'm sorry." Truth is, I had been drinking. When I left the restaurant, I bought a bottle at a liquor store. It was not my intention, truly. I just needed to numb myself. I didn't finish the bottle but I'd had a good amount of it.

Zwe: "Come here." He took me to a room, laying me on the bed. I watched him setting up the drip and insert it in my arm. "What happened."

Khaya: "Nothing." I looked away.

Zwe: "Talk to me Khaya. Something is triggering you. Is it about Thembisa?"

Khaya: "Thembisa is my friend."

Zwe: "Right. Then why do this to yourself?"

Khaya: "I'm just going through a lot, okay?"

Zwe: "We all are. I want to help you. Hey? I don't want to see you like this. Let me help you, tell me what's wrong."

Khaya: "I never stood a chance. Even if I did sleep with her. I would've probably treated her like crap immediately afterwards. She would've resented me like all the other girls. I'd still have lost her."

Zwe: "That's not true because it didn't happen. You can't base your life on what if. I'm sorry that you never got the chance with her. Perhaps it was meant to be a lesson to you." I chuckled.

Khaya: "My life has been full of lessons since I could walk."

Zwe: "Maybe you should be in the palace for a few days. I don't like seeing you like this." I wanted to decline but not even I could fight it. I did need the Biyela's now more than ever. I'm not sure if I'll survive another night in my apartment.

Khaya: "Okay. Can Sbo come fetch me?"

Zwe: "Sure. I'll call him when we're done." ...

SASA POV\_

After brunch and drinks, the text finally came. Petu called for the bill and paid it quickly. Qhama drove us to the res, not even parking.

Petu: "Friend, I'll see you soon. I love you. Be safe."

Me: "Thank you Petu. I love you too." She ran inside to fetch my bag from my room, placing it inside the car and closing the door. Qhama drove off immediately. I sighed in relief but I was paranoid. What if Sibonelo got people to follow me? What if the King has people following me? I can't even switch on my phone until I arrive. Even though he's distracted by Khaya currently, you never know with Sibonelo.

Halfway, we'd changed the car into a black Range Rover, identical to one of Nkosi's. We drove into Mthinomkhulu finally. I was dying of boredom. Qhama parked at a guesthouse in the quieter side of town. The street looked abandoned. I wonder where the people were? It was the only suburb of Mthinomkhulu town and it wasn't bigger than three streets. The gate opened, the guards came out surrounding the car. They checked Qhama, he had to step out the car. Another one got in the seat and drove inside the property. The whole yard was flooded with security. The gate closed behind us. My door was opened. I climbed out the car and was escorted into the house. Surprisingly, the house didn't have guards inside. All of them were outside. Mthunzi greeted me.

Mthunzi: "Hello Thembisa."

Me: "Good day sir. How are you?"

Mthunzi: "I'm well thank you. The prince is in the room just down the hall."

Me: "Thank you." I wanted to run but my legs were suddenly wobbly. I carefully walked down the passage to the room. My heart pounding in my chest. When I reached the door, I could hear music playing softly inside. "I'm sure I knew, the only reason God gave me hands was to hold you. And he finely tuned the drums of my ears just hear your voice, said I will all.. I will always love you." I opened the door, walking in. There he stood. Looking at me. He smiled, brightening the whole room. I ran to his arms. He caught me, pulling me up in a tight embrace. I can't ever let him go.

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Chapter 36

## PRINCE POV\_

The house we had secured in Mthinomkhulu town belonged to an old lady who had opened her home for us while she went to visit her sister, she probably didn't know I was the one who'd be staying here. The house was thoroughly cleaned and secured yesterday. It looked quite lovely. Better than I thought it would. It was two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a big yard which is great for my security. They would use the large living room as a sleeping space in the evening. I preferred my security to rest when I rest, that's why I brought extra. Half will sleep in the evening while the others keep watch. Then change shifts in the morning but they will sleep at the guesthouse because you can't sleep in the lounge during the day, that's weird. I went to the main bedroom that I'll be using. It was big. I did change the mattress and bring new Egyptian cotton sheets. Everything was set up within an hour. The room had enough light and space. Mthunzi knocked on the door.

Nkosi: "Yes."

Mthunzi: "You've been staring at that spot for a few minutes now. What's the problem."

Nkosi: "Have you heard from her? Is she coming?"

Mthunzi: "Yes, they're less than two hours away."

Nkosi: "Her phone is off."

Mthunzi: "It is but Qhama says she's fine."

Nkosi: "Why is her phone off if she's fine?"

Mthunzi: "There's cameras in the car, I can see that's she's fine. You need to relax."

Nkosi: "Fine. I need you to distract me."

Mthunzi: "Well, the food has been delivered. Do you want to set up another picnic?"

Nkosi: "No."

Mthunzi: "She loved it the last time. It's a great idea, you did such a good job."

Nkosi: "I don't want to be outside."

Mthunzi: "You whispered to the guards. They'll protect you and her. Nothing will happen."

Nkosi: "Still."

Mthunzi: "Okay. We can set up here then. Do you want to help me pick the roses?"

Nkosi: "The garden here doesn't have roses."

Mthunzi: "We can go to the florist."

Nkosi: "I don't want people to know I'm here yet. The town is already buzzing with excitement. They'll probably break into a song and dance tournament if they spot me picking flowers. What else can I do?" He chuckled.

Mthunzi: "Fine, I'll have the guard fetch the roses." He checked his phone.

Nkosi: "Is she here?"

Mthunzi: "Not yet. Calm down."

Nkosi: "Check her again."

Mthunzi: "Fine. Look, see? She's in the car. She's fine." I looked at his screen. She was staring out the window. What a beautiful woman. Even the side of her face is mesmerizing. "Are you happy now?"

Nkosi: "No. Not until she walks in." I paced the floor.

Mthunzi: "I'll speak to a guard for the flowers."

Nkosi: "Pink. She likes the pink ones."

Mthunzi: "If they don't have them?"

Nkosi: "Red will suffice I guess." I sighed.

Mthunzi: "I'll be back just now so we can go over a bit of work." He walked out. Work was the last thing I wanted to do but I did need the distraction. I went to the kitchen, taking out a tray. I placed the snacks carefully one by one.

Mthunzi: "Nkosi please."

Nkosi: "What?" He massaged his temple.

Mthunzi: "Nothing. Carry on." I finished with my placement and took the tray to the bedroom. Can't put food on the bed. But there's no table. Can't put it on the floor either. This was a conundrum. "What is it?"

Nkosi: "There's no table here."

Mthunzi: "Put it on the bed."

Nkosi: "Can't put food on the be-"

Mthunzi: "I'm at my peak with you. Please put the food on the bed."

Nkosi: "I can't."

Mthunzi: "So you're gonna hold a tray for two hours?"

Nkosi: "What must I do?"

Mthunzi: "Dear God." He walked out. Now what was I supposed to do? Food needs to be on a table. Not a bedside table, not a dressing table, a food table. Who doesn't have a food table? Mthunzi walked in with a small table and placed it on the rug.

Mthunzi: "There. A table." I placed the tray on it.

Nkosi: "Hmmm."

Mthunzi: "Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "It looks out of place."

Mthunzi: "You're reminding me why I hate coming here."

Nkosi: "It's not my fault, it looks out of place. Look at it."

Mthunzi: "No. Don't look at it. It's not important. What's important is that you'll be seeing Thembisa for the first time in a month. I get that you're nervous and excited but stop fiddling with tables and food. She doesn't care. She only cares about seeing you. Okay?"

Nkosi: "Oh." I looked at the table.

Mthunzi: "Stop looking at the table."

Nkosi: "It's quite impossible, it's literally right there." He huffed, storming out of the room. Maybe if I moved it by the window. I picked it up, placing it by the window. Mthunzi was right, the table didn't matter but it looked much better by the window. Good. Now I can find something else to do. I hated waiting. Mthunzi was outside, smoking.

Nkosi: "Haven't seen you smoke in years.

Mthunzi: "You stress me alot."

Nkosi: "Sorry." He threw the cigarette on the floor.

Mthunzi: "You're adjusting to love. I'm here to advise you in all aspects not just work but love as well. But I'll need you to listen to me. I understand you're nervous but I promise you, Thembisa is just as eager to see you. The perfect picnic set up doesn't matter. Whether the food is on a table by the window or on the bed."

Nkosi: "So you saw it looks better by the window?" He stared at me. "I'm joking with you. Thank you. I don't know what I'd do without you."

Mthunzi: "Everything clearly because I know you're itching to place the flowers yourself the minute they arrive." He laughed.

Nkosi: "Fine, I'll relax."

Mthunzi: "Samu will arrive tomorrow morning."

Nkosi: "Good for her."

Mthunzi: "You do know your father is expecting to hear that you saw her."

Nkosi: "I suppose. She'll join us for the royal visit."

Mthunzi: "Alright. What about Thembisa?"

Nkosi: "Well, she did say she's only spending a night. So she'll go home tomorrow morning."

Mthunzi: "Okay. Here are the flowers." ...

It was finally time. I waited in the bedroom. I had the roses all over the room. She was at the gate, her security being checked. I knew the moment she stepped into the house. She greeted Mthunzi with so much respect. I love her so much and more each moment. The music was playing softly in the room. I'd chosen our favorite song to welcome her in. Now was the time. I watched the door as it opened, she stepped in. My heart glowed with joy just seeing her face. She ran up to me, I caught her in my arms, pulling her up and soaking all of her in. Her scent, her skin, her presence. I didn't want to let go. I closed the door with her still in my arms and sat on the bed.

Nkosi: "Hello baby." She didn't respond. Oh no. My shoulder was getting wet. This was the one thing I hated. I hated seeing her cry. I was wondering how she was coping all these weeks, clearly she wasn't. "I'm sorry my love." I kissed her softly, rubbing her back. We stayed that way for a while until she calmed down. "I miss you too." I kissed her lips, wiping her tears.

Sasa: "Okay."

Nkosi: "I'm here now. You have me the whole day, night and morning." She kissed my lips, softly, holding my head making me focus on nothing but this moment. All the stress of the past few weeks fell away instantly. I pulled her closer to my body, as if I could get any closer than her sitting on top of me. I lay her down on the bed, kissing her as gentle as I could but I couldn't hold back on how much I craved her. My body shivered in thirst. I traced kisses down to her neck and shoulder, softly grazing my teeth on her skin. She moaned, awakening a deep insatiable desire in me. Her legs wrapped around my waist, pulling me closer. My hands slid up her thighs, my fingers hooking on her underwear. I pulled it down, getting up to take it off her legs. I undid her sneakers, putting them aside then kissed her foot, all the way up her leg and thigh. I kissed all around her clit. Then sucked on it gently, my tongue flipping up and down on it. She moaned once again, panting. I kept the same pace with my tongue as much as I wanted to devour her in all different ways, she needed this pace to reach her climax. My tongue continued flipping rapidly on her nub, and I felt her getting closer. All of her was soaking wet, ready for me. She held my head, moaning louder. Her nails dug into me as she finally reached her orgasm, convulsing to a still while I sucked softly. I placed a kiss on it and she squirmed. I could hear my phone ringing and I would continue to ignore it. I got up, kissing her lips. An urgent knock hit the door. Fuck. Amahle. I got up, walking to the door.

Nkosi: "Hm?"

Mthunzi: "Quick word, my Prince."

Nkosi: "Right now?"

Mthunzi: "Very right now." Nobody bores me like my family. I went back to bed.

Nkosi: "I'll be back my love." She kissed my lips then wiped my chin. I walked out the bedroom. Mthunzi was in the lounge. He had an amused look on his face.

Nkosi: "This isn't funny."

Mthunzi: "I know, I'm so sorry but Amahle wanted to kill me over the phone."

Nkosi: "And you got so scared that you had to interrupt me? She's four hours away, what could she do?"

Mthunzi: "She said very mean things. I didn't have a choice." I sighed. "It wouldn't be a good idea My Prince. Getting her pregnant won't work in both your favours. It can only make the risk much bigger."

Nkosi: "I wasn't trying to get her pregnant. I bought condoms."

Mthunzi: "You bought condoms?"

Nkosi: "I sent a guard, you know what I mean."

Mthunzi: "Even so. I don't think they'll work. Amahle's warning is something if not accurate."

Nkosi: "Both of you bore me. Understand that." I walked back to the bedroom.

SASA POV\_

I just had my first orgasm. It was quite sudden but it felt so damn good. I was still throbbing when he left the room. He walked back in and I sat up.

Me: "What's wrong?" He climbed on the bed.

Nkosi: "Nothing my love."

Me: "Okay, can we carry on?" I kissed him.

Nkosi: "I want to with my whole soul but your friend thinks it's not a good idea."

Me: "Amahle?"

Nkosi: "Hm. She warned me before I left and harassed Mthunzi until he knocked on the door." He sighed. I giggled.

Me: "Why is this not a good idea.?"

Nkosi: "I might just get you pregnant. I don't want you more at risk than you already are in." He brushed my cheek staring into my eyes.

Me: "I'd love to have your baby."

Nkosi: "Trust me, I'll be much happier than you will be."

Me: "You like kids?"

Nkosi: "No but I'll like mine, mostly because they're yours and I think I'm a fun person to share a baby with."

Me: "Fun?"

Nkosi: "I'm a delight."

Me: "You are, my love." I kissed him, cuddling in his arms. "How have you been these past few weeks?"

Nkosi: "Taking it day by day. I hate not seeing you. Our video calls had become the highlight of my life."

Me: "Me too." I sighed. "Sibonelo came to me again. At res."

Nkosi: "I thought he was banned."

Me: "He stood at the gate."

Nkosi: "I'm tired of being patient, I'm going to hurt this boy."

Me: "You know that's what he wants."

Nkosi: "So how did you leave?"

Me: "I told him we'd speak later and I'm going to brunch. I'd left my bag in my room. We called Khaya when we were at Zoulah's, and he distracted him."

Nkosi: "He distracted him how?"

Me: "Remember when Khaya was in hospital? It was because of alcohol poisoning. So he drank a glass and went to hospital, when he got there, asked Zwe to call Sibonelo."

Nkosi: "That's clever."

Me: "How are your royal visits going?" I brushed on his beard with my fingers.

Nkosi: "Mostly okay. The roads have been built here in Mthinomkhulu. Everything is now tar not gravel. I'll find out about the lake tomorrow."

Vamani village had their school roof fixed but that's only temporary, I found that the foundation it's built on isn't stable and so, we'll be building a other school there. We've start with the plans. Their electricity has been fixed and Sibonelo has offered his family network. For free."

Me: "That's suspicious."

Nkosi: "That's what Mthunzi said."

Me: "Is there a way you can counter his network. I suspect he announced this out loud so the whole village knows and so if you say no, you'll look like the a-hole."

Nkosi: "Hit it on the nail. What do you mean counter his network?"

Me: "Either by being a major shareholder in their company so you have a say in whatever decisions they make or having a system that protects user information from him. For example if he ever decides to cut them off from the internet or you, there's a built system that can prevent that. If that makes sense."

Nkosi: "That's genius. We haven't thought of that."

Me: "When will you announce the shopping center idea in Mthinomkhulu?"

Nkosi: "Announce it? Why? We spoke to the chief and he said it's fine."

Me: "That's not okay Nkosi. Yes, you own the land but the people are living on it."

Nkosi: "I'm trying to develop it for them."

Me: "And that's good. But you'll need to make them understand that. You want to be closer to the people, you need to show them Kindness. They know you don't need them so it will mean so much to them if you're respectful." He sighed. "Alot of people do not trust that you're good."

Nkosi: "You mean your dad?"

Me: "Him specifically and he's not going to change his mind about you in one day but it will be a work in progress."

Nkosi: "Okay. We'll work on that."

Me: "What will you be doing tomorrow?"

Nkosi: "I'll be making an appearance at the lake. It's gonna be a whole thing. The press are probably already in town. I don't know if I'll be able to do anything more."

Me: "What are we gonna eat?"

Nkosi: "I had food ordered. Are you hungry?"

Me: "No I'm thinking for later tonight. I'm just enjoying being in your arms right now."

Nkosi: "Hm.." he kissed my lips, climbing on top of me. "I missed you."

Me: "I missed you too." He lay his head on my breasts.

Nkosi: "This feels good."

Me: "You're sleepy aren't you?" He chuckled.

Nkosi: "I've been working hard baby. I barely slept last night. I couldn't wait to see you."

Me: "I'm not going anywhere my love." I brushed his head listening to his breathing as he fell asleep.

PRINCE POV\_

I woke up late in the afternoon. Thembisa had fallen asleep. I slowly got up, covering her body with the fleece then tip toed out the room. Where the hell is Mthunzi? I went to the kitchen, empty, lounge as well. I walked out the house. All the guards were still here. I spotted him in the corner having a chat with two of them. He walked to me immediately.

Nkosi: "Hello."

Mthunzi: "Hi. What's up?"

Nkosi: "Are you bored?"

Mthunzi: "That's random but no. Why?"

Nkosi: "Hm...you're having a drink with the guards."

Mthunzi: "I am. You were busy."

Nkosi: "Okay. I'm available now."

Mthunzi: "Are you jealous that I'm having a drink with the guards?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Mthunzi: "Okay my friend. Let's have a drink together." Not all of them were drinking of course. The ones that were, are probably going to be the ones who sleep in the evening. We sat in the lounge. Mthunzi brought a bottle of whiskey and some glasses, pouring our drinks. "Did you rest well?"

Nkosi: "Very. The next time you should bring your wife. I don't see why you didn't this time."

Mthunzi: "You know the agreement between my wife and I."

Nkosi: "Yeah, I don't understand it."

Mthunzi: "You understood it very well two months ago."

Nkosi: "Well, I changed my mind. Will you change yours?"

Mthunzi: "No. I love Busi as my wife but we live very separate lives. She knows my first priority is you. I know hers is her businesses."

Nkosi: "Do you think I affected your marriage Mthunzi? Please be honest with me."

Mthunzi: "Let's not do this Nkosi."

Nkosi: "No, let's do it. My wife is in the bedroom, fast asleep. I've had her in my arms for hours. I'm glad I didn't do any work all day, all I did was prepare for her arrival and then love her. Seeing that you're the reason I have her, Are you able to do this for your wife?"

Mthunzi: "You know I don't have to-"

Nkosi: "Yes or no."

Mthunzi: "No."

Nkosi: "Then I did affect your marriage Mthunzi. You've known me for 20 years now. You've taught me everything I know about life. Yet, I'm the reason you don't have a life outside of me."

Mthunzi: "That's not true. Nkosihle I have a life outside of you. You forget that you tell me to go home in the early evening? I come to work in the morning and I'm lucky because I'm working with my best friend."

I'm always home for dinner and breakfast. My wife has never complained."

Nkosi: "Still. I think I'd feel better if you too got a break."

Mthunzi: "No man Nkosinhle. Is this about what I said outside? You don't even stress me that much."

Nkosi: "It's not but thank you for clarifying that I don't stress you much. Also, I just want my friend to feel what I feel. I want your person to feel loved too. By you." He laughed.

Mthunzi: "You're definitely whipped. Drink your alcohol so we can talk about other things. You and I are fine. My marriage is fine." I know him, I know his marriage is fine. What bothers me is that if it came to choice, he'd definitely choose me over his own wife. That's not okay.

Nkosi: "So Thembisa came up with an idea to counter attack Sibonelo's future or potential plans regarding his network in the villages. I could either buy major shares in their company, this way I can have a say in whatever decisions they make or implement with their network. Or, develop another system that protects user information from him. So that if he ever did try to control communication, I would know and be able to stop it."

Mthunzi: "That's a great plan. I'll look into both. Do you think there'll be conflict of interest if I involved Mpendulo in this research? Seeing that his son is Sibonelo's advisor?"

Nkosi: "Hm. Even though I doubt Khaya and Mpendulo are typical father and son relationship poster, I think you should not involve him. Just in case. I know that Khaya did intern for him at some point so perhaps they might still talk about work sometimes."

Mthunzi: "We'll need to look into another lawyer soon if this boy's thing is serious."

Nkosi: "Thembisa will be my lawyer once she's finishes with her studies. Mpendulo will teach her the ropes in her final year. She'll do her articles and then work for me. I'll let him go then."

Mthunzi: "Oh that's evil." He laughed.

Nkosi: "What can I say? I'm a Sikhosana." We toasted glasses.

Chapter 37

SASA POV\_

I woke up in the early morning, for once Nkosi was fast asleep next to me. Seeing that he had a bit to drink with Mthunzi well into the night. I was glad he had fun, he looked quite buzzed when he came to bed. I got up, getting out of bed before a strong arm grabbed my waist. I giggled.

Me: "I thought you were sleeping."

Nkosi: "I am but you're trying to run away from me."

Me: "I'm going to pee." I laughed. "Then start on breakfast. What do you want to eat?"

Nkosi: "You." He pulled me back into his arms.

Me: "I'm going to pee on the bed."

Nkosi: "It's not my bed, so I don't care." I laughed, while he placed kisses all over my face.

Me: "Nkosinhle!"

Nkosi: "What?"

Me: "Let me go pee."

Nkosi: "No." I tried to tickle his ribs. He stared at me. "What was that?"

Me: "I'm tickling you."

Nkosi: "To achieve what?"

Me: "To make you laugh."

Nkosi: "You think scribbling your little fingers on my ribs will make me laugh?"

Me: "My fingers aren't little!"

Nkosi: "They're little baby. Little fingers." He kissed my hand. "Little nose." He kissed my nose. "Little mouth." He kissed my mouth. "Even your feet are little. You know what else is little?" He kissed my lips.

Me: "You already did my lips."

Nkosi: "Not those lips." He kissed my nipple, sucking on it, tracing his tongue down my stomach to my cookie. "These lips." My whole body felt soft and numb. The only place that was alert with touch was where his lips kissed. His tongue made love to my labia slowly making me dizzy. He sucked them gently then massage them with his lips, kissing them, loving them. His tongue slid up to my clit, slicking on it twice, electrocuting me. I let out a moan. He continued kissing my lips, obviously teasing me. Just as my body settled again, his tongue slicked my clit a few more time.

Me: "Oh Nkosi..." I moaned. He kissed my thighs, softly biting my skin. He loved grazing his teeth on my skin, almost like he wanted to bite. It felt like an itching desire in me when he did that. It felt so strange that I wanted him to bite. He kissed my clit again, sucking on it then slicking his tongue on it rapidly. Right there. My heart slowed as I reached my climax, shivering to the bone. He kissed it one last time and I shivered again. He came up to my lips, kissing me.

Nkosi: "Now you can go pee."

Me: "I was five to releasing it on the bed." I kissed him back, holding his neck.

Nkosi: "Good that you held it in because it took an awful while to get this mattress here. I would hate to go through that again." I giggled.

Me: "I want to return this favour."

Nkosi: "Uhm. No."

Me: "No?"

Nkosi: "Hm.hm." I kissed his lips, respecting his decision. Maybe he'll tell me later why. We talked about everything under the sun.

Me: "Let me make you breakfast. What do you like?"

Nkosi: "Let's have some porridge. I haven't tasted one made by you."

Me: "Okay baby." I got out the bed wearing a gown then going to the bathroom before making my way to the kitchen. The fridge was stocked.

I started with the porridge and while it boiled on the stove I made regular breakfast for everyone. I had to count the guards. They came up to 23 people including Mthunzi. That is insane. All of them were outside because it was 7 in the morning. Eleven had slept in the lounge last night, the other eleven will be heading out at around 9 to the guesthouse where Princess Samu would be. Mthunzi was using the second bedroom. I decked the table with the food I cooked. That fridge will have to be stocked everyday if this is the case. I made tea then poured porridge in a bowl placing it with the butter and sugar on tray, taking it to Nkosi.

Nkosi: "Thank you baby. What took so long?"

Me: "I was making breakfast."

Nkosi: "Porridge takes 47 minutes to make?"

Me: "No, I was making other breakfast for everyone else."

Nkosi: "Baby, there's cooks that will be arriving in 13 minutes. You're telling me they don't have a job?"

Me: "You didn't tell me that."

Nkosi: "I didn't expect you to cook for 24 people!" He laughed. "You're adorable. When have you ever had to cook when with me?" I giggled.

Me: "Mxim Nkosi. What are the cooks going to do now?" He continued laughing.

Nkosi: "You're the one who fired them. All I did was wait for porridge."

Me: "I feel really bad and you're joking."

Nkosi: "I'm sorry baby. I'll tell Mthunzi to cancel them for the morning. They can just make lunch for the guards."

Me: "Do it now, before they arrive. Shame they're probably already on the way."

Nkosi: "I'm trying to eat."

Me: "Nkosi please." He sighed, getting up.

Nkosi: "My tea will get cold."

Me: "It will take less than two minutes." He went to Mthunzi and spoke to him then came back.

Nkosi: "Sorted." He sat down. "Baby please don't ever cook for 24 people. I would never expect that from you. You're a queen."

Me: "I'm not a queen. I'm Thembisa and I don't eat if others aren't eating. So unless I know someone is coming to cook. I'm gonna cook."

Nkosi: "You're my queen." He kissed my lips. I watched him put butter and sugar in his porridge then stir it. So he remembers. "What?"

Me: "You remember how to mix it."

Nkosi: "I remember everything, my love." We ate our porridge. "I like this one better."

Me: "Which one?"

Nkosi: "This one."

Me: "What are we talking about baby?"

Nkosi: "The porridge."

Me: "As opposed to which one?" He tasted mine.

Nkosi: "hmm. It's definitely this one."

Me: "Your one?"

Nkosi: "No, yours. You cook it better. I didn't like the one they cooked eNtabeni much."

Me: "You said you liked it."

Nkosi: "I was being nice." I laughed.

Me: "I'm going to feed you alot of things so I'm going to need you to be honest instead of nice."

Nkosi: "No can do. Mthunzi said you must be nice when a woman makes you food. She can kill you." I laughed.

Me: "Mthunzi is scaring you baby. I need to know so that I don't feed you things you don't like." He put his tray aside, coming to kiss my lips.

Nkosi: "I like everything you feed me."

Me: "I'm trying to eat." He laughed.

Nkosi: "Eat my love. I love you, I want you to finish your food while it's still hot." I giggled.

Me: "Your food was definitely still hot Nkosinhle. What time are you going to the lake?"

Nkosi: "Even in the afternoon. They have to wait for me, I'm the future King."

Me: "The arrogance is sexy but I'm going to need you to get ready by 10. The village wakes up very early and a good king respects his people's time."

Nkosi: "You're my good king." He kissed me.

Me: "This bed is going to eat this porridge if you keep doing that." He laughed, laying back in bed.

Nkosi: "I missed you."

Me: "I missed you too baby." I finished my porridge, sipping my tea then cuddled back in his arms.

Nkosi: "The weather will change at midday."

Me: "Not possible. Our weather is very consistent baby. It's sunny now, it will be sunny all day."

Nkosi: "It's going to rain after midday."

Me: "Not this time." I kissed his chin. "If it does rain, I might stay another day with you and go home tomorrow." He smiled.

Nkosi: "Hmm. It's going to be a great day for me."

Me: "Let's take a nap, so we can wake up at 9 and get you dressed. Oooh, are you wearing your sexy little royal suit today?" He laughed long and hard.

Nkosi: "Sexy little royal suit? Thembisa do you not respect the throne even a little bit?"

Me: "But it is sexy and It grips you tight in all the right places. It's like lingerie on you. How many sets do you have?" He kept laughing.

Nkosi: "What is wrong with you?"

Me: "How many?"

Nkosi: "I have 12. Don't you dare laugh."

Me: "I'm not laughing baby. Let's sleep then." I giggled. "Is your lingerie steamed at least?" He chuckled.

Nkosi: "You're a silly person. I'm not entertaining you any longer." I kissed his chest, resting my head to sleep.

## PRINCE POV\_

At 9 I'd gotten up and taken a shower then got dressed. Thembisa is so silly, why would she call my most important regalia lingerie? I chuckled, looking at myself in the mirror fully dressed. I kissed her forehead, walking out the room. Mthunzi was in the lounge.

Nkosi: "Good morning."

Mthunzi: "You look happy."

Nkosi: "I am. I'm going to need you stay behind today. Thembisa will be here, I'd prefer you here with her than guards."

Mthunzi: "The guards are loyal to you."

Nkosi: "And that's why they'll be with me. I'll be fine. Besides, Samu will be around. This won't take longer than two hours."

Mthunzi: "It might take the whole day. The village is very excited for your arrival. I have no doubt in my mind they'll be celebrating if not following you back here. And what about Samu? She might want to have dinner with you."

Nkosi: "I'm not having dinner with Samu. I'm here to work."

Mthunzi: "Really? Because you've been giggling all morning."

Nkosi: "I don't giggle, Mthunzi." He laughed.

Mthunzi: "So what happened with breakfast?"

Nkosi: "Don't even ask. Can you believe she cooked? I'm a little offended."

Mthunzi: "Can you cook?"

Nkosi: "I did live alone in another country. Of course I can cook."

Mthunzi: "Don't lie Nkosi. You can't cook. I've never once seen you pick up a pot."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi, I can cook."

Mthunzi: "But I know you can't."

Nkosi: "I know you're trying to trick me into cooking to prove a point and that will not happen."

Mthunzi: "Because you can't cook." He laughed.

Nkosi: "Mxim. I'm leaving. Thembisa is sleeping, don't make a noise."

Mthunzi: "What would I possibly be doing Nkosi? It's not like there's a drum set waiting for me in the passage. You can leave two guards to stand watch at the gate. You'll be fine with just 9?"

Nkosi: "Feels a bit naked, I don't know."

Mthunzi: "You're not funny. I'm being serious."

Nkosi: "Four can stay behind."

Mthunzi: "Absolutely fucking not. Don't even try it. I know you with your stunts of jumping into lakes, they'll carry you away the second you unbutton that suit." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "Fine. I'm leaving then." He walked me out, addressing the guards, sternly threatening them about the importance of my safety. Mthunzi is dramatic honestly.

The drive was uneventful but when I drove into the village a crowd was waiting already. Oh, this was hell. I hated it already. Why did I leave Mthunzi behind? I can't do this by myself. I definitely can't. Everyone looked happy for sure but there was just too many of them. They ran next to the cars, singing all the way to the lake. I can't get out of this car. I looked at my phone, I didn't even see the message I'd received 10 minutes ago. <I'm so proud of you baby. Appreciate the love you're receiving. You're already safe. Now be King.> I smiled. The cars stopped. The guards ushered away the crowds to a safe distance then opened my door. Here goes nothing. I stepped out the car. The singing was mixed with screaming was almost deafening. I walked to the edge of the lake. All the water had been drained out, some debris was still left inside which was still being removed day by day. I can't believe I was

inside this huge hole almost losing my life. I'm glad that didn't happen, my father would've burnt this entire village to the ground. I sighed closing my eyes to filter through the thoughts of those around me. Different emotions but none of them intending bad. Samu was arriving with her guards, knowing her she'll want to come disturb my thoughts. I would ordinarily turn around to go speak to the people but I needed the media to take pictures with her next to me so that my father leaves me alone. She stood next to me.

Samu: "Prince Mehluli."

Nkosi: "Samukelisiwe."

Samu: "You look good."

Nkosi: "I am."

Samu: "How are you?"

Nkosi: "Good."

Samu: "You don't want to know how I am?" I turned to face her. Which polite way can one say I don't care?

Nkosi: "You're not in hospital, so I would suspect you're well." She smiled.

Samu: "Hmm. Where's your head of security? He's always next to you."

Nkosi: "Taking care of the wife."

Samu: "Oh. Didn't know he was married."

Nkosi: "Hmm." I walked away to the podium that was built for this day. The mic was on a stand but still quite shorter than me. I looked at a guard. He came to adjust it a little further up. The crowd was still singing and so I waited. They settled down finally waiting to hear what I had to say. The chief and his family was here as well. The community leader, everyone. I spotted Thembisa's mother and sister in the crowd. I looked at her father and he stared at me unimpressed, his arms folded on his chest. This is going to be tough with him staring at me to fail.

Nkosi: "Good Day community of Mthinomkhulu. I am...taken aback to see how many of you have come here to welcome me so warmly. Thank you." Another roar of noise erupted from their clapping and screaming. I waited for slince once again. "I can't get used to that, by the way." I expected another cheer and got it. "Thank you again. The reason we're

here today, as you all know, this is our first community update. As you can see, the lake has been drained. We are now in the process of removing the debris that was inside it. If you look closely, don't go too close, you'll slip." They laughed. I'm actually being serious. "There were a few cars in there. And then just general metal and scraps. However, there is still one body that hadn't been discovered the day I we- the day the first four were discovered. Hopefully, by the end of the process we will be able to locate it. Another update I wanted to share is that, since I was last here a few weeks ago, the roads you have asked for, have been built. May I please see with a show of hands if there is a home that doesn't have electricity installed yet?" I waited. "I'll take that as a no. The electricity is sorted. Next on the agenda is the jobs issue. Once the hole here has been fully extracted of all the remains in it, it will be tested. My intention was to provide a means of job supply. I understand upon good advice that, perhaps your blessing as a community will make this idea much more fruitful. I would like to invite a member of each family to a meeting once we're done here. I want each family to have a representative in any community meeting with me. That way, everyone's concerns and thoughts are taken into consideration. Our last and final item is of course where we will be hosting these meetings. There is no community center. This is an amenity that all villages in this province already have and again the plan to build it will as well be discussed in the following meeting. So I implore everyone, to go to their families right now and discuss who will be representing the home. The candidate must be above the age of 21, all genders are encouraged. The meeting will partake in the next hour. The media is welcome, that way no one outside is excluded from hearing what is happening inside." I looked at the chief. "Is there a space that can hold one member of each family including myself, the media and you?"

Chief: "Yes Your Highness. The school hall will be a good location."

Nkosi: "Good. The school hall it is. Thank you Mthinomkhulu village." I walked off the podium straight to my car.

SASA POV\_

I sat on the couch, curled up with a fleece blanket and a cup of coffee watching TV. Nkosi was truly magnificent. The people adored him.

Me: "That was amazing. He did so well. Why has he never spoken before?"

Mthunzi: "Nkosi hates talking. To anyone. If he really has to, one to-the-point sentence will do. He really is great in front of those cameras and crowd today. I guess that's your influence."

Me: "Oh no, that was all him. I didn't even know he's speaking today. I thought he'd walk to the hole, give a thumbs to the cameras and leave." He laughed.

Mthunzi: "I would've gotten a panic text already."

Me: "Do you think they'll notice you're not there?"

Mthunzi: "They definitely noticed but what will they do?"

Me: "Well, nothing I guess." It's not like they'll ask Nkosi. Even though the guards were a little spread out but without a doubt, if someone's foot steps sideways they'll barricade him in a split second. "Can I ask you something?"

Mthunzi: "Anything."

Me: "How is your wife doing?" He smiled.

Mthunzi: "She's great. I spoke to her this morning. She's also suspicious why I'm not next to her favorite person." He chuckled. "She understands my work and supports it. I'm sure if she knew you'd be here, she'd have sent you your salted caramel."

Me: "She told you about that?"

Mthunzi: "Yes she did. It made her weekend. She described you as the sweetie pie with pretty eyes who was on a first date."

Me: "I wasn't even on a date." I giggled.

Mthunzi: "I'm only saying what I was told." He sat up, staring at the TV then typed on his phone.

Me: "Is something wrong?"

Mthunzi: "Security is leaving spaces between them, they need to fully cover him." I kept quiet because I didn't know much about their routine. He spoke in his phone. "I don't care what he says, I want you closer. Give him the phone." He waited. "No Nkosi, my only condition of not being there is that you fully listen to the guards. I don't care how safe

you feel Nkosinhle." He listened. "I don't care that you're away from the lake now. You might find other spaces to jump into. I don't trust you." I giggled. "Call her on your own phone and listen to your guards." He hung up. "He's impossible to manage." My phone rang.

Me: "Hello baby."

Nkosi: "Hello my love. Did Mthunzi wake you?" I giggled.

Me: "No. He didn't wake me."

Mthunzi: "Unbelievable." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "I'm jealous. What are you talking about?"

Me: "You obviously. We're watching you on TV."

Nkosi: "Oh? See now you're gonna make me smile at the camera."

Me: "They'll love your smile baby. You have beautiful teeth."

Nkosi: "I'm not showing the world my teeth Thembisa. Next thing they'll want me to stick out my tongue, there's no stopping with humans." I laughed.

Me: "Are you enjoying yourself?"

Nkosi: "Absolutely not. Your dad looked like murder."

Me: "He was there?"

Nkosi: "Yep. And your mother and sister too."

Me: "Oh that's nice."

Nkosi: "It is. Baby, it's going to rain today."

Me: "Why are you lying to me?"

Nkosi: "I don't lie baby."

Me: "Just say that you want me to stay."

Nkosi: "Fine then, I want to come home to my woman after all this parading around. I'll even grin on camera for you."

Me: "Okay baby. You'll find me here."

Nkosi: "Now I'm happy. I have to go baby."

Me: "Alright my love. I love you."

Nkosi: "I love you too."

Me: "Please hang up Your Highness."

Nkosi: "I don't want to now."

Me: "Haibo Nkosinhle, people are waiting on you."

Nkosi: "Then you hang up."

Me: "Fine then, goodbye." I hung up, waiting on his text. It came in almost immediately: <Can't believe you hung up on me.> I laughed. I replied: <I love you baby. Sorry for hanging up on you.> Sent. He replied: <I'll only accept apology in kisses on my chin. Thanks.> I laughed. He's such a baby. <Anything you want my love.> I smiled watching back on tv as he entered the Chief's home. He turned to the camera facing him and grinned.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 38

KHAYA POV\_

I'd woken up early for once besides school. I don't wake up early on holiday but I had a job to do. After a quick shower, I put on jeans and a t-shirt. Another thing I'm not used to. If I'm home bound, I prefer shorts and socks only. Being Sibonelo's advisor, I have to be in a suit. He's crazy. Jeans is what he's getting today. I walked out of my room, going down the stairs to the kitchen. The Biyela palace was more like a mansion. I think 8 or 9 bedrooms in total. I got juice from the fridge and went to the lounge. Mngqobi was with Zwe and Sibonelo.

Khaya: "Morning." I sat on the couch next to Mngqobi.

Sibo: "Hey. How are you feeling?"

Khaya: "Bit of a headache, regular shivers but I'm fine."

Zwe: "Did you take your pills?"

Khaya: "I will Bhut Zwe, right after I eat. What are we watching?"

Sibo: "Sikhosana's favourite village. He just arrived at the lake."

Zwe: "Oh come on. It's not his favorite."

Sibo: "Mnqobi?"

Mnqobi: "It's definitely his favorite, brother."

Zwe: "The village was underdeveloped for decades. He is only doing his job. Back me up Khaya."

Khaya: "I don't know Bhut Zwe, he kinda went hard for this and very quickly too."

Zwe: "And what about the other villages he's done things for? Vamani has a new school roof, new roads and electricity."

Sibo: "Because they complained using Mthinomkhulu as example. He's performative."

Zwe: "It's a good performance because at the end of the day, the people will benefit greatly."

Sibo: "The people." He rolled his eyes. "Sooner or later he's going to crack. The people will suck him dry and he will no longer be cute. You watch."

Mnqobi: "Awww. You think he's cute?"

Sibo: "Mxim. Angithi you're treating him like a puppy rolling around in dirt. He will show his true form eventually."

Zwe: "I'm almost sizzling with excitement to see the disappointment on your face." He laughed.

Sibo: "I'm giving him until his coronation. He will crack." Mehluli didn't seem like someone who can't handle his emotions. Any and all interaction with him, he has shown zero interest or emotion. Does he even have a heart? I doubt it. Probably loves using his brain is how calculating and unbothered that man is. I hate that I'm starting to admire him. He better not do something to fuck up. If he can perform a little more, we could probably be the richest province in the nation. That would mean more business and more business will need us all. My phone buzzed in my pocket. This is why I block people. I looked at the screen. Zimmy. <Are you okay? You didn't come home.> Home???

Since when is my apartment home? I replied: <I am home.> She read it then typed, responding: <You're not in your room, I checked.> Where does she think I am? <I'm at the palace with Biyela's. Home. I'm fine.> I focused back on the TV, Mehluli was still staring at the lake, before being approached by Princess Samu.

Sibo: "Getting very confident. Fun fact, the first time he ever addressed people was in this village. Do you think he'll speak today?"

Zwe: "You hate him. We get it."

Sibo: "I don't hate him. Not at all. I just want him and his family to be honest and fair human beings." I received another message. What was happening? <Okay, it would be appreciated if you know you're not coming home to at least send me a message so I don't worry all night.> Son of Mary and Joseph. What does this mean now?

Khaya: "Mnqo. What's happening here?" He read the messages on my phone and burst into laughter. "I'm serious. Tell me."

Mnqobi: "My twin. It means you have a wife."

Sibo: "What wife?" Mnqobi tossed him my phone.

Khaya: "Mnqobi, that phone is only two months old." Sibonelo laughed.

Sibo: "What the hell?"

Khaya: "Right? In my apartment?" He gave my phone to Zwe.

Zwe: "I don't see the problem. This is a reasonable ask. Why are you mean to your girlfriend?"

Khaya: "Except she's not my girlfriend. She's my friend, who has since overstayed her welcome in my place. I'm fine now, I don't need a babysitter anymore."

Zwe: "I think you do. This girl seems to care about you."

Khaya: "I have all the care I need right here." He typed on my phone. "Bhut Zwe? What are you doing?"

Zwe: "Nothing, just checking the time."

Khaya: "You're typing."

Zwe: "Shhh, Sikhosana is about to speak." I looked back on the TV. Indeed he stood on the podium, confident and daring as he usually is. The crowd was loving him. Alot. Will he even be audible over this noise?

After the future king's speech, he left instantly for his car.

Zwe: "Sibonelo do you have any comments?" He held my phone to his brother's mouth.

Sibonelo: "Where is his advisor?" We all looked at the screen, I haven't spotted him once. "Isn't he ALWAYS next to him? At all times. If not directly next to him, somewhere nearby. Even at the restaurant he goes to, Mthunzi is never too far from him if they're not sitting in the same table. Where is he today?" Oh shit. This was quite obvious.

Sibonelo: "Any takers? Guesses? I'll tell you where he is. That girl disappeared from Mountain Peak yesterday, ending up in her village. The entire village is out celebrating Sikhosana's arrival today. She isn't there. I'm going to get myself drink while that sinks in." He got up, going to the kitchen. I hadn't noticed this before he brought it up but now I couldn't stop wondering. The only other important person to Mehluli is Thembisa. He wouldn't leave her unattended but to leave her with his personal head of all operations and security? That's insane. Mthunzi's primary job is to take care of him and him alone. I wonder who else has noticed this. Maybe King Sikhosana? Will he just brush it off or what? I can't imagine what their relationship is like but I don't think Mehluli cares about impressing him. I looked over at Mnqobi who was staring at a picture on his phone. Since he gave mine away, I looked at his.

Khaya: "Just text her."

Mnqobi: "And say what?"

Khaya: "Hello. Ask how she's doing."

Mnqobi: "Nah. Maybe she's busy."

Khaya: "if she doesn't respond then she's busy but when she isn't, she will."

Mnqobi: "You know I can't Khaya."

Khaya: "Is this about Nothando?"

Mnqobi: "Mostly, yes."

Khaya: "You haven't married her yet. You can play around in the meantime."

Mnqobi: "You know I've tried that but I always end up feeling guilty."

Khaya: "For having meaningless sex Mnqobi?"

Mnqobi: "Yes. I know she doesn't even care but I do. I've been in love with her since I was 17. You know this."

Khaya: "Right. Now you like this one too."

Mnqobi: "I do. Yeah."

Khaya: "Just text her."

Mnqobi: "How did we circle back to this? Khaya, I can't pursue this girl. What if she falls for me? She will be heartbroken when I marry another woman and I'm not letting go of my first love. I won't go back on my promise to Nothando."

Khaya: "Does Nothando even feel the same?"

Mnqobi: "Nope."

Khaya: "Does she know you bullied Sibonelo and your dad to promise her hand in marriage to you?"

Mnqobi: "No and she never will." I chuckled.

Khaya: "I thought you're the nicest one out of your brothers but nope, you're just as they are. Calculating."

Mnqobi: "You still have a chance with Zwe for nicest brother but don't get your hopes up too high. Rather place your coins on Sboni, look at him. He's a dream."

Sibo: "What about me?"

Khaya: "Hmm."

Zwe: "Nightmares are also called dreams. Except they're bad."

Sibo: "Bad? All I did was walk in?"

Zwe: "I wish that is all you do." He laughed.

Khaya: "Text her. Just to say hi. See what she says. That's all. I'll leave you be."

Mnqobi: "Not happening."

Khaya: "Then you leave me no choice." I grabbed his phone. "Bhut Zwe." I tossed it to him.

Mnqobi: "Khaya!!"

Khaya: "I also don't know what's currently happening in my life because of you. I could have begged marriage and babies. We must all suffer." I laughed.

## PETU'S POV\_

I was in my room at res, reading a book Sasa had given me. I wasn't much a fan of reading books, I'd rather watch movies but I got hooked to this particular story. My phone rang. Amahle.

Petu: "Amy." I answered.

Ama: "Did you use the numbers?"

Petu: "What numbers?"

Ama: "The numbers I sent you." Last night she had sent me a bunch of numbers and I didn't understand what they were for also I was a little tipsy so I fell asleep.

Petu: "Use them how Mahle? What do you mean?" She sighed.

Ama: "That was your Powerball for this month."

Petu: "What? Why?"

Ama: "So that you play and win money Petu."

Petu: "Babe, I don't need money. I've got everything already, and dad sends me an allowance."

Ama: "Still. You can play the numbers I give you each month, to have something for yourself. Save it and invest it. It'll make you comfortable by the time you graduate. It's like having a part time job."

Petu: "Except I'm not working Amahle."

Ama: "I'm sending you tonight's one. Use it. I'll talk to you later. Bye." She hung up. I sighed. Is there a way I can make her stop? I really don't need money. My dad pays my fees, and sends me an allowance that I

use wisely. Extra money is not necessary and I don't want to get used to it. My phone beeped a message but it was not Amahle. It was social media. I got a direct message from someone. I don't usually check those because it's always weird men asking strange things. I checked it absentmindedly but got stuck when I saw the name. Mngqobi Biyela. This was obviously a fake account, why would he send me a message? I opened it. <Hello Petunia How are you?> This can't be him, is it? I clicked on his profile and saw the verification mark. It was him. I quickly video called Sasa. Honestly I was shaking. I didn't know what to say, do I text him back? What if it's a mistake? I don't want to seem too desperate by responding immediately. But I am desperate. I'm desperate to know what he wants to say.

Sasa: "Hi baby." Her face popped up on screen.

Petu: "We have a situation." She looked concerned.

Sasa: "What is it?"

Petu: "Mngqobi sent me a direct message. He's asking how I am." She squealed with excitement.

Sasa: "So, did you respond?" I watched her place the phone probably on a table facing her.

Petu: "Not yet. I don't want to seem too eager."

Sasa: "That's not a thing Petu. Mngqobi likes you. He's always staring at you."

Petu: "I don't know Sasa."

Sasa: "Please respond. For my sake."

Petu: "Okay. I will. What are you doing?"

Sasa: "I'm baking bread. Still making the dough. It's raining heavily here."

Petu: "Ohh, it's going to be a romantic evening for you, hm?" She laughed.

Sasa: "Probably just a normal evening. I was just craving baked bread. What are you busy with?"

Petu: "I'm reading the book you gave me. It's really nice."

Sasa: "Right? Have you spoken to Amy?"

Petu: "Just now yeah. I'm trying to get her to stop sending me Powerball numbers." She laughed.

Sasa: "Oh babe. Just embrace it. Amahle means well. I suspect this is her way of expressing love, by giving. She saw how it made you happy the first time and how it will benefit you well in the future. So, accept it and take her advices on it as well."

Petu: "Okay then. What are you making the bread with?"

Sasa: "It's supposed to be bones soup but I know my boyfriend and his meat. He will complain if I make him chew bones alone so it's stew with off the bone beef meat." I giggled.

Petu: "That's cute. Let me leave you to it then. Bye babe."

Sasa: "Chat later love. And text him back, right now."

Petu: "Okay I will." I hung up, going back to the message. There was already another one. <Busy?> What was going on? I hate that I was now suspicious. This is usually how men approach me. 'Hi, u busy?' then adore me with words and invite me over to have sex then ghost me. I really like Mnqobi. So far he seemed like a nice guy but he was Khaya's best friend. Khaya. That wasn't comforting at all. I responded: <Hey. I'm good. How are you?> I sent it. He replied instantly: <I'm great. What are you doing?> The suspense was killing me. What did he want? <I'm reading, you?> I responded and quickly received his reply. <Watching tv with brothers. Are you busy tonight?> There it is. How disappointing. I'd promised myself this year will be different regarding the male species. I wouldn't be allowing them to use me for their fantasies and fetishes. Not even Mnqobi, a royal prince who had the sexiest abs I've seen. I couldn't help but wonder would it be really bad to be his midnight secret even if it's once. He's sexy, he's kind and soft spoken, he obviously will treat me to a nice place and not a dingy backroom. And what if he's really good in bed? No, stop it. Self worth first. I put my phone aside and read my book but my thoughts were more intrusive. This sexy man wanted to know my plans for the night and I'd rather be his midnight secret than sit here and read. That's it. Self worth can be gathered tomorrow again. I responded: <No. Not at all. Just gonna read in my room.> I sent then watched him type: <Still at res?> He wasn't allowed in here so I'm sure why that's a question. <Yeah. Not going away for holiday.> I replied. He responded: <Okay, would you like to have dinner at Tempa tonight?> Hm, a dinner first? Okay. This is different. <Sure. At what time should I be there?> I

sent. <Can I pick you up at 7?> He asked. I replied: <7 is perfect. Royal princes aren't allowed in but you can wait at the gate for me. I'll be out then.> I sent. <I'll let you know when I'm outside. See you soon beautiful.> I let out a silent scream. I was about to have royal dick. Perfect royal dick. I had to get ready. I put out my items because I wasn't sure which bag I'd use. Intimate wipes. Some condoms, the best kind. Panty liner. Tiny bottle of mouthwash, NEED to have fresh breath and of course some mint gum. My small perfume, 30ml, in case I need to refresh my floral scent during the night. The small vanilla scented oil for my bikini line, under my breasts and between my tummy rolls. The girly has to look moist like steamed buns after my shave. Now I need to shave. I sighed. It's going to be a good night.

## SASA POV\_

Early evening after I'd finished making the stew, More food had been delivered for the guards but I did make enough bread for everyone. I really enjoyed baking. Cooking I was okay with but baking was my first love. I went to the lounge where Mthunzi was.

Me: "Bhuti, are you hungry? The food is rea-" I stopped in my tracks.

Mthunzi: "Breath."

Me: "It's a gun."

Mthunzi: "It is. It's not going to attack you. Be calm." He had on gloves, cleaning it with a small cloth. "You're really afraid of everything aren't you."

Me: "Guns kill people."

Mthunzi: "No. People kill people. They use the guns just as they use knives, axes, pangas, rocks. You're not scared of those?"

Me: "But guns are machinery, they can just go off. A knife isn't going to float from the table to my heart. Unless of course there's a witch in the house." He chuckled.

Mthunzi: "No gun will ever just go off near me. I'm a military general. Specializing in gun handling and other things I'm not allowed to mention

by law. I just know how to control guns. Do you want me to teach you?  
It's a useful skill."

Me: "I don't think I'm allowed touch it. That's a military weapon."

Mthunzi: "I'm a ?"

Me: "Oh, a general."

Mthunzi: "Right. Come hold this." He hand me a smaller gun than the one he was cleaning. It was still big in my hands.

Me: "It's heavy."

Mthunzi: "It is. Relax your elbows."

Me: "I'll drop it."

Mthunzi: "No you won't. Hold it firmly. Relax your elbows, there. Aim at the TV."

Me: "I can't. That's expensive."

Mthunzi: "It's the cheapest in this house and I'm being generous. It's material, it can be bought again within the hour. You don't want to aim at the door and shoot at a guard by mistake. A TV won't die. Aim." I aimed at the TV. "Okay, good. So how will you see your target with your eyes closed Thembisa?"

Me: "What if it goes off?"

Mthunzi: "I can bet you my life, it won't. Stop shaking. Take off the safety."

Me: "Where is that?"

Mthunzi: "Right here on top, quick switch."

Me: "Like this?"

Mthunzi: "You're a natural. Where is your target?"

Me: "I'm scared of shooting the TV."

Mthunzi: "You don't need to shoot the TV but if you ever needed to, at this right moment, you'd be able to."

Me: "Wait, what does that mean?"

Mthunzi: "Exactly that. You can shoot."

Me: "I don't want to shoot Bhuti."

Mthunzi: "You're shaking again, you don't have to shoot. I'm saying if you were in a position where there was a gun and you're in danger. This is what you'd do. It would be this moment, where you shoot."

Me: "Oh. Okay."

Mthunzi: "Good. This is the common gun for most guards in all the royal families. Your man owns the company that makes it. Now, the next gun we can try is the upper level one. Used mostly by Kings guards and head of security like myself. Now we can put the safety back on to make sure-"

Nkosi: "What the hell are you doing?" I got a fright, almost jumping out my skin. Mthunzi grabbed my hands pointing at the roof as the shot went off.

Mthunzi: "See? Everyone is safe. No gun will ever go off near me without my control. Hello Nkosi. I thought i taught you in your first lesson to not frighten a person carrying a gun." He took the gun from my hands.

Nkosi: "Are you serious? Why is she holding a gun Mthunzi?!" He held me in his arms.

Me: "He was teaching me to defend myself baby."

Nkosi: "Shh. You shot a gun through the roof. Mthunzi?"

Mthunzi: "I would never let her hurt herself or anyone else. You know that. Situations arise, maybe she needs to learn how to defend herself too and not rely on guards at all times. Like you learnt as well." Nkosi looked down at me.

Nkosi: "You're not scared?"

Me: "Not anymore. I shot a gun." He chuckled.

Mthunzi: "So, how was your day?"

Nkosi: "Exhausting. I need a stiff drink. STIFF." Mthunzi went to the small table to pour two glasses.

Me: "I also made food. How are you not soaking wet, it's raining outside. Wait, where are the guards? I hope you didn't make them stand in the rain, Nkosihle." Mthunzi chuckled.

Nkosi: "They're in the garage and on the patio, baby. I had an umbrella. Don't tell me you cooked again."

Me: "Of course I did. Food was delivered for the guards but I did bake lots of bread and made a beef stew. The bread is probably still warm. Do you want to eat before or after a bath?" He hugged me.

Nkosi: "I can't even decide. If I can swallow you and have you live inside my body."

Me: "That wouldn't be fun for either one of us my love. I'll dish up then prepare your bath. You and Bhuti Mthunzi can then catch up on today so long." I kissed his chin and went to the kitchen.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 39

PRINCE POV

I was fully enjoying myself, not kidding. After Thembisa dished up some food and sliced the bread, Mthunzi and I sat down to eat. The slice of bread was still warm with steam oozing out of it. I took a bite. The crust all around was crunchy and the middle soft and buttery. This is the most perfect bread. I dipped some in the stew and had a mouthful. Now I was conflicted. I liked it both ways and wanted it both ways. What sorcery was this.

Mthunzi: "This is nice."

Nkosi: "Nice?"

Mthunzi: "It's really good."

Nkosi: "Amazing is what it is."

Mthunzi: "So, how was your day?"

Nkosi: "Not fun. I had no one to talk to."

Mthunzi: "You could've sent me a message."

Nkosi: "I know. I didn't want you to feel I'm micromanaging you because you're with Thembisa."

Mthunzi: "That's good. That's really good that you understood that but I will never feel that way. How was the meeting with the community?"

Nkosi: "It could go both ways. I did ask for their blessing to build the shopping center. There were different opinions, but we meet again tomorrow with final decisions. They will be discussing the idea with their families and a vote will be done."

Mthunzi: "If they say no?"

Nkosi: "Then they say no and stay with a gaping hole for the rest of time. Not my problem."

Mthunzi: "What about the community center?"

Nkosi: "This isn't negotiable at all, I told them this. Reason for it not being negotiable is because it's a basic necessity that all villages have."

Mthunzi: "Okay that's good."

Nkosi: "It is. What took the most time was discussing the plans of where to build it and how. I tried to demonstrate the plan I had come up with and they seemed to like it. Another thing we discussed was what would be done in the community center. They weren't too happy about that."

Mthunzi: "Why is that?"

Nkosi: "The first problem I have is that the majority of the people who were there were men. Like 8 out of 10 odds. If women are outnumbered, their voices will be pushed down to silence. Which is what happened. I raised the idea of teaching proper contraceptives and access to it for young adults and teenagers. They lost their shit. Over condoms and pills." He chuckled.

Mthunzi: "They don't want them?"

Nkosi: "No. Apparently, this is somewhat encouraging teenagers to have sex without consequences. Whatever the hell that means."

Mthunzi: "What backward ass thinking is that?"

Nkosi: "Hm. I'm not good with explaining so I let it be. I don't know what to say to convince them. Thembisa said teenage pregnancy was a

problem here as well as proper contraceptive and good healthcare. How do I then convince the parents to accept this?"

Mthunzi: "There's a problem Nkosi. If teenage pregnancy is a problem, who is getting these teens pregnant?"

Nkosi: "How would I know Mthunzi? I live in Mountain Peak."

Mthunzi: "My Prince. This is way deeper than just them thinking we're teaching teenagers sex. Teenagers don't wake up one day and know sex. Someone is already teaching them. It could be between themselves but what if it also isn't? This needs to be looked into. In the meanwhile, perhaps have this conversation with the community leader. He is obsessed with you and he will listen."

Nkosi: "Okay."

Mthunzi: "What did Samu say?"

Nkosi: "Left me alone, thank goodness. I last spoke to her at the lake."

Mthunzi: "What if your father sent her?"

Nkosi: "I doubt he directly sent her, perhaps encouraged her to be persistent to wear me down."

Mthunzi: "Your phone is ringing."

Nkosi: "As phones do. I'm way too tired to attend to anyone today." He took my phone looking at the screen.

Mthunzi: "It's Samu."

Nkosi: "Tell her I'm sleeping." He answered the phone.

Mthunzi: "Hello."

Samu: "Mehluli, how are you?" Mthunzi and I looked at each other, he wanted to laugh.

Mthunzi: "This is not Mehluli, you're speaking to Mthunzi."

Samu: "Oh? I thought you were attending to your wife- Wait... You're in Mthinomkhulu?"

Mthunzi: "Yes. How can I help you Princess?"

Samu: "Please give Mehluli the phone."

Mthunzi: "He's not available for the evening. He has retired to bed."

Samu: "Please tell him this, because I know he's still awake. I know he's with Thembisa, this is obvious. I take it that's why you weren't present today. I'm not the only one who noticed. If he wants to be discreet, the very least he could do is let me know so I don't slip up to his and my own family. If we're going to make this work, he needs to include me so I can help him." She hung up.

Nkosi: "Was I not clear? Mthunzi, why does she think I'll marry her? I thought no was no?"

Mthunzi: "I don't know Nkosi. What bothers me is that I also don't know what state she's currently in. What if she calls your father?"

Nkosi: "So what must I do? I have a hot bath waiting for me that I'm looking forward to."

Mthunzi: "I'll handle it. Don't worry."

Nkosi: "Are you sure?"

Mthunzi: "Yes, go relax. You've been working all day."

Nkosi: "Thank you." I got up, making my way to the bedroom. I could hear Thembisa in the en suite, singing while the water was running. I stood at the bathroom door and watched her. She was kneeling on the floor, her hand in the water waving back and forth. She closed the tap and stood up, turning around. She got a fright upon seeing me. I anticipated this, and caught her in my arms.

Sasa: "Why do you always try to scare me?"

Nkosi: "I don't try, I succeed. Why are you always afraid?" I kissed her lips. Something I've been dying to do all day. "Thank you. Dinner was amazing."

Sasa: "You're welcome. Let's take your clothes off so you can get in the bath." She stared at my blazer, confused. It wasn't a normal blazer. There were clips and buttons all over. I showed her each one.

Nkosi: "This is the second one, unclip it here."

Sasa: "Like this?"

Nkosi: "Yes. The third is inside here." She unclipped it. "Then this string, untie it."

Sasa: "Baby, this is a corset." I laughed.

Nkosi: "I should've known you'd say something foolish."

Sasa: "It's not foolish. This is genuinely how corsets are. Strings and buttons."

Nkosi: "It's the last two buttons. Here." She undid them. "Thank you."

Sasa: "This suit suits you. A lot."

Nkosi: "Thank you, my love."

Sasa: "So you only wear your family colours? Nothing else?"

Nkosi: "With the royal suits, yes. It's the highest ranked suit so it must only be in my family colours. My other suits are black and navy. I think I have a grey one. I haven't worn it in years. Do you know you'll also have to wear these colours on our important visits?"

Sasa: "Why? I'm not a royal."

Nkosi: "You'll be married to a king. Me. It's not about being royal."

Sasa: "Are we gonna have matching outfits? Oooh, I can imagine a purple princess dress. With a slightly inflated skirt that drapes to the floor, a corset waist sinching my figure in and popping my boobs out. The princess neckline going up to the tips of my shoulders into long sleeves that cut off with lace before my wrist. Do we wear crowns? I'm going to look like a witch. A very powerful witch." I laughed.

Nkosi: "A lot goes on in this cute little head. That is a very detailed gown. It would look better in gold and diamonds." I watched her take off my shirt.

Sasa: "Even your shirt is royal. Look at this. Buttons are supposed to be in the middle Nkosi, not on the breast plate."

Nkosi: "Why am I getting chewed for clothes I didn't design baby? I wear what I'm given."

Sasa: "They're trying to complicate your life. We would be done by now, but angithi we need a map to take your clothes off." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "At least the pants are only two buttons."

Sasa: "Are you sure? Next thing you know there's a hidden 17." I laughed.

Nkosi: "Are you taking a bath with me?"

Sasa: "I already took my bath baby."

Nkosi: "I also took a bath in the morning but here you are trying to dip me in again."

Sasa: "Fine, I'll bath with you but I need some fruit to snack on. Stay right here." She walked out the bathroom to go fetch the fruit. I got in the bath so long to relax.

PETU POV\_

I was bathed, shaved and moisturized. Ready to get dressed. I didn't know what to wear. I stared at the two options on top of the bed. The first outfit was jeans and a white gypsy crop with nude heels. The second outfit was a forest green simple body con dress that held on my curves all the way down to my knees. It was backless with only two drawstrings to hold it together. I would wear it with black heels and black leather jacket on my shoulders. It was classy, it was sexy but because the dress was plain in front I'd wear jewellery with my look. Just a pendant necklace and small hoops to keep it simple. I heard a knock on my door. I wonder who that is, maybe Zimmy. I opened.

Petu: "Nothando. Hey."

Notha: "Hi." She walked in. "Going out?"

Petu: "Yeah I have a date." I closed the door. "Which outfit do you think looks cute."

Notha: "The dress. Who's your date? I didn't know you were seeing someone."

Petu: "I'm not. He's my crush actually." I smiled, getting dressed.

Notha: "From our school?"

Petu: "Yes. It's Mngqobi."

Notha: "Mngqobi Biyela?"

Petu: "Yep. Oh yeah, you know him right? Since you're a princess too."

Notha: "Yes, I know him. He's nice."

Petu: "He is. I do however think, he's just in it to score some rounds." I struggled with my necklace. She helped me clip it on.

Notha: "And you're still going?"

Petu: "Absolutely. He's sexy as hell. If it's a few rounds, one night, I'm happy with it."

Notha: "Interesting."

Petu: "It would be unrealistic of me to expect a royal prince to fall in love with me, Nothando."

Notha: "The actual Heir to the throne, who is deemed unattainable fell in love with your best friend who is non royal. Possibilities are endless."

Petu: "Yeah, but theirs is a true love story. It doesn't happen everyday. It's like Thembisa was specifically made for him."

Notha: "Probably but what makes you think Mnqobi wasn't made for you?"

Petu: "Things like that don't happen to me Notha. It's cute to dream about, sure, but it's not realistic. I'm the cute fat girl, who works hard, has a group of friends she loves and will graduate then get herself a stable job. A man might come along, he might not. I'm not too bothered by it. I will however have some fun." She stared at me quietly. With Nothando, that's normal. She just looks at you, no emotion, nothing.

Notha: "You smell nice. He's going to love the scent."

Petu: "You think?"

Notha: "Yes. He likes girly smells on girls. Flowers, sweets. Not sure what about those make them girly but." She shrugged.

Petu: "Thank you Notha. I'll be back later tonight surely then we can hang out?"

Notha: "I'll be fast asleep. Rather let's see each other in the afternoon for lunch. Enjoy your date." She walked out. What a strange person. I checked the time. Almost 7pm. I quickly wore my shoes, tying my hair back. I didn't bother much with make-up, just mascara, eyebrows, a bb cream and lipgloss. My phone buzzed a message. <I'm outside.> I checked my purse again, and walked out. The car was waiting outside the gate. A guard standing next to it. He opened the door for me and I climbed in.

Petu: "Hi." My heart suddenly hammered in my chest. Was this happening? The car drove off.

Mnqobi: "Hello Petunia. You look gorgeous."

Petu: "Thank you." I smiled.

Mnqobi: "How are your holidays going?"

Petu: "Great. Getting in lots of sleep. And yours?"

Mnqobi: "Not much changes on my side. If I'm not at school, I'm working, so."

Petu: "Where do you work?"

Mnqobi: "At the second family company. Bi-motive."

Petu: "Oh the cars? Wow. What do you do there?"

Mnqobi: "I'm shadowing my dad to take over from him. General operations of the company as a whole."

Petu: "That sounds interesting."

Mnqobi: "Not really, just demanding. I'm learning because I don't want to run a company I do not understand parts of. Once I'm in charge, I'll obviously delegate to department heads and their teams."

Petu: "Nice. That sounds really cool. Honestly, just having a car manufacturing company is already cool."

Mnqobi: "What's cool is that the first 3 models are named after my brothers and I. Country RX, Bone X1 and the Warrior."

Petu: "That's sweet. What about your sister?"

Mnqobi: "She wasn't happy with her model, she wants a super car like we're living in a movie." I laughed.

Petu: "I can see it. So, since you make cars, why do you have a Benz."

Mnqobi: "We don't have a sedan babe. The Country is for rural driving, it's a 4x4. The Bone is an SUV, it's the size of an Audi Q5, I don't like it. The Warrior is a hatchback car, it's small. Sibonelo enjoys driving the Country RX most of the time. He uses the Benz probably only four times a month. Bhut Zwe only drives the Bone. He designed it, loves it to bits. I love the Warrior, I designed it but I'm not allowed to drive myself yet."

Petu: "I thought you were 21."

Mnqobi: "I am. My family doesn't allow you to drive yourself until you pass your honors."

Petu: "Is there a reason?"

Mnqobi: " You're only considered an adult in my family after your honors degree. Whether you pass it at 23 or 27. They don't care."

Petu: "Is that like a royal thing?"

Mnqobi: "No. Only a Biyela thing." The car parked outside the restaurant.

Our dinner was amazing. The conversation was light and effortless. I enjoyed his company. Not once has he made a sexual comment, or stared too long at my boobs. I mean, he did, but for a split second. Twice. He was trying his best to be respectful and I found that adorable. I didn't want any dessert, opting for a glass of white wine instead.

Mnqobi: "I'm having a good time with you."

Petu: "Me too. To be honest, I was skeptical when you texted me."

Mnqobi: "Why?"

Petu: "It just seemed random."

Mnqobi: "It was. To be honest, my brother texted you. I was too scared to text." I giggled.

Petu: "Well, thank him for me. I'm having a lovely evening. I'd be in my room, reading into a packet of chips."

Mnqobi: "Where are your friends?"

Petu: "Sasa went home. Amahle as well. Zimmy is with Khaya. Nothando is at res, probably reading."

Mnqobi: "Nothando Phakamisa is your friend?"

Petu: "Yes."

Mnqobi: "Oh."

Petu: "She's more Amahle's friend but we hang out often so I guess we can say we're friends."

Mnqobi: "I see." He sipped his wine, looking away. Okay? That's weird. He suddenly looked like Sibonelo now.

Petu: "What's wrong?"

Mnqobi: "Nothing."

Petu: "Do you have history with Nothando?" She would've said something, surely.

Mnqobi: "No history, no."

Petu: "Oh okay. You just seem cold suddenly." I guess this was the end of the night. If he had something for Nothando then I obviously can't interfere here. I hate that it hurt. Maybe I underestimated how much I liked him. "Can you drive me back to res? Thank you for dinner." He called the waiter.

Mnqobi: "I like you Petu. I just-"

Petu: "I get it. Mnqobi, do you think I came here because I was expecting a relationship and flowers? I know you want sex." He choked on his wine. Are we children?

Mnqobi: "Sorry. I wasn't expecting that." He sipped some water. "Uhm... It's not that I don't like you. I do. I just, I'm not in a position to offer a future."

Petu: "I know that."

Mnqobi: "And you're okay with that?"

Petu: "Yes. I am."

Mnqobi: "This is strange for me, I've never had a woman be this assertive."

Petu: "I'm not a little butterfly Mnqobi even though I want to be touched like one. We should be able to communicate what we both want, as adults. I like honesty and openness."

Mnqobi: "Okay. I don't know what to do now."

Petu: "Well, you can drive me home. Then you can think about it when you're at your home. Simple."

Mnqobi: "I don't want to take you home." He licked his lips, giving me butterflies in my tummy.

Petu: "How then am I supposed to get home Prince Biyela?"

Mnqobi: "We can find other ways to spend our night." The waiter placed the bill on the table. He took out his wallet, taking out his card and paid the bill. Immediately getting up. He held out his hand. "Touched like a butterfly you say?" I held his hand, getting up.

Petu: "Very gently."

Mnqobi: "My language." He kissed my lips softly then led me out the restaurant to the car.

Petu: "Where are you taking me?" He chuckled. I know he lived with his family and I don't think I'm ready for sneaking in and out a palace.

Mnqobi: "Don't worry, we're not going to my family home. We can use Sibonelo's house or Khaya's apartment. Which one would make you more comfortable?" He held me against the car. I could tell he already had an erection, his eyes lazy with lust. My reasoning quickly left me.

Petu: "The nearest." He opened the back door, leading me in. The car drove off. He held my hand, looking at my body. It was just his look, that was getting me wet.

Mnqobi: "Pick up your speed, Mark." Oh hell. There goes my panties. Drenched. The nearest place was a gorgeous tall apartment building. The car barely stopped before he got up, holding his hand out to me. I stepped out the car following him inside the hotel like building. He scanned an access card on the lift and we got in. The doors closed. He pulled me to him, smashing his lips on mine. His hands gripped tightly on my body and he groaned. The doors opened too soon. He led me out, marching down the passage to a room and opened with his key. He kissed my lips as he closed the door. My jacket dropped on the floor.

Mnqobi: "Hold on." He walked down the passage knocking on the door. "Kay?"

Zimmy: "He's not here."

Mnqobi: "Oh okay." Okay this was awkward. I picked up my jacket, starting to sober up. This was a bad idea. "Baby?" He pulled my hand down the passage into a bedroom and closed the door. "Finally." He kissed me again, taking his shirt off showing off his ripped torso. This was so confusing.

Mnqobi: "Is everything okay?"

Petu: "Yes."

Mnqobi: "Okay. Do you still want to do this?"

Petu: "Yes." I stared at his body, throbbing at how sexy he looks. He took off my dress. "Uhm, can we switch off the lights?"

Mnqobi: "No baby, I want to see you."

Petu: "Please Mnqobi?" He sighed, switching them off.

Mnqobi: "I'm really eager to see you Petu, I want to watch how your body responds and collides with mine. I want to see your face. That's why I'm this hard. It's been over an hour and all I did was stare at your face." It was hard for me only because I wanted him to be turned on and maybe if he sees my stretch marks, that won't be the case.

Petu: "Maybe the bedside lamp?"

Mnqobi: "Perfect." His hands slipped in my lace underwear, he groaned. "Fucking perfect." His finger slipped in, moving in and out. I felt the pleasure igniting off his finger straight into me. I struggled to breath. He pulled me to the bed, taking off my underwear. I was fully naked, as I lay on the bed. He reached over for the lamp and it dimly lit up the room. His mouth found my nipple, sucking on it but his hands caressed my rolls, down to my thighs. He got up to take his pants off, his erection still hard as rock. I sat on the edge and sucked him in. Massaging my tongue on his shaft and pushing him deep inside.

Mnqobi: "OHHHH. Fuck." I kept pulling it out and shoving it back then sucking. His grip tightened on my hair. I looked up at him while I sucked. He was staring down at me, he pulled it out. "If you're looking at me like that I'm going to cum into your mouth, in two seconds." I kissed his tip, massaging the shaft with one hand, the other gently holding his balls. Without warning, I slowly sucked him in, still looking at him. He let out a slow quiet moan as he came. I kept going, this time touching myself and swallowing his load. "PETUNIA." He pulled my hair, getting himself out my mouth. I lay back on the bed, with my legs open my fingers circling my clit with my juices. "Fucking hell, you are so sexy." He went down, licking my entrance. His finger went in again, this time with his lips sucking on my clitoris. My toes curled in the air as I felt the waves of pleasure wash over me. I was dizzy, calling his name until I came on his face, shaking to a spasm. He kept sucking, making me choke and

squirm until I pushed his head away. He stood up, his erection again, hard.

Mnqobi: "let me check for condoms." I was quite shy now. I know I had in my bag but I'd take them out if he couldn't get some. He opened the drawer next to the bed, indeed there was an unopened pack. He took one, rolling it on his dick. He stared at my body, licking his lips, climbing on top of me. I kissed him, opening wider.

Mnqobi: "My beautiful butterfly, may you receive me?" He whispered on my lips.

Petu: "Yes." He slowly entered me, his eyes fluttering closed. I listened to the slow rhythm, going in and out of my body. He felt so amazing. So damn amazing...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 40

KHAYA'S POV\_

It was a Friday and I know Sbo doesn't work Friday to Sunday. I don't need to be stressed today, I have to go tell Zmmy to go back to res. I'm living at the palace now, so there's no need for her to be in my apartment. The rest of the day, I'll probably be at Sbo's house with Mnqobi and him. We'll probably braai some meat, play a few video games and they'll drink. I can settle on non alcoholic beer. Basically it'll be a boys weekend. We haven't had one since January. I went downstairs. Zwe was having breakfast at the dining table. All my life I've never been able to eat in the bedroom or lounge because I basically grew up with royals. They sit at a table, everytime. I have my lazy days though and I always regret it because couch and carpet cleaning is unreasonably pricey.

Khaya: "Bhut Zwe." I sat down, dishing up some breakfast.

Zwe: "Morning." He read on his phone while eating oats. "How are you feeling?"

Khaya: "Great. Are you joining us this weekend?"

Zwe: "Maybe. Don't let Sibonelo bully you into a drink."

Sibo: "Am I that big a villain?" He sat down on his chair at the table.

Zwe: "Yes." Mngqobi walked in, hurriedly.

Mngqobi: "Morning brothers. Let's go Khaya." Zwe grabbed my arm as I stood up.

Zwe: "Eat. And finish the food. Mngqobi sit down and eat. Where are you rushing to?" I started eating my food.

Mngqobi: "Bhuti Zwe."

Zwe: "Sit Mngqobi." He sat down, dishing up a slice of toast. "I will pour this porridge down your throat. What is the issue? Where are you running to?"

Mngqobi: "I'm not allowed to sleep out and so I had to leave someone at Khaya's apartment." I stared at him. Is my house a commune?

Zwe: "Why didn't you take her home?"

Mngqobi: "She kinda fell asleep."

Khaya: "In my house?"

Mngqobi: "Khaya please."

Khaya: "I hope you didn't do it on my bed Mngqobi. I'm sincerely hoping. That's a gel memory foam mattress with anti dust mite and anti microbial properties. Do you know how difficult that is to find?" I couldn't mask my disappointment, I tried. He chuckled.

Sibo: "That's weirdly specific."

Mngqobi: "I didn't do it on your bed Khaya. What are you worried about even if I did, that bed has seen more than 100 girls since it's been bought."

Khaya: "I have it deep cleaned every month and that's not the point. Dear God, not my couches. Mngqobi. That is a limited edition Grohö. You know he died 7 months ago right? It's not like he can make me one again."

Zwe: "You have a Grohö? You're 21, Khaya. Why the hell do you have a 70k couch?"

Khaya: "I like design, Bhut Zwe. Don't look at me like that. It takes a special person to have a good eye and taste."

Sibo: "Your couch is ugly. It's a plain vanilla couch. No reason to pay that outrageous amount."

Khaya: "It's called an investment. That is his last work. And my couch is not ugly Sbo. It's simple and exclusive. 10 years from now, it will be an antique and worth possibly half a million."

Zwe: "I got the earlier design. The slate."

Sibo: "That ugly thing you won't allow me to sit on?"

Zwe: "Can't expect you to understand, your taste is as bland as your suit."

Sibo: "I don't spend 100k on couches, I buy stocks."

Khaya: "Mnqobi!" He couldn't stop laughing.

Mnqobi: "It wasn't on your couch either."

Khaya: "What do you mean?" My understanding is that Zimmy is in the guest bedroom. The only one there is in my apartment. "Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "I was using the guest room."

Khaya: "Oh so she's gone? That's solves half my problems for the day." I drank my juice.

Mnqobi: "She moved into your bedroom." I choked on my juice. The brothers laughed.

Khaya: "What do you mean Mnqobi?"

Mnqobi: "I mean she was in your room when I arrived, watching TV." I breathed. That's it. She's out.

Khaya: "You'll find me in the car." Bhut Zwe grabbed my arm again. "I finished my food Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "First calm yourself down. Don't go in there and say things that will hurt someone who put their life aside to take care of you. For weeks, she was in that apartment, making you food, getting you awake on your low days, making sure you had someone around. Don't hurt her because you couldn't heal yourself. She tried her best." He let go of my arm.

Khaya: "Okay Bhuti." Mngqobi and I walked out. Since he wasn't allowed to leave without a guard, we would be driven. I loved this. Personally I hate driving myself and so I took full advantage when I was with him. I can't even remember where I left my car. Either at the hospital or my apartment, I can't be sure but I know Sibonelo took care of it. He's on top of everything with his busybody. The guard drove us to my apartment.

Khaya: "So, how was your night?"

Mngqobi: "Incredible." He blushed.

Khaya: "Okay! Okay!" I laughed. "I take it this isn't a smash and pass."

Mngqobi: "It'll be a cold day in hell and I'd still be cuddling my thick mami."

Khaya: "And Nothando?"

Mngqobi: "Please let me have this moment Khaya?"

Khaya: "Absolutely not. Don't you remember how you chewed my head over Thembisa. For weeks. So tell me, will you be cutting the agreement with Nothando's family?"

Mngqobi: "She'd probably be relieved but I can't. You know how royal agreements are. I can't change my mind and I don't want to. Nothando will be my wife."

Khaya: "And you'll keep Petunia as a side chick?"

Mngqobi: "Yes. She understands that, nothing more can happen. She's fine with the arrangement. It's just sex."

Khaya: "You are one lucky motherfucker."

Mngqobi: "I am." He smiled.

Khaya: "So will you tell them? About each other?"

Mngqobi: "I don't know. If maybe my fling with Petu is longer term, like 6 months going. I'll have to tell her. Definitely. I'm only marrying Nothando in 3 years time anyway, it's not like we're in a relationship or trying to be."

Khaya: "You realize that Nothando will find out about Petu? They're in the same circle."

Mngqobi: "Right. I'll talk to her."

Khaya: "Today."

Mnqobi: "Okay, today."

Khaya: "And If Nothando wanted to date someone?"

Mnqobi: "You want me to be a bad person."

Khaya: "You'd kill him, wouldn't you?"

Mnqobi: "No but my brother would." We laughed. "I'm joking but I don't think Nothando will be entertaining people."

Khaya: "Because of you idiot. She has to stay a virgin, unless she's being done by you."

Mnqobi: "Yeah that's not the problem I'm picking up. I think she may just be asexual."

Khaya: "What the hell is that?"

Mnqobi: "I don't think she's sexually attracted to anyone. I don't think she ever has been. She's never had a crush. While all the princesses from age 12 started having goggle eyes towards us, she just never showed interest. In fact, she found it stupid."

Khaya: "Amahle is also like that, it doesn't mean anything. Maybe they haven't found someone attractive."

Mnqobi: "Amahle had a crush on you when she was 11. She used to follow you around. Remember?" He laughed.

Khaya: "Ahh. Yes. Okay. My point is, right now, as adults, maybe they don't see ideal bachelors. Honestly Mnqobi, even I wouldn't crush on me. Have you seen my track record? Disgusting." I chuckled.

Mnqobi: "If you say so." The car parked at the building, we walked in. I started at the reception to order breakfast, pretty sure they're still asleep in my house. We took the lift up to my apartment. I opened my home, finding Jimmy on the couch, watching TV with a glass of red wine. My body silently screamed. Red wine stains were a nightmare to remove and a bigger nightmare to pay for. I massaged my eyebrows.

Khaya: "Hi." She looked at me.

Zimmy: "Khaya." The audacity to be mad at me? In my house?

Khaya: "So we need to talk."

Zimmy: "Hm." She looked back at the TV, taking a sip. I could feel myself tick.

Mnqobi: "Hello Zimmy." He walked to the guest room.

Khaya: "So what's going on?"

Zimmy: "Where have you been?"

Khaya: "Home. With the Biyela's. I told you this yesterday."

Zimmy: "Hm."

Khaya: "What's the problem Zimmy?"

Zimmy: "Nothing." She took another sip, staring blindly at the TV. Her eyes were swollen and her nose too.

Khaya: "Are you sick?"

Zimmy: "No."

Khaya: "You're drinking wine at 8 in the morning." She didn't respond. This was a problem, how can I remove the glass in her hand without a fight and most importantly without a spill. "I ordered breakfast, it should be up in a second. Can you help me set up?"

Zimmy: "No."

Khaya: "Okay. So obviously something is wrong. However I don't feel responsible for it."

Zimmy: "My parents are getting a divorce."

Khaya: "Oh."

Zimmy: "Ya. My so called perfect father has been cheating on my mother with a girl my age. She's pregnant. With an 18 month toddler already. So he's been sleeping with her since she was 18." I couldn't gasp out loud but WTF. My father is in his mid 40s so I would suspect Zimmy's in that age group or older.

Khaya: "That is...I'm sorry." I would understand how that feels but at least my step mother is 5 years older than I am. And she refuses to have children with my father. Possibly only with him for his money and I like that about her. A go getter. Doesn't even fake being in love. She demands money and expensive bags. He deserves it.

Zimmy: "He's since moved out the house. My mother is trying to act strong. Can you believe she knew about this since that girl was pregnant a first time? She never told me. She just kept it a secret and fucking protected his dignity. 18 months Khaya. That's six months shy of two full years. She just sat there and pretended it was fine." I sat next to her on the couch. I was itching to take the glass away but the important thing was to listen to her.

Khaya: "How long have you known?"

Zimmy: "A week. She sent me a message introducing herself, wanting us to meet and ending it off with the fact that she's 3 months pregnant with my little sister and I have an 18 month old brother." Oh that's raw. I'm sorry. That sounds insensitive.

Khaya: "Let me just.." I finally took the glass, placing it on the table and gave her a hug. "Is that why you didn't go home this holiday?"

Zimmy: "Yeah. Anyway, what do you want to talk about." She pulled back, wiping her tears. There was a knock on the door. I stood up.

Khaya: "Oh, right. Yes. So I'm gonna need you to go back to your place. Since I'm staying at the Biyela's full time, there's no reason for you to be here. So."

Zimmy: "Oh, okay. I'll pack my things." She stood up. I held her arm pulling her into a hug, laughing.

Khaya: "I'm kidding. You can stay here as long as you want. As long as you're not leaking fluids on my bed." She giggled but it turned into a sob. "Oh no. Zimmy? I was really joking babe. I don't want you to leave. The apartment is open and available for you for as long as you want."

Zimmy: "It's not that Khaya."

Khaya: "Oh right, the other thing. Look, your dad is an asshole for doing that to your mother. Block this chick. She shouldn't be contacting you. You don't wreck someone's life like that then use children to manipulate your way in. Block her. The only person who needs your support in this situation is your mother. She's been gracious as hell keeping his tattered dignity stable after he wrecked it himself."

Zimmy: "Thank you Khaya." The knock on the door persisted.

Khaya: "Oh shit. Forgot that. Let's set the table, I'll bring the food in." I went to open the door and brought the breakfast inside. It was enough

for two people and some extra but we already ate so it would be enough for the girls. "I don't think these ones are coming out anytime soon. Let me sit with you."

Zimmy: "Can we sit on the cou-"

Khaya: "Absolutely not. No." ....

## PETU POV\_

I woke up hearing the door open. Mngqobi. Oh yeah... That happened. I tried to look away. He sat on the bed.

Mngqobi: "Good morning my butterfly." I giggled.

Petu: "You can stop calling me that."

Mngqobi: "I don't think I can. How are you?"

Petu: "I'm good. How are you?"

Mngqobi: "Great." He smiled.

Petu: "I should, uhm take a quick shower." I got up, holding the cover around my body.

Mngqobi: "I'll wait." I don't know what that means but I need to get dressed.

Petu: "I need to wear my dress."

Mngqobi: "To go shower?"

Petu: "Yes, I can't be naked walking around in someone's house."

Mngqobi: "There's a towel right there baby." Will it even fit around my body? It looked big so probably. People usually buy smaller towels fitting themselves so I wasn't really expecting as thin as he was to have a big one. The towel wrapped around me with some room to tie it. I walked to the bathroom with my purse and showered using soap and my hands. After drying I put some lotion on and the perfume in my purse. I went back to the bedroom. Mngqobi had his shirt and shoes off, laying on the bed. His dick printed hard on his shorts. This was a sex machine. I picked up my underwear about to put them on.

Mnqobi: "Butterfly?" I looked at him.

Petu: "Hm?"

Mnqobi: "Please come sit on my face." I stared at him, shocked. "Please. Like you're sitting on a chair, with your legs open. Make me your chair." I swallowed. It's not just his soft pleading voice, his look and his words did the work. I climbed on the bed, crawling up to his face. He pulled the towel off and pulled me to sit. His mouth drooling wet sucked on my clit. I let my body go, enjoying his lips in between mine. He held my ass pulling me closer and squeezing. I felt him groan on me, I looked down worried but he had his eyes closed enjoying himself. I got up, trying not to cum on his face. He slid out from under me and pulled my legs. I knelt on the bed with my face and chest feeling his hands on my ass, sliding down to my waist. He kissed each cheek, surprising me. Two wet fingers teased my entrance before one pushed in followed by another. Gently and slowly, they moved in and out. The other hand was cold when it touched my clit. I moaned, listening to both sensations. He rubbed my inside tenderly, the finger on my clit was soft and slipping slowly with the juices dripping from my hole.

Mnqobi: "You're so fucking beautiful." He kissed my cheek while busy with his fingers still.

Petu: "Mnqobi please." I moaned.

Mnqobi: "Tell me that. Tell me my butterfly is gorgeous?"

Petu: "I'm fucking gorgeous." I panted.

Mnqobi: "I didn't hear you baby." My whole body shivered. I was about to cum so hard. "I can't hear you still my love." He went slightly faster. I balled the sheets in my fist, my soul leaving my body.

Petu: "I'm your gorgeous butterfly." I moaned, coming undone in his hold. I reached my climax, shaking and leaking. He took out his fingers. I flopped on my bed, throbbing. He kissed my thigh, up my tummy side, on my back and neck.

Mnqobi: "And you're going to remember that, everytime I fuck you." He kissed my ear.

SASA POV\_

It was a beautiful morning. I woke up and looked next to me. Nkosi was asleep too. He needed to get up and ready for his community meeting. I kissed his chin then his lips. He opened his eyes, waking up.

Nkosi: "Baby."

Me: "It's time to wake up my love." He stretched.

Nkosi: "What time is it?"

Me: "it's 9." He turned on his side tucking me in his arms.

Nkosi: "Five more minutes." This was new.

Me: "You're never this tired."

Nkosi: "Hm." I kissed his chest. In no time he was snoring again. I was thinking of leaving around 11 in the morning. Nkosi took another nap for 30 minutes before I woke him again. He pulled me again, groaning in his sleep. The Siberian Tiger refuses to wake up. Another 15 minutes went by. Finally, Mthunzi knocked on the door.

Me: "Baby."

Nkosi: "Hm." He sat up. "Why are you waking me up love?"

Me: "Haibo Nkosi, you have to go to work. And Mthunzi is trying to wake you. He's outside." He got out of bed, opening the door.

Mthunzi: "You're late Your Highness. Good morning."

Nkosi: "I'll be ready in 30 minutes." He closed the door, coming back to bed.

Me: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I'm not going to sleep next to you for a very long time. I'm trying to milk it."

Me: "You'll see me baby. Maybe I'll leave here a few days before school then perhaps we can meet eLangoluhle and spend some days together."

Nkosi: "Absolutely. I'll plan it baby." He kissed me then went to take a bath. I checked my phone seeing missed calls from my father. I dialed him back.

Xolani: "Hello."

Me: "Hi Tata. How are you?"

Xolani: "I'm well, how are you?"

Me: "I'm fine Tata."

Xolani: "I hope you're on your way."

Me: "I am Tata. I'll be there by afternoon."

Xolani: "Okay. Call me when you're close."

Me: "Okay Tata." He hung up. I went to the bathroom. Nkosi had just got in the bath. "I just spoke to my dad. He's expecting me. Maybe he might not be at the meeting with you."

Nkosi: "He didn't even say anything yesterday. I was hoping to get his vote today but that's okay."

Me: "You already have my vote baby." I kissed his cheek. "Are you hungry?"

Nkosi: "Yes I'd like some porridge please." I got up going to the kitchen. Mthunzi was in the lounge.

Me: "Morning bhuti."

Mthunzi: "You can call me Mthunzi. I'm not any older than Nkosi." I chuckled.

Me: "Okay, Mthunzi sir. Would you like some coffee?" He laughed.

Mthunzi: "No thank you. I've been awake a while. I got everything. Breakfast and all."

Me: "Okay." I went to the kitchen and made the porridge, when down dished up and placed on the table waiting for him. He came out dressed in his black and gold royal suit.

Nkosi: "Thank you my love." He sat down, eating. I sat with him, eating my own.

Nkosi eventually left at 10:30. He'd probably arrive around 11 in the village. It would've been easier to catch a ride with him but I anticipate the village is waiting at the entrance. I bathed, getting dressed in a black loose maxi dress with spaghetti straps. I packed my bag, tying up my braids and wore sandals then left the room. Mthunzi was waiting on me.

Mthunzi: "So I'll drop you at the taxis to the village but I'll follow behind it until you reach home. Your bodyguard will be around but blended in the village. I doubt anyone would come attack you here but between your father and Qhama residing a few doors away, you should be okay."

Me: "Okay, that's fine." We left the house, him driving me to the bus stop in town. "Thank you bhuti. I'll be fine here."

Mthunzi: "Alright. Goodbye." I got out the car going to the taxi across the road. It was taking its sweet time to fill up. Finally we went on our way. It was after 11. I sent my father a message telling him where I was. Already, I was missing Nkosi terribly. This was going to be a difficult conversation with my dad. I really wanted to be with Nkosihle but I needed his blessing. After a draining long trip, the taxi stopped at the entrance of our village. I got off with my bag. My dad was standing there waiting as he usually did. I walked to him. He looked behind me. I looked at where his attention. Mthunzi drove in towards us, passing by into the village. My father looked at me. I swallowed.

Me: "Hello Tata." He turned around walking away. Oh no.

My father was quiet all the way home. I didn't even know what to say. What was he thinking?

Me: "How are the goats Tat-"

Xolani: "Don't talk to me about goats Thembisa. So that's where you were. Not only did you disobey me, you fully disrespected and lied to me."

Me: "Tata I'm sorr-"

Xolani: "Why are you sorry? Why? You lied to me. You continued behind my back seeing this man and lied. All this time I'm thinking you're at school but you're shacking up with a man. Is this what I taught you?"

Me: "No Tata." We walked in the house. My mother was in the lounge with her friend from church uMakhumalo.

Mama: "Here is Thembisa, why not ask her?" Ask me what now? I just got here.

Me: "Hello mama noMamK." My father went to the bedroom.

MamK: "Thembisa doll, are you not tired from traveling?" If I said yes, my father might snap.

Me: "No mama."

MamK: "Okay. Vuyiswa was supposed to speak to the girls at school. She's the teenage group leader, it's just that now we've discovered that she's pregnant. You know how news travels here in the village mntanami. The elders don't want her to talk to the girls anymore. Can you please do it?"

Me: "I don't know MamKhumalo. What would I talk about?"

MamK: "You'll be speaking to them about how it is to transition into womanhood. How you've carried yourself this far. Your challenges and victories. Tell them how important it is to keep their virginity. Your mother tells me you attended a reed dance and participated so you're still a virgin. That is a very good thing mntanam."

Me: "I...."

Mama: "Yes, I raised a very good child. She will speak to the girls. Right Thembisa?" I was kind of avoiding my dad as well now. I know he will bring this up if I stay indoors.

Me: "Okay mama. When?"

MamK: "Now." Oh. That's sudden. I couldn't even prepare?

Me: "I'll put down my bag and walk with you ma." I took my bag to my room, only carrying my purse back to the kitchen.

Mama: "Xolani, we're leaving!" We walked out of the house, taking a walk to the school. It wasn't far, just a couple of streets away. The two older women continued their gossip session about who was the father of Vuyiswa baby. I kept my mouth shut, absorbing the information.

MamK: "Haa! Nomphele says she once saw her coming back from the direction of Fanayo's house." Fanayo got his name because he was unfortunately a twin. Probably the first set in the village. He was a very old man.

Mama: "But Fanayo is married. He's an old man. It can't be him because his wife is always in the house screaming like a mad woman. Nowezile says she saw her walking with one of the Dube boys. The tall one with

shoulders like a wire hanger." I kept my laughter in but I was so close to bursting.

MamK: "Eh. Then I don't know. Remember that time, I came from town I saw her standing by BabMkhize's car? And you know him, he likes them young. I'm glad Xolani punched him the day he heard he was talking about Thembisa at the tavern."

Mama: "He should've done more than punch him. He's a disgusting man." Now when did this happen? Talk and say what about me? We walked in the school. Nkosi's cars were here. A few guards stood around, the others were probably with him in the hall.

MamK: "This Prince is a very good man."

Mama: "Very good MamKhumalo, say it again. I've never seen a King so involved and kind. He's doing a far better job than his father."

MamK: "I hope he doesn't change. The nation needs him. I hope he doesn't find a rude queen. Oh, that would be the end of us all."

Mama: "MamKhumalo don't say things like that. We can only pray the princess he marries is just like him." We entered a small classroom. The teenage girls were here. About 12 or 13 of them.

MamK: "Okay Thembi my love. We will give you some privacy to have your talk. Remember, to encourage virginity mostly and self love too."

Mama: "Yes, and passing at school. Tell them how you're doing well in university and how that will be easy for you to get a job and be successful. Tell them that." I don't think it's that easy at all but okay.

Me: "Okay mama."

MamK: "Girls. Hello. This is Thembisa Ntaka. She will be talking to you about a few things. She is currently studying at a university in Mountain Peak. She has tested for virginity and she still is intombi nto. She has a few words that she would like to share with you. Please listen to her. We'll now give you your space." They old women walked out, I guess going to the hall where Nkosi was. I stood in the front of the class, leaning on the desk. Among the girls Zanele was here as well. She was smiling at me.

Me: "Hi guys. Uhm, I didn't really prepare anything, mama kind of kidnapped me." They chuckled. "So, I was told I must speak to you about virginity and how important it is. My take is, your body as a whole

should be important to you, your worth shouldn't be placed on your vagina. My take also is, keeping your virginity can be a choice that is actually beneficial to your health as well. As you know, our village doesn't have the best healthcare. You've seen how the clinic is. Getting a contraceptive is humiliating. Not only are the nurses shaming you for sex but as well as the other people there, who will go home to gossip. Unfortunately that is how it is. It will take a while to band our community together. And that is why I encourage you to rather abstain. I haven't had sex, mostly because of the fear of falling pregnant or getting sick. When I arrived in Mountain Peak, I had endless access to contraceptives but I was also hesitant on being sexual because I was warned about how the boys in the city are. It is not a myth. The boys in the city are very good looking and very rich." I thought of Khaya, smiling. The girls were giggling. "But even with that, they are bad. They do not value you and will push you to the side for the next candy. Not all of them of course but a good portion are not good people. And there is no way of telling who is good, the best way is to continue to abstain. The person who loves you will wait and respect you. So far, is there any questions?" One girl put her hand up. Her name is Emihle.

Me: "Yes Emihle?"

Emihle: "What happens when you have a crush? A guy that you like and he likes you back? But he's always trying to put his hand in your skirt. Do you think you should let him?"

Me: "No. That is not a person that respects you. If you say no and he continues to do it everytime you're with him, he doesn't respect you and does not like you. The next thing he will do is want you to meet him in private. There's a lot of danger in being in private with a boy that does not respect you. He will hurt you. Avoid him at all costs." She nodded, disappointed. Another girl put her hand up.

She: "Is it wrong to like other women? The church says that it is a sin."

Me: "The church lies sometimes." The girls laughed. "Being a lesbian or gay is not wrong. Who another person chooses to love is not anyone's concern but themselves. We are all human beings created the same way but have different interests, likes and taste. It is important to be respectful of every person, no matter background, gender, sexuality or status. Being an evil person is a sin. Being yourself is a blessing." ...

## PRINCE POV\_

My meeting was going quite well. The people had voted for the shopping center. That made me glad. Mostly because I'd already drawn up the plans and I was excited to see how it would turn out. The chief stood on the stage talking to the community about the plans.

Mthunzi: "Thembisa is here-"

Nkosi: "Where?" I could feel she was closely somewhere but not close enough. I scanned the hall.

Mthunzi: "in one of the classrooms, having a talk." I wanted to see her. I looked at him, pleadingly.

Mthunzi: "Go."

Nkosi: "Everyone will follow." He typed on his phone.

Mthunzi: "Having some of the guards block all doors. There's no one outside currently. You'll take five with you. You can go now. Don't be too long." I stood up, walking down the short stairs to the nearest door. The guard opened, closing it behind me. I had the five waiting already and we walked down the hallway. I could follow her scent, finally finding the classroom she was in. She was dressed in a black flowing summer dress that reached the floor. My heart glows everytime I looked at her. She continued talking but the girls looked at me. She looked at me. I walked in the classroom.

Nkosi: "Good afternoon." She blushed bowing her head.

Thembisa: "Your Highness." I looked at her class of little girls.

Nkosi: "I heard you were having a talk."

Sasa: "Yes Your Highness, I was asked to speak to the girls."

Nkosi: "About? Perhaps I can join?"

Sasa: "Uhm." She looked at her class. All the girls were nodding excitedly. "We are talking about being a woman. How, one can transition from girl to woman without losing her virtue prematurely. I was telling the girls a bit about how advantageous abstaining from sex is. To prevent pregnancy." My eyes never left hers.

Nkosi: "That's very true. Sex is not important in a relationship, but with the right person it is magical. It is easier. Softer. More loving and enjoyable."

Me: "That's true Your Highness." Zanele picked up her hand. "Yes Nele." I could feel Thembisa hold her breath.

Nele: "I have a question for Your Highness if I may."

Nkosi: "Go ahead." I looked at her.

Nele: "Your Highness, how do you know that someone likes you?"

Nkosi: "Hm. That's a difficult question. I guess I know from the way she looks at me. The way she takes care of me. The way she supports me and respects me but also makes me laugh even on my darkest days." I looked at Thembisa. She was looking at the floor, blushing. God I wanted to hold her.

Sasa: "Uhm, girls. Let's talk about careers now. Our Prince here is an architect. Your Highness, would you please kindly share what your job is?"

Nkosi: "With pleasure." ...

SASA POV\_

The talk with the girls was successful. Nkosi had given us space after he told us about architecture and his job. I walked back home with Nele and her friends. They were so excited they got to see him and speak to him. I walked into my home with her behind me. Mama and Tata were in the lounge.

Mama: "My girls. How was the talk?"

Nele: "AMAZING mama!!! The Prince came to our talk!!!" She screamed. I froze. My father stared at me coldly.

Mama: "Really? What did he say?"

Nele: "Hmm, Sasa do you want to tell mom what he said?" She giggled.

Me: "He didnt say anything but answer your question. I'm going to cook supper." Hopefully she lets this go.

Mama: "What did he say mntanam?"

Nele: "He said, he knows someone likes him by the way she looks at him and Sasa was looking at him looking like she's on the moon." She giggled. Mama laughed.

Mama: "Oh mntanam. I don't blame you." I kept my mouth shut and focused on the pots. My father stood in the kitchen.

Xolani: "How long are you going to be disrespecting me Thembisa."

Me: "Tata."

Xolani: "Break it off. NOW."

Me: "No Tata! Why are you being like this! He hasn't done anything wrong."

Mama: "Haibo. What's happening now Xolani?"

Xolani: "This disrespectful child of yours is cohabiting with that prince!"

Mama: "HAIBO!!!"

Me: "Tata, I'm not cohabiting. Nkosi wants to marry me. We are in love. I know that you don't like him Tata, and we're willing to work for your blessings but I want to be with Hi-"

Xolani: "Thembisa, are you choosing a man over me? The father who has raised you and provided for you with love and care ALL YOUR LIFE!!"

Me: "Who else was supposed to tata-" he slapped me across the face hard.

Xolani: "You will NOT speak to me in that manner Thembisa. Break it off. Right now. It's either me or him. If you choose him, you're dead to me. Never set foot in this house again." He hissed.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 41

SASA POV\_

My cheek stung from where my father hit me. My nose bled only a little. I went to my room, taking out a tissue. It wasn't the slap that hurt the most, my parents have given me hidings before. He made it clear that I had to choose between him and Nkosi. If I chose Nkosihle, I lose my family. If I don't choose him, I had to let go of my love. I couldn't even cry because if they walk in here seeing me in tears it would earn me a hiding. I can't lie, in this moment I really wanted to choose Nkosi. I trusted that loves me, that he would protect me. But I wouldn't have a family, a home. My children would never meet my father, my sister, my mother. I would walk on stage to graduate, without my childhood cheering me on. My door opened. I quickly wiped my tears. My mother sat next to me.

Mama: "Thembisa, is what your father saying true?" She would obviously take his side on this. I wasn't even hopeful that she would speak for me.

Me: "I'm not cohabiting mama. I live in Res."

Mama: "Are you in a relationship with him?"

Me: "Yes mama."

Mama: "Yoh. Thembisa. That man is a future king." Thanks for the reminder that everyone keeps highlighting. "So what is it now?"

Me: "I don't want to choose mama. I'm in love with him."

Mama: "You know being in love Thembisa? Where would you know it from?" I kept quiet looking at the tissue in my hand that had small stains of blood. "Yoh. I don't know now. Your father is very angry and will not listen." She folded her arms. What did this mean? I looked at her. "Don't look at me like that Thembisa. Are you sure this man wants to marry you? Are you sleeping with him?"

Me: "I'm sure mama. We're not sleeping together yet."

Mama: "Then why is that other princess following him everywhere?"

Me: "She wants to be his first wife. She's the one his father chose."

Mama: "So you want to be a second wife wena? At your tender age Thembisa?"

Me: "No mama. He won't marry her."

Mama: "How do you know that? Have you met kings Thembisa? They can do what they want in case you don't know. And they don't marry non royal ordinary girls like you. They marry other royals. I'm sorry mntanam." I looked at my hands again. What I needed was to make a decision that I didn't want to make. I couldn't do it. I'd have to continue lying to my father but what would that do to our relationship? There's actually no going back on our relationship now.

Mama: "Don't get pregnant, Thembisa. Yoh. It won't help your case. Your child will be a bastard to the throne and you know they kill those right?" My heart hurt at the thought. "Yoh Thembisa. You're stressing me now."

Me: "What do I do mama? Can't you speak to him?"

Mama: "Your father? Eh. He shushed me aside and went out. Now I must get into trouble when I haven't done anything?"

Me: "Why does he hate him so much?"

Mama: "The Royals are cruel Thembisa. The last time a king married a commoner, his family killed her when she gave birth to the current King. They don't want us in their palaces. We are nothing to them. Your father is only trying to protect you." The ancestors once again. Why make our paths cross? Why let us fall deeply inlove with each other if destiny doesn't want us together. Why welcome me in their alter and allow me to be with him if I'm not meant to be with him? "Yoh. Shame. Poor woman. Yazi she was young. She ran away with the king and when they found them, she was already pregnant. They pretended to accept her but..." She shook her head. "It was very bad. The king turned very bitter and evil after she died. He destroyed the village she was born in. I grew up hearing stories about him. If you even looked up at him, he would order you killed. No one was allowed to look at his face. And he never married again after his wife died. They say he once burnt a forest to the ground and at the time a group of virgins were on camp. Burnt them all alive. Yoh. He was very very cruel until his dying days. I remember the relief everyone had when they heard he had passed. Yoh. Heeee, Thembisa." She clapped once.

Me: "This was King Ngidumise Sikhosana?"

Mama: "That's the one! Even his name is scary. Imagine. Praise me. Yoh."

Me: "How much do you know about the royals mama?"

Mama: "A bit. My grandmother and Aunt Nozi worked at the palace remember? They told us everything that happened. Make me tea so I can tell you." I quickly jumped up to go make tea. When my mother was in a comforting mood, I always embraced her. This was the side of her that I loved. Yes alot of the time she was very mean but I did enjoy these moments. Even if it was just a day. I made the tea and brought it back to my room with my own cup. We sat on the bed sipping.

Mama: "So, King Ngidumise was the first king I knew. He was made King when I was only 8. I think he was 18 at the time. Back then Kings were crowned at that age ke but he was the last one to be crowned then. The current was crowned in his early 20s due to Ngidumise The Majesty's health. They thought he would die soon. Alot of people said it was because of the heartbreak. He died of a broken heart they said. It was truly sad. Anyway, before Ngidumise was crowned. About a year before. He and his girlfriend ran away together. It was a scary time for the royals. His parents thought he had been abducted and so they searched high and low for him. Only finding him months later. Unfortunately, you can't hide too long as a future king. Rewards to find him were the biggest amounts ever mentioned. When they found him, he was returned but he refused to leave his girlfriend behind. She was heavily pregnant with their son. The Sikhosana family welcomed them back. They got married and he was crowned in a month, Thembisa. Hehehe!!" She sipped her tea.

Me: "Then what happened mama?"

Mama: "The day after his crowning. His wife gave birth to their son. The heir to the royal throne. The current King. Nobody heard from the Sikhosana family for days. Then the announcement was made. I remember my mother and aunts crying and screaming. The drama of it all." She sipped her tea. "The nation was mourning, painfully. Then. The Sikhosana family banned the mourning." I gasped.

Me: "MAMA. How do you ban mourning?"

Mama: "As I said, that family is evil mntanam. No one was allowed to shed a single tear more for the dead queen. That's what they call her, the Dead Queen. Imagine? Yoh." She shook her head sipping her tea. "The family isolated itself from the public eye. Oh it was bad. In just weeks, we woke up to the news that the village she was born in had

been burnt to the ground with everyone trapped inside. Immediately we knew it was his order but what could we say? Even the other royal families were scared of him. All of them combined. Months and months went by without hearing from him or seeing any member of the Sikhosana family. Since he was young, it was said that his father had encouraged him to take another wife, so that she can raise the baby and give him more children. Yoh, as if he spat in his face. What did Ngidumise do? On the exact morning of the reed dance he burnt that camp to the ground, WITH the virgins there." My heart broke. Innocent people died by his hand because he was hurt. That's horrible.

Me: "That's so sad."

Mama: "Sad Thembisa? It was inhumane. Like I said, if you so much as look in his direction, he would have you killed. Throughout the years, that family locked themselves in their palace. King Ngidumise passed away only when he was 42. Imagine that young age. The nation was relieved more than sad. The current King, who had then been recently crowned, King Sizwengaye Dumisile Sikhosana allowed mourning for seven days."

Me: "Is he better? King Sizwengaye?"

Mama: "Better than Ngidumise? By far. King Sizwengaye enjoys attention, he wants to be looked at. He wants people to praise him and celebrate him. That's why he's so extravagant and his most prized possession is his son." So that's why Nkosinhle. The good king. He's supposed to fix the mistakes of the past two generations.

Me: "So King Ngidumise never had other children?"

Mama: "Oh he did. He just killed them. He didn't want them. Like I said, don't get pregnant. None of his other children lived past 20 years old. They tried shame. Two of them were hidden by their mothers until they reached 17 and 20. Problem with the Sikhosana family, it is said all the males have the same eyes and face. So a person who knows can easily spot them and report it. Even your son might have those eyes, you must beware." I giggled at the thought of a baby with orange brown eyes looking exactly like Nkosi.

Mama: "Thembisa is laughing when this is serious."

Me: "Sorry mama."

Mama: "Don't be sorry. I built my home and family. I can't tell you what to do with your life and who to be with Thembisa. All I wanted for you was that you pass and graduate so you don't depend on anyone. Your father is old. He won't be here forever. You need to be able to take care of yourself and start your own family." She picked the cotton on her dress.

Me: "Mama, how did you meet utata?"

Mama: "Hehe." She smiled. "Your father was traveling to the Bathonga Kingdom. He passed this village but he ran out of money so he stayed. He built himself a hut there by the forest. One day I was going to fetch water at the river and I saw him washing there. I watched him until he finished. When he turned to see me, he got a fright." She laughed. "I asked why he was washing in the river and he explained that the water is running down the stream. Whatever that means. I got my water while he got dressed. He asked me if he could help me and I accepted his help. By the time I reached home, I was already thinking about him. I know I hadn't seen him in the village and so he wasn't from here. I wondered where he was living. By morning, I went back to the river and indeed found him there. This time, I'd brought some bread and sugar water with a cup. We sat down and he ate. That became our meeting place every morning. He finally got himself a small job. With that, continued living in his hut, saving most of his money. My father gave us a stand to build a shack. Your father built it all by himself. By this time I was pregnant with you." She smiled sweetly. "It was a beautiful time. We had our small home, it was one room, no bigger than this room of yours but it was home. Your father was asked by others in the community to build them shacks as well. That's how he started making some money. As years went by, he joined the other men to go to construction sites and help build in town. Your father would come home, carry you on his back and practice building in the community. This is how he built our home. With the money he kept saving and making. He bought the land and made sure it was very large. I complained so much but your father had a vision. Look now, the yard is filled with goats and chicken. Look at our house."

Me: "That's beautiful mama. Do you know where dad was born though? Did he ever tell you?"

Mama: "Oh yes. He was born in the village that was burnt to the ground. He was only 11 when it happened, fortunately he woke up and ran. He says he thought his family had woken up and ran too. By the time he

realized that he was running alone in the road, it was too late. The whole village was engulfed in flames. He says sometimes at night he can still hear the screams coming from the fire, he couldn't do anything but cry. He knew if they found him alive they would kill him too and so he ran, never looking back."

Me: "That's why he hates them. It's not Nkosi that he hates mama. He hates the Sikhosana name because King Ngidumise killed his family and childhood."

Mama: "Eh. You see why we took you to that university? Let me go cook child. Stop crying and bleeding out your nose." She got up and walked out.

KAYA POV\_

It was afternoon and I'd just finished watching the end of the community meeting at Mthinomkhulu. Just then, my phone rang.

Khaya: "Sbo?"

Sibo: "I thought you two wanted to come to my house?"

Khaya: "We're coming Sbo."

Sibo: "Okay." He hung up.

Khaya: "Mnqobi!" I yelled. He's been in there for hours.

Zimmy: "Hey." She came out my room, waking up from a nap.

Khaya: "Hi. How you feeling?"

Zimmy: "Fine." She sat next to me.

Khaya: "We're going to Sibonelo's house, you wanna come along? Just gonna do drinks and games."

Zimmy: "I don't know Khaya. Isn't this supposed to be your guys thing."

Khaya: "Yeah, but you're also my guy. You'll sit in a spot and put air pods on. Get dressed." She went to my room. Can you believe she even moved her clothes in there? Unbelievable, the things women do. Mnqobi came out the room, Petu walking behind him looking shy. I couldn't help but laugh.

Khaya: "I hope there's birth control involved."

Mnqobi: "Please shut your mouth? I'm taking Petu to Res."

Khaya: "Sboni called, so be quick. Zimmy is getting dressed, I'm taking her with us."

Mnqobi: "Baby, do you want to spend the weekend with me?"

Petu: "Who's Sboni?"

Mnqobi: "He's not that bad, I swear."

Petu: "Sibonelo?? He's harassing my friend."

Mnqobi: "And he's stopped. I promise. He's not following or stalking her anymore." She sighed.

Petu: "Even so, I can't. I promised Nothando I'll hang out with her today. She's there alone."

Khaya: "Why don't you invite her too? I'm sure she'll enjoy hanging with friends outside Res." I smiled. Mnqobi stared at me looking like he wanted to strangle me.

Petu: "Okay. Then, we can go." She walked to the door.

Mnqobi: "I'm going to kill you." He whispered to me before he walked out. I laughed until I coughed. He needs to be honest. That's what he kept teaching me all these years as I navigated the streets. Zimmy came out the room in shorts and a graphic T-Shirt that looked strangely familiar.

Khaya: "is that my shirt?"

Zimmy: "Yes. I like it."

Khaya: "Huh?"

Zimmy: "My clothes are in the wash so I don't have a top to wear. Unless you want me to go topless."

Khaya: "Rather go topless babe." She laughed. "So, Mnqobi is taking his person to Res. We won't all fit in one car, so I think we should drive."

Zimmy: "Okay. I'm ready to go." I looked for my keys finding them in their place, so my car was obviously in the parking. We went down to the basement, getting in and I drove.

Khaya: "What do you want to drink?"

Zimmy: "Hennessy is fine." I looked at her. "What? I'm not in the mood for champagne." I started at the liquor store to buy her bottle and some non alcoholics for myself. I'm not sure what Petu drinks but I got a 24 pack of ciders, a bottle of gin and two champagnes. Once I got the alcohol I drove to Sibonelo's. He lived closer to the Biyela palace on the east of Mountain Peak. The Stellars, it's called. The Biyela family was one of two families in the area. It was only reserved for the wealthiest. The other family was of a white man called Reynard Smith. The Biyela's had bought almost all the property except for his. It kept the area property value above the 100 millions. Zwe and Sbo had their own house apart from the palace. Mnqobi would get his own once he graduates as well. The rest were rented out to affluent families and people who visited Mountain Peak often. Other royal families that is and investors from around the world. I drove into the gated community.

Zimmy: "Never been to this side of town. It looks filthy rich."

Khaya: "It is. The Biyela's own about 95% of this place."

Zimmy: "I know they've got money but this is just crazy. So if Biyela is like this, how do you think King Sikhosana's area looks?"

Khaya: "The Sikhosana's built themselves actual heaven. I went to their palace few weeks ago. It is the most intimidating place I've ever stepped in. Even the air is different. It's secluded and incredibly vast. I don't even know how to describe it."

Zimmy: "Isn't it crazy? How did this whole royalty thing start? Why are there chosen families for it? And why are they hoarding so much wealth?"

Khaya: "I don't know love." I parked the car. "And we don't ask those questions here. They won't do us any good. These are people you want in your life and they need to like you. That's how people get success here. By Associating with these names. So we don't ask questions, we say yes sir and wait for opportunity. If push comes to shove, stroke an ego. Let's go." We got out the car, taking the alcohol in the house. Sbo was in the lounge smoking a blunt, Zwe as usual on his phone.

Khaya: "Big bro's." They looked up. "This is Zimmy, my friend."

Sibo: "Hey you."

Zimmy: "Hello Prince Sibonelo, Prince Zwelethu."

Zwe: "Hi. Khaya, where's your brother?" I laughed.

Khaya: "he's probably on his way."

Sibo: "What?"

Khaya: "Mnqobi's new chick is friends with his wife." He laughed.

Zwe: "Khaya."

Khaya: "He knew, Bhut Zwe. This has nothing to do with me."

Zwe: "Why would he do something that stupid? At this critical time? Sibonelo why are you laughing when you have a business proposal with that family? Do we want to piss this girl off?"

Khaya: "I don't think she'll be pissed off Bhut Zwe but we'll see."

Zwe: "All you three do is stress me. On top of my job. Sibonelo stop laughing."

Sibo: "Okay."

Khaya: "Zim, do you want me to pour you a drink so long?"

Zimmy: "Yes please." She sat on the empty couch, nervously. I don't know why she's so nervous, she's been with Sibonelo once, so why is she shy around him? I mixed her a Hennessy, bringing her the glass.

Khaya: "Sbo, I want to talk to you?"

Sibo: "Yes bug, what's up?" I sat next to him.

Khaya: "It's about Sikhosana."

Sibo: "There goes my good buzz."

Zwe: "What's up Khaya?" Right, the sober less aggressive one.

Khaya: "So, I was watching the community meeting today. The village voted for the shopping center."

Zwe: "That's incredible."

Sibo: "And Expected."

Khaya: "Sikhosana has a company that does the construction of all his buildings. What he outsources is installing electricity in them. This

specific project seems big, already has the public eye on it. I was wondering if it was wise that I pitch a proposal to offer the installation?"

Sibo: "You're not an electrician Khaya. And you don't have a company that specialises in electricity."

Khaya: "Yeah. That's true. However I was thinking in the sense of consulting. I can outsource the electricians who will be teaching the skill to members of that village, Sikhosana will then pay me to pay them. That's how I was thinking."

Sibo: "Hold on, this sounds like a great idea."

Zwe: "It is. So what you're saying is. You'll register a company and hire two electricians. Make the proposal and once he accepts, you send your two to the village to teach the installation process."

Khaya: "Yes, once that is done, I'll have it checked and tested. At the end of the project, I'll have paid the two and those that intern will have a skill, experience and of course be paid. Then I'll keep the profit."

Sibo: "This is good bug."

Khaya: "Won't it affect us? Since you don't like him?"

Sibo: "This is business Khaya. It has nothing to do with my personal views. I myself, am in business with Sikhosana. Have you forgotten our trip to Vamani village? I can't block you from being successful, we're brothers. Register this business first thing Monday morning. Zwe and I will look at the costs and wire you your starting capital."

Khaya: "Thank you brother."

Zwe: "Mnqobi is quite good with drafting proposals, ask him to help you as well."

Khaya: "I'm actually hoping to partner with him."

Sibo: "Good."

Zwe: "I can guide and mentor you with the consulting. I have a bit of experience with that."

Khaya: "Thank you Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "And you, little lady? What are you studying?"

Zimmy: "I'm studying BCom Economics."

Zwe: "Good path." She needs to milk every opportunity like I told her, she can't just sit there and drink Hennessy, she better be listening.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 42

PRINCE POV\_

I was really missing Thembisa. It was evening and I was with Mthunzi in the house having a drink.

Mthunzi: "I'm upset."

Nkosi: "Hm."

Mthunzi: "You want to know why?"

Nkosi: "Why?" I sighed.

Mthunzi: "You're not even pretending to enjoy my company."

Nkosi: "Sorry."

Mthunzi: "What's on your mind?"

Nkosi: "I was thinking of my dream. Early in the morning. I was not here. In a place I've never seen. I woke up to my eyes staring at me in the form of a baby girl. She was sitting on my chest. When I woke up, she smiled, the most beautiful thing in the world. I took her out the room, Thembisa was out in the garden, resting with a cup of coffee and a book. It felt so real. There was no guards, no pressure, no all of this nonsense. Not in this world. I was really happy."

Mthunzi: "No wonder you didn't want to wake up."

Nkosi: "Yeah. Just feeling Something I don't like."

Mthunzi: "What?"

Nkosi: "My heart hurts. Physically. What does that mean?"

Mthunzi: "Maybe it's because you're missing her?"

Nkosi: "What if she's in danger or hurt?"

Mthunzi: "Call her." I dialed her number, putting it against my ear as it rang.

Sasa: "Hello."

Nkosi: "Hey baby."

Sasa: "Hey."

Nkosi: "What's wrong?"

Sasa: "Nothing. How are you? I heard the village voted for the center. That's amazing. You did a great job."

Nkosi: "Thank you. My work here is done. Can I see you tomorrow Before I leave?"

Sasa: "I don't know baby. My dad is pretty angry right now."

Nkosi: "Why?"

Sasa: "He knows about us. He wants me to choose."

Nkosi: "Choose what Thembisa?"

Sasa: "Between you and him." Oh fuck, my chest tightened. This would hurt. Thembisa loves her father. It's her father. Unlike my father, her father was a loving caring parent and would continue to be so. Unconditionally. I only invited danger to her life.

Nkosi: "Oh."

Sasa: "Found out from my mother the reason why."

Nkosi: "That he won't accept me?"

Sasa: "Yeah." Doubt it will make a difference.

Nkosi: "What is it? What have I done?"

Sasa: "Not you. It turns out, the village your grandfather burnt to the ground, was my father's home. He was the only one that survived. He was 11 years old when he escaped." No... No... "He believes that your family use non royals and kill them for sport." I was too embarrassed to even respond. I've never paid too much attention to my family history. I knew obviously my grandfather was the cruel king and I thought I'd left

all of that in the past. My father himself is cruel, I'd hate to admit that he isn't as bad as Papa but I'd be lying. He is just as bad.

Sasa: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Your father is right, Thembisa."

Sasa: "I'll try talk to him."

Nkosi: "It's not something you can talk him out of baby. My family did him wrong, not you."

Sasa: "He just walked in the house, I have to go." She hung up.

Nkosi: "Fuck."

Mthunzi: "What's wrong." I dialed Amahle's number and put it on loudspeaker.

Ama: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I need to know what your people have planned Amahle. This needs to be fixed." She sighed. "Thembisa says her father asked her to choose between me and him."

Mthunzi: "Jesus. That's dramatic."

Nkosi: "Is it Mthunzi? Apparently, my grandfather burnt his village to the ground after his wife died. Remember that? We hadn't even been born yet. Thembisa's father was the only one to survive it. 11 year old boy, running and hiding from a king who wanted to obliterate an entire group of people just because. Would you want your daughter to marry that person's grandson? Amahle? What is the plan here?"

Ama: "I don't know Nkosi."

Nkosi: "YOU CANT NOT KNOW!! YOU CAN'T!!!!" I screamed.

Mthunzi: "Nkosinhle-"

Nkosi: "No Mthunzi. Maybe you two don't fucking understand. I'm either about to lose the most important person in my life or she will lose her family. If she chooses me, she still has to fight for her fucking life from my own father. WHAT IS THE FUCKING PLAN."

Ama: "Nkosi, please calm do-" I felt my brain tick. Before I destroyed everything in this house, I walked to the bedroom. I was a long way far from my sacred place. I had no trees, no woods and I was in unfamiliar

grounds. I couldn't go for a run. I couldn't speak to or see Thembisa. I was going to lose my mind here. Why did it have to be like this? Why couldn't this one thing go right? The only thing that mattered to me. I saw a pink satin on the bathtub. I walked to it. Thembisa's night robe. I picked it up, put it against my nose to smell her. The material just as smooth as her skin. How could I fix this? Mthunzi walked in, giving me my phone.

Mthunzi: "It's her." I looked at my ringing phone.

SASA POV\_

I sat in my room, pretending to read a book. My father walked in, looking at me.

Xolani: "Have you made your decision?"

Me: "Tata please."

Xolani: "Let me make this easy. Give me that phone."

Me: "Tata I'm begging you, please." He took the phone from me, looking through it.

Xolani: "I'm going to dial his number. If you're planning to stay in this house and obey me, you will tell him that it's over. You want nothing to do with him, ever again. He will leave you alone and never contact you. If you're planning on choosing him, tell him to come pick you up. As you are, you will walk out that door and never return. Are we clear?" I sobbed into my hands. "Is he My love? Is that him?" The phone rang, on loudspeaker.

Me: "Tata please don't do this." I begged. My heart hoping and praying he doesn't answer but because he will never not answer to me, he did.

Nkosi: "My love." I looked at my father. He stared at me, nodding to the phone. "Baby? What's wrong?"

Me: "Nkosi." I straightened my voice.

Nkosi: "Thembisa."

Me: "I... Please take care of yourself."

Nkosi: "Baby, wait-"

Me: "It's over. I can't see you again." He hung up.

Xolani: "Good choice. You may hate me now but you will thank me later. You can do much better than that boy. I'll keep this, in case he doesn't get the message." He walked out. My chest ached in pain I've never felt before. A mixture of pain and in different volumes. I lay back in bed, sobbing uncontrollably. I don't have any plan but I'd get Nkosi back. I hate that I had to hurt him, wherever he is, I know he's broken. My father just needed to be given time. He had to eventually understand that I loved Nkosi and him. I can't choose. I don't want to.

The next morning, I woke up early. I know my father was up already but probably in the back with the goats so he wouldn't see me sneak out the gate. I got dressed in my leggings, sweater and boots. Quietly opening my bedroom door. I snuck out. I heard my father outside.

Xolani: "Go back to where you come from my boy." I rushed outside to see who he was talking to. He had Qhama on the ground, holding a knobkerrie in one hand.

Me: "Tata!! What are you doing?!"

Xolani: "You're going to tell your king to remove all the imposters he has placed in this village or we will forcefully remove you. Do you understand me?" A group of men from our village came in holding their own weapons.

Me: "Tata, please stop this!!"

Xolani: "Do you hear me, my boy? You will leave now and relay this message. If you are to return or your people are still here by midday, tell him he'll watch the same movie that happened in uMcebo village. Go." Qhama got up.

Qhama: "Rather kill me."

Xolani: "Mthatheni." I quickly jumped and grabbed on Qhama pulling him away. "Thembisa!!!" He pulled me from him.

Me: "Qhama leave! Go!" Qhama jumped out the yard, running. "How could you do this?"

Xolani: "I'm not the villain here Thembisa. Get back in that house."

Me: "I HATE YOU." I spat on the ground, walking back to the house.

Mama: "So early in the morning. What is this commotion? Why is the community in my yard? Thembisa?"

Thembisa: "It's your husband Mama!! Not only did he make me break up with him, he's trying to kill a man in the yard all because he's here to protect me!" I cried.

Mama: "Yoh Xolani man!!!" He walked in.

Xolani: "I'm doing what's best for you!!"

Me: "What do you know about what's best for me?! I'm telling you that I love him!"

Xolani: "So did Nonkosi!!! She loved him too!! She was just like you Thembisa. The village's only hope!! He came there and took her from us, only to go and kill her!! And that was not enough, he came to kill every single one of us all because he didn't want to have to see the place he met her ever again." He cried. "My home. My mother, my father, my brothers Thembisa. My life. He took all of that from ME. And now he wants to take you? I can't... I can't let him take my baby." He broke down. My mother closed the door.

Mama: "I don't think anyone can speak any longer. Both of you are crying. I just woke up, ndingafuni. I think we must all rest and pick up later. Now the neighbors are here. Please." I went to my room, closing the door behind me.

A week went by. My family was quite literally ignoring each other. I wasn't speaking to my dad and he wasn't speaking to anyone else in the house. I only talked to mum and Nele and stayed in my room most times. I'd even neglected the goats and chickens but for that I felt really bad. I was due to go back to school tomorrow, and I didn't know what awaited me in Mountain Peak. I hadn't been able to speak to Nkosi for a week. At this point, he probably thinks I meant it. I packed my clothes in my bag. It was small but I needed something to do. After packing, I cleaned my small room. My father walked in, sitting on the bed. I still wasn't talking to him, he got what he wanted there's no reason to keep bothering me.

Xolani: "Thembisa." I looked at him. "Why don't you understand I'm trying to protect you? Your life?"

Me: "Why won't you let me make my own mistakes?"

Xolani: "How will you learn from a mistake if you're dead? This isn't a game."

Me: "Tata, I'm sorry about what happened to your friend but this has nothing to do with Nkosinhle. He is not his grandfather."

Xolani: "Nonkosi was not my friend Thembisa. She was an innocent young girl in our community who had a bright future ahead of her. We looked up to her. We had high hopes, as the village. She was not just beautiful, she was kind, helpful and caring. My older brother wanted to marry her, he tried to court her but she was so focused on her bright future. Until that king came along. What will you do with your life if you're with him Thembisa? Let's be ambitious and say, you get married and you live happily ever after. You'll what? Abandon your life while he keeps his just as is? Abandon your dreams and career, to nourish and enrich him? What will you do for yourself? You'll only be pouring into his cup and have nothing left." He sighed. "Thembisa mntanam, I'm only trying to protect you. You can do so much better."

Me: "What happened when you left the village?"

Xolani: "I ran to the nearest village. Mhlabomvu. I stayed only a few weeks before the community chased me away. Since I didn't grow up there and had no place to live, they assumed I came to steal. I was too afraid to tell them what had happened in case they reported me. I went from one village to the next. At times, sleeping in the streets of a town for months on end. I did this until I found a family that took me in. I stayed with them for a few years. When I was 20, I'd gotten a small job, saving a bit so I could build myself a shack. The daughter of the family that took me in, came home one day, crying. She had found that she was pregnant and blamed it on me. I'd never touched her in my life. The man that impregnated her was her school teacher and she was protecting him from being beaten to death, so the easiest target to get rid of was me. She accused me of forcing myself on her. At the time I was coming from work. The community had gathered in the home and soon as I came in, I was confronted and beaten. I escaped with my life. Again. I came here to Mthinomkhulu, I was meant to continue to cross into the next province to Bathonga Kingdom. I was hoping it would be

better there. Instead I ran out of money, so I built myself a hut in the woods here. Then I met your mother." I sighed. My father had quite a difficult life. Almost a decade of suffering. All because of one man. "When you were born, I promised I would protect you with everything in me. God knows if I knew you'd cross paths with that man, I'd have never allowed you to go to Mountain Peak."

Me: "You haven't even given him a chance."

Xolani: "At your life's expense? No. I would rather be dead than accept it." He got up, walking out.

## PRINCE POV\_

I'd finally found it. The house in my dream. I'd only described it to Mthunzi once and he found it almost instantly. Well, it took two days. The owner wasn't selling and so I had to offer double the value price. I had to have that house. Thankfully he accepted. But now I had my dream home, without my wife. I hadn't heard from her since last week Friday. After that call, I tried to calm myself down. Perhaps her father had forced her. Instead I got a message in response, telling me to leave her alone. It's been a dark week for me and I didn't want to think about this any longer. I woke up this Sunday morning in my house. The sale and transfer had been finalized on Wednesday, the owner moved out by Friday. I only had a bed placed in here. Being eNtabeni was painful. I didn't even want to see my family. I couldn't stand them honestly. Last week Saturday I had tried for Thembisa again. Qhama came back bleeding. It was then that I realized, there could be no getting through Thembisa's father. I covered my head again, hearing the front door open. Why was Mthunzi here with company? I don't want to talk or be talked to.

Mthunzi: "My Prince."

Nkosi: "Please get the fuck out. I told you I want to be alone."

Ama: "That's rude."

Nkosi: "You're the very last person I want near me, Amahle." She sat next to me.

Ama: "Ouch. Thank you Mthunzi." He walked away.

Nkosi: "What do you want Amahle?"

Ama: "I came to check on you."

Nkosi: "Really? You needed to come all the way here? I thought you could see the present and future."

Ama: "Nkosinhle." I sat up to look at her.

Nkosi: "You knew. Yet you kept quiet."

Ama: "Nkosi, I can't know everything. I told you I see different realities. In one she chooses you, over her family. In another, she chooses her father and regrets it. What was I supposed to do?"

Nkosi: "What do you mean she regrets it?"

Ama: "Exactly that. She regrets choosing her life without you."

Nkosi: "but I can't expect her to abandon her family."

Ama: "Then why are you angry at everyone?"

Nkosi: "Who must I be angry at Amahle? The grandfather I love, who is no longer alive but has happily left a trail of pain, and trauma for me to go through?" She sighed.

Ama: "What happened in the past was horrible but we can't change it now."

Nkosi: "Tell that to the man who had to watch his family burn."

Ama: "What do you want me to do Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "Amahle, I don't want to be without Thembisa."

Ama: "I know that."

Nkosi: "Please tell me. Tell me anything."

Ama: "You're going to have to be strong."

Nkosi: "Clearer."

Ama: "You will see Thembisa. Today." My heart moved back to its place. "Don't do it Nkosinhle. Don't repeat history. Please."

Nkosi: "They're not giving me much of a choice now, are they?"

Ama: "They're giving you plenty of choice. Just choose the right one. It will be safer for her."

Nkosi: "And what is the right choice."

Ama: "I'm not allowed to tell you that." She looked at my phone on the dresser. "So, how is anyone supposed to contact you if your phone is off?" I took my phone, switching it on. "Please. Don't."

Nkosi: "I'm not going to elope. I heard you Amahle." My hands were shaking, as I watched my phone switch on. In just a few minutes, my phone received a message. "I need to see you." I didn't know this number. No one knew my number except for my father, Mthunzi, Amahle and Thembisa. The message was only a few minutes old. I dialed the number.

"Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "Thembisa?"

Sasa: "Hey... Uhm can I please see you?"

Nkosi: "Yeah. Yes you can. I can send Qhama-"

Sasa: "No. I'm in Mountain Peak. We need to be careful here."

Nkosi: "Okay. Amahle will come to you."

Sasa: "Okay. See you soon." She hung up. I don't know what this meant. Her tone was very different. I looked at Amahle.

Ama: "Don't."

Nkosi: "I heard you the first time Amahle. Damn."

Ama: "Do you want to hear the two options?"

Nkosi: "Will they hurt?"

Ama: "Yes."

Nkosi: "Then no." She looked at her thin cold hands, fiddling them.

Ama: "She dies in both." My blood went cold.

Nkosi: "If she comes to see me today, it will seal her fate." She didn't respond. "Don't bring her here."

Ama: "But you said-"

Nkosi: "Tell her I've changed my mind. Amahle I will never forgive myself if she dies. It's fine. It's better she's away from me. Tell her, we can't be together."

Ama: "Nkosi-"

Nkosi: "Please leave." My voice was shaky in a way I've never heard it before.

Ama: "I'm sorry." She got up, walking out.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

## Chapter 43

### SASA POV\_

I unpacked my bag of clothes, repacking different clothes and other essentials as much as I could fit into it. I disconnected my system and packed it up along with my laptop. Since I was doing online lectures, I could quite literally do it from anywhere, hopefully eNtabeni. At least it has internet. As long as I'm next to him. I don't know what the future held but I know I couldn't let go of Nkosi. My father was hurt and I understand that but once he sees that Nkosi is different, he will give his blessings. I've packed and finished with everything. Petu came in. We hugged each other as if we hadn't seen each other in years. Since I couldn't contact anyone, she was probably worried about me.

Petu: "What happened to you."

Me: "My father confiscated my phone. Imagine."

Petu: "Oh no. Why?"

Me: "He doesn't approve of Nkosi. He wants me to stay away from him."

Petu: "What? That's insane. Does he not understand Nkosi His Highness is the future King? Who wouldn't want that for their daughter?"

Me: "My dad. It's a long story babe. Tell me what you got up to. I couldn't hear about your date. How did that go?" She quietly screamed.

Petu: "Giiiiirrl. So, he came to pick me up right? We went to Tempa because I wanted to be near Res. We had dinner, a nice conversation and then, he told me his brother actually sent the message for him."

Me: "Eww, Sibonelo?" She giggled.

Petu: "No. Zwe."

Me: "Right! And?"

Petu: "Then I told him I was skeptical at first. Whether it was him and whatever. The conversation moved to our expectations. I stated that I wasn't expecting any relationship, I know exactly why he called me."

Me: "Don't keep me in suspense."

Petu: "I told him, that I wanted to be touched softly, and the agreement was that it was only sex. Nothing more. Then we went to the apartment."

Me: "PETU!! You said that to him?"

Petu: "What was I supposed to do Sasa, I was starving. Have you seen that man?" We laughed.

Me: "And how was it?"

Petu: "Ohhhh." She fell on the bed. "So fucking perfect. I've never cum like that in my whole life." I giggled.

Me: "Friend.." I squealed excited for her.

Petu: "Yoh. I forget I'm speaking to a future queen here. But he was so amazing Sasa. That man can work his rod. No, he's very skilled there. But that's not the only thing. He's so gentle and sweet. He whispers kind sexy words in my ear. The way he looks at me? Yoh Thembisa, I have a fear I've caught feelings."

Me: "Ey Petu. I thought you said it's no strings attached?"

Petu: "Not when he calls me his beautiful flower. His gorgeous butterfly. I'm sorry, that sealed it for me. He just looks at my body and drools, like what the hell is that about?" She blushed.

Me: "I'm happy that you're enjoying yourself my friend." I needed to speak to Nothando ASAP. She and Mngobi need to tell Petu their arrangement and they need to do it soon. She's already catching feelings, this can only go south. I can't involve myself because I don't know if she already knows or what are the consequences of revealing an arrangement before its public announcement. They need to clarify.

Petu: "So, how was your few days with King Bae?" I smiled, looking at my bags.

Me: "Amazing. So amazing, I think it's time I moved out."

Petu: "THEMBISA. To the palace?"

Me: "Oh hell no." I laughed. "To his villa. I'll be more protected there anyways. I'll continue attending school online. I'll video call you everyday."

Petu: "My friend, this is big. I'm so happy!!" She hugged me.

Me: "Thank you babe. So you'll have Amahle and Nothando here with you. Is Zimmy back?"

Petu: "Uhm...no. She's been acting strange lately. She has withdrawn alot. Doesn't answer calls. Nothing."

Me: "That's unlike her at all. Maybe we should call her?"

Petu: "Okay, before you go."

Me: "Did you hang out with Nothando?"

Petu: "Alot, yeah. Between her and Mngqobi, I was very busy." Oh, this is bad.

Me: "How is she? Did she talk about herself? Her future plans? Prospects? Relationship?"

Petu: "She's Nothando. Barely speaks but this week was better. She did tell me a little about her home, Golden Crown. Even invited me to visit during the next holiday."

Me: "Petu!! That's huge! You're going to be living in a palace? Like a princess!"

Petu: "Imagine! Yoh. Anyway, she also said she's engaged to a prince. I wasn't expecting that. Nothando seems... different. I didn't think she liked people."

Me: "Right. It's probably a royal thing."

Petu: "No, the Biyela's are normal. They're very chilled."

Me: "Oh?"

Petu: "Yeah. So Friday, we were supposed to go to Sibonelo's house but I felt guilty leaving Nothando alone after we had planned an afternoon. So I chilled with her until she got tired of me and went to sleep at night. Mngqobi came to pick me up and we went to Sibonelo's house. There was Khaya, Sibonelo, Zwe and Zimmy."

Me: "Oh?"

Petu: "I wasn't comfortable with Sibonelo at first. I'm still not, actually. However, he wasn't weird or said anything out of line. In fact, Mngqobi says he has left you alone. You don't have to worry about it but I don't trust Sibonelo so keep your guard up still."

Me: "Petu, you're involved with Mngqobi. He's very close to his brother, you'll chill with him alot so don't feel guilty about that. I know you have my back."

Petu: "Okay babe. I just wanted you to know." The door opened. Amahle walked in. We both jumped up to hug her. I hadn't seen her in weeks. We only spoke on the phone.

Ama: "Hello."

Me: "Hey!"

Petu: "Oh my God, I missed you."

Ama: "I missed you too."

Me: "Can we chill a bit? Just to catch up. Where is Nothando?"

Ama: "On her way." She put her bag down. Why couldn't she look me in the eye?

Me: "Are you okay? You look upset?" She kept quiet. Nothando walked in.

Notha: "Hello."

Me: "Hi Notha."

Petu: "Hey babe."

Notha: "Can I talk to you?" She looked at Petu.

Petu: "Sure."

Notha: "Please Follow me." Finally, she'll be telling her the truth. Amahle closed the door after they walked out.

Me: "What's wrong?" She sat next to me.

Ama: "Nkosi really loves you. I know that because he would rather sacrifice his happiness for your life." Why was my heart beating this fast now?

Me: "What's going on Amahle?"

Ama: "He told me to tell you, he's changed his mind. He no longer wants to see you. He doesn't want to be with you."

Me: "Amahle you don't understand. I know how it may seem, I didn't want to break up with him but my father forced me. He took my phone and kept me in the house, I couldn't contact him. That's what I wanted to explain today."

Ama: "He knows. It's just safer for you to not be with him." My throat closed with the slowing of my heartbeat.

Me: "Amahle, I've packed my bags. To go be with him." I choked, the tears falling down my face. "We can be together, we can try. He can protect me. I know he can." I cried.

Ama: "I'm sorry." I was struggling to breath in dire need to hear her say she's joking but she wasn't. Nkosi's phone was not going through. It was over.

PETU POV\_

Notha took me to her room which was much bigger and she didn't share it. I expected that, since she's royal.

Petu: "So what's up?" I sat on the couch.

Notha: "How are you?" This was random.

Petu: "I'm fine. How are you?"

Notha: "Great. Was coming down with a flu a few days ago, had it checked so I'm fine. Drink?"

Petu: "No thank you." She sat in front of me with her glass of juice. "You wanted to talk?"

Notha: "No I don't."

Petu: "Sweetheart, that's what you said."

Notha: "I lied. Amahle needed to speak to Thembisa so she asked me to get you out the room."

Petu: "Why didn't you just say that? I would've given them space. I know there's a lot I'm not allowed to know since she's dating His Highness."

Notha: "Okay." She sipped her juice. "How's Mnqobi."

Petu: "He's fine. Spoke to him this morning."

Notha: "You guys are dating now?"

Petu: "No. Strictly just hooking up."

Notha: "But you talk everyday." She sipped her juice again. "Am I in an interview?"

Petu: "Yeah. We share some interests. Nothando, have you and Mnqobi had a thing? The first time I mentioned you're my friend, he kind of zoned out. He said no but something is off."

Notha: "We don't have a thing."

Petu: "Oh. Maybe I'm just imagining it."

Notha: "You told him we're friends?"

Petu: "Yes. Aren't we?"

Notha: "I suppose." She finished her juice. "Do you mind if I read?"

Petu: "No, knock yourself out." I took out my phone, going through socials. I had a cute mirror selfie that I wanted to post. It's been a while since I did, so I posted it, turning off my comments. I scrolled through some more then saw Mnqobi had posted a new photo about an hour ago. He looked so fiiiine. I obviously liked it immediately then got off socials.

Petu: "Love, do you have headphones?"

Notha: "First drawer." She was very focused on her book. "What was it about? She never puts that thing down. "Is this the same book you've been reading for a month?"

Notha: "No. This is the sixth."

Petu: "You read one book in less than a week?"

Notha: "Yes."

Petu: "Jesus. That's fast."

Notha: "It's too slow. Unfortunately I have school work to do so I can't get more time to read. I did finish two this holiday though. Not from this series however, I needed a change."

Petu: "So this is a series? Like many books of the same story?"

Notha: "Yes."

Petu: "What's it about? You seem so very interested in it?"

Notha: "It's the Game of Kings series. The book version, they're much better than the TV series."

Petu: "Oh. How many books is it?"

Notha: "10. This is the 6th."

Petu: "Wow. So what is the other ones, you said you needed a change?"

Notha: "More or less the same story from a different perspective. Like a spin off."

Petu: "Oh. I see." I took the headphones from the drawer and relaxed on the couch, leaving her to read her book. I received a message from Mnqobi: <hey beautiful. May I please take you out to dinner tonight?> I smiled, doing a little dance. I responded: <I'd love that. What time should I be ready?> I sent it, giggling.

Notha: "You okay?"

Petu: "Mnqobi asked me out to dinner."

Notha: "Thought it was just sex."

Petu: "I thought so too. I think he likes me but I don't want to get too ahead of myself."

Notha: "He definitely likes you." She turned her page, her eyes glued on the next page immediately.

Petu: "What should I wear?"

Notha: "You look good in a dress. In everything in fact so I doubt it'll matter."

Petu: "Do you think it's a good idea? That I'm spending this much time with him?"

Notha: "Why wouldn't it be?"

Petu: "Because you know... I'm starting to like him and we already said we won't be dating, it was strictly sex."

Notha: "Just ask him."

Petu: "I can't do that."

Notha: "Of course you can. If you're showing him your vagina you can ask him anything you want."

Petu: "I don't know Notha."

Notha: "Well, know is all I'm saying."

Petu: "I was the one who initiated sex with no strings. If I start asking about dating he'll think I tricked him."

Notha: "Any man who can be tricked by sex absolutely deserves it." I giggled.

Petu: "I think I'll just enjoy this for now."

Notha: "If you say so." ...

KHAYA POV\_

I enjoyed my Sundays lazying about by myself but with Zimmy going through her things, I had to give her space. School was starting again tomorrow. I was grateful for something to do, finally. Downstairs, Zwe and Sibonelo were having breakfast. Mngqobi came from the kitchen and sat down as well.

Khaya: "Morning brothers."

Sibo: "Where's your friend?"

Khaya: "At the apartment still and before any suspicions arise, she's going through a rough time. Her parents are getting divorced. So she needs some time out and alone."

Zwe: "That's good that you're offering your space to her."

Khaya: "Thank you Bhut Zwe."

Mngqobi: "You're going insane, aren't you?"

Khaya: "Because she's sleeping in my bed. Wearing my t-shirts. What does it mean?"

Mnqobi: "Means she's in loooooove."

Khaya: "Zimmy? Please. Don't be silly."

Zwe: "Is it because of Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "I didn't do anything wrong!"

Zwe: "Isn't she one of your...girls."

Sibo: "Absolutely not. We only hooked up once."

Zwe: "This is disturbing. That's why Khaya can't approach her."

Khaya: "Why would I approach her Bhut Zwe?"

Sibo: "Yoh Zwe. Can you leave me alone?"

Zwe: "No I can't. How must Khaya pursue anyone if you're after them?"

Sibo: "You can't be serious. I'm likely to marry someone he has fucked too, have you seen his history? He's been with the entire province."

Zwe: "That's obviously not true. You'll be marrying a virgin, aren't you?"

Sibo: "I'd rather eat glass. Can we drop this topic? Khaya, I'm not after your women. Zwe, please stop filling his mind with that theory because it's not true. However, Zim is not who I'm asking about."

Zwe: "Surprise surprise." He drank his coffee.

Khaya: "Who are you asking about Sbo?"

Sibo: "Sasa. Where is she?"

Khaya: "Probably at Res."

Sibo: "Is she still attending online learning?"

Zwe: "Why do you want to know?"

Sibo: "Khaya answer me."

Khaya: "I think so." He sighed. "What's wrong?"

Sibo: "Nothing. All sanctions around her have been lifted. She's no longer being watched."

Khaya: "What does that mean?"

Sibo: "Could be one of two things really."

Zwe: "Well?"

Sibo: "It's either the target is off her back. Or... Whoever is watching her got what they wanted and they're only waiting for opportunity. So... Advise her to be careful."

Zwe: "Opportunity to do what?"

Sibo: "Kill her obviously." He tossed a pork banger in his mouth.

Zwe: "That can't be right. How do you know this?"

Sibo: "You forgot I study assassination tactics and king orders for fun?"

Khaya: "W-who wants to kill her?"

Sibo: "That's what I can't figure out actually. It's been really bothering me for a while and a bit. My guess is a juggle between King Sikhosana, King Bathonga or King Nakhamula. Just that I don't get why King Sikhosana would want to kill her? The fact she's a commoner and loves his son doesn't give much reason. The way Mehluli is protecting her, I doubt he's even seen her. So I can't figure that out. However King Bathonga is very suspicious because he wants Mehluli to marry his daughter Samu. This will obviously benefit them greatly, why wouldn't he kill the obstacle? He's number 1 on my suspect list. Then Nakhamula's are just Nakhamuling. They've tried to dethrone before but failed. A very dumb bunch, I'm gonna just say that." He chuckled. I felt chills going through my whole body.

Zwe: "Have you asked your father?"

Sibo: "I tried but he's not letting up. You ask him." Thembisa's life was in danger still? How long would this go for?

Khaya: "I can't just stand by and watch her die Sbo. I can't. I have to do something."

Sibo: "Maybe you have an army I don't know about?"

Khaya: "I don't need an army to protect an innocent person!! Please."

Sibo: "Khaya, I know just as much as you do. Whoever this is CLEARLY didn't need permission to-" something clicked in his brain. I could see the light bulb moment on his face. "Oh my God. It's King Sikhosana. He's

the only King that doesn't need permission for an assassination." He gasped.

Zwe: "Why the hell would he want to kill her?"

Sibo: "That's the real juice. Why would King Sikhosana want to kill an innocent girl?" He sat back in his chair, thinking deeply. "She knows something."

Khaya: "Surely not."

Sibo: "Oh she does. She found something out about Sikhosana. Why else would he get rid of her? Oooh, this is good."

Zwe: "What are you going to do?" Sibonelo smiled.

Sibo: "I can offer her full protection, if and only if, she tells me what she found about them."

Zwe: "What full protection are you on about? You think Sikhosana will just let her go because she's got you on her side? Also she doesn't like you."

Sibo: "No but he can't afford to start a war with us. Mngqobi has his alliance with Phakamisa. We have the Nakhamula's on our side and the Mpondo's as well because remember they only have princesses, we have two bachelor Princes. Powerful ones, might I add. No one will support him. Also, it's not like he'll barge our palace guns blazing. Her life in exchange for their secret. Sounds like a fair trade to me."

Zwe: "And what if she knows nothing? What if it's another case of the cruel king? Remember the story we were taught about how his wife died? What if she was killed to neutralize him? To make him cruel? How are you going to protect this innocent girl Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "I know there's something. I just know they're hiding something and it's huge. I'd hate to think they're sacrificing these women for the throne but I honestly wouldn't be surprised." He whispered.

Khaya: "Sbo, we need solutions!!" He sighed.

Sibo: "How much do you know about ukuthwala?"

Zwe: "ABSOLUTELY NOT!! NO."

Sibo: "I'm out of suggestions. If any of you have another solution for getting her away from his firing line, safely, then maybe speak up."

Mnqobi: "Maybe we're jumping the gun here. Perhaps the sanctions were lifted because she no longer poses a threat to the throne?"

Sibo: "Would you rather be prepared for battle or hope your enemies just suddenly forget about you?" ...

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Chapter 44

One Week Later.

SASA POV\_

This week was probably the hardest in my life. It was one thing not being able to speak to him while I was in Mthinomkhulu but I had the hope I'd come here to Mountain Peak and make things right. I had the hope that we'd be together, live together and just shut everything else out. I haven't had the heart to unpack my things or attend school. I needed to get myself together. It was a Sunday. I needed a shower, my hair washed and set up my schooling system for tomorrow. I got out of bed. Amahle was awake as well.

Me: "Morning."

Ama: "Hello." I took my things to go shower. When I looked in the mirror, my eyes were fully swollen and red, I expected that. I looked horrible. Not that it mattered because no one would see me anyway. I took my shower, also washing my hair. I went to the bedroom to dress in leggings and a crop top. I changed my bedding, putting in clean sheets duvet and pillow. I bundled up my laundry and put it aside then placed my laptop and school system on my desk. I made a cup of coffee and sat in my desk checking my emails. I had a number of them including two from the HOD enquiring about my attendance. I'd missed a full week and no one could get hold of me. I didn't have an excuse but made something up. I'd received my assignments and I also had a test this

week but I had to attend unfortunately. I couldn't write it online. It was on Tuesday. I wrote down the date. I had to study starting from right now.

Ama: "Would you like to get something to eat?" I'd been living on one sandwich a day and been absolutely fine.

Me: "I don't feel like going out."

Ama: "Should I order something?"

Me: "Yes."

Ama: "Are you ready to see Petu and Notha?"

Me: "Sure." The embarrassment of being dumped felt like nothing compared to the heartbreak. I needed headache pills. My backpack was under my desk, I reached down checking for the bottle of pain killers. I took two and continued to sort through my work.

Ama: "Sasa."

Me: "Amahle."

Ama: "I'm sorry."

Me: "It's fine Amahle. I'm moving on." My phone rang. The caller ID showed my father. I answered.

Me: "Hello."

Xolani: "Hello Thembisa. How are you?"

Me: "I'm fine Tata."

Xolani: "Okay. You're still upset?"

Me: "I'm trying to study I have a test on Tuesday Tata."

Xolani: "I never wanted this to happen to us."

Me: "Well it did Tata. I chose you. Unfortunately, that is something that has really hurt me beyond belief. I can't just be okay. I'm going to need my space now."

Xolani: "Okay. I'm sorry."

Me: "Goodbye Tata." I hung up.

Ama: "You shouldn't be so hard on him."

Me: "Amahle, I'm trying. I'm trying the best I can to process the pain I'm in, I cannot for the life of me accommodate other people's feelings and trauma. He had a variety of options of how and when to talk to me about what he went through instead, he chose to hurt me. Violently. I can't. No."

Ama: "I understand." My phone rang again and I was about to switch it off before realising it's Khaya.

Me: "Hello."

Khaya: "Finally. I've been calling all week. Why aren't you taking my calls? Are you with him?" He whispered.

Me: "Why are you whispering? No I'm not with him."

Khaya: "I need to speak to you. You can't come out of Res. Not anytime soon." He whispered.

Me: "Khaya, I can hardly hear you."

Khaya: "I'm saying, don't go outside. I can't text. I don't know how to speak to you. Thembisa, apparently the people who were watching you, no longer are."

Me: "Okay?" That's a good thing. I suppose.

Khaya: "Right, which means your life may be in danger. Sibonelo suspects that King Sikhosana might be trying to kill you. Just like ..." He kept quiet for a bit. "Like his mother. The cruel King's wife. He thinks you know a secret about them which is why he's trying to kill you."

Me: "He thinks I'm in danger because I'm not being watched any longer?"

Khaya: "Yes."

Me: "Tell him he's wrong. The sanctions were put down because I broke up with Nkosinhle. No one will be trying to hurt me anymore."

Khaya: "Oh."

Me: "Yeah. I have to go Khaya. I've got a ton of work to get through."

Khaya: "Okay. We'll talk later?"

Me: "Sure. And thank you Khaya, for looking out for me. Goodbye."

Khaya: "You're welcome, bye." I hung up.

Ama: "He's a good friend to have."

Me: "Indeed."

Ama: "But he's right. You still have to be careful Thembisa. The sanctions are lifted but my father still doesn't want you here."

Me: "If you can, please tell him to leave me alone. Honestly, I'm going through enough he got what he wanted. Everyone has gotten what they wanted. Everyone except me. So please, can they continue to celebrate without tormenting me any further? That's all I ask." I put on my headphones and started my new assignment.

KHAYA'S POV \_

It was midday, Sunday. I was still in bed, processing what Thembisa had said. She broke up with Sikhosana. I was relieved for the most part but probably more than happy. She didn't sound too good on the phone but I don't want to overwhelm her yet. For now I can just be a supportive friend. I got out of bed finally, showering and getting dressed. Going back to my apartment was not an option yet. I was enjoying the pampering of the palace and also, I don't know if I have the capacity to deal with Zimmy's moods. I get she's going through a tough time but why is she hostile to me? I went downstairs. Sibonelo was laying on the couch watching the news. He was hardly ever in his house, only slept there when we visited. Zwe was probably in his own house but I needed to speak to him too.

Khaya: "Hi brother. Where's Bhut Zwe?"

Sibo: "I'm fine thanks, how are you?"

Khaya: "I'm okay."

Sibo: "Zwelethu is in his house. What do you need?"

Khaya: "Oh. Can I go over there? I want to talk to him."

Sibo: "I'm right here." I stared at him. He smiled. "I give good advice. I work with my father."

Khaya: "Fine. I called Thembisa today. She's broken up with Mehluli." He looked surprised.

Sibo: "Is that so?"

Khaya: "Hm. Mntqobi said Petu has been upset because she knows something is wrong but Amahle won't let her know what. Thembisa was just in bed all week. I guess this is the reason."

Sibo: "And he's also gone AWOL. Interesting. And Petu saw Thembisa in her bed?"

Khaya: "Yes. She said she shut everyone out. Maybe that's why the sanctions were lifted?"

Sibo: "Probably. Good for her." He looked back at the TV.

Khaya: "So...I wanted to know what is the best way I could support her?"

Sibo: "You want her, don't you?" He chuckled. "This is your chance my little prince. Get your woman before Sikhosana changes his mind."

Khaya: "Yes but how?"

Sibo: "Haibo Khaya. You can see I'm as single as you are, how am I supposed to know? Ask Zwe."

Khaya: "You told me you could advise."

Sibo: "I lied, I'm bored. I wanted to know what's got you so jittery. It doesn't interest me one bit, so go ahead and go talk to him rather."

Khaya: "Fine, are you coming?"

Sibo: "I'm extremely busy." Fortunately Zwe walked in. Oh yes, it was Sunday. "Khaya has girl problems again."

Zwe: "I've barely sat down. Hello Khaya." King Biyela and his wife came down the stairs.

Queen: "My boys. Good afternoon." We greeted them both.

King Biyela: "Where is Mntqobi?"

Khaya: "Uhm..."

Sibo: "Went to the restaurant to pick up the Leads documents." I can't lie to a king. I couldn't even try.

King Biyela: "Khaya, where is Mntqobi?"

Khaya: "he went on a date."

King: "See Sibonelo? Very easy to be my son."

Sibo: "Is this still about yesterday?"

King: "Obviously it's about yesterday."

Zwe: "What happened yesterday?"

Sibo: "There's no need for that Tata. Let it go."

King: "I found your brother in my bed, deep under the covers cuddling my wife."

Sibo: "She is MY mother."

King: "And that's still my bed. You're grown. Where's your own wife Sibonelo?"

Queen: "Please leave my son alone. He's allowed to come to me when he's having troubles."

King: "Troubles? He's 29. He shouldn't be in my bed with his troubles. Khaya, how are you doing my boy?"

Khaya: "I'm fine Tata. Thank you for asking. How are you?"

King: "Great." He stared at Sibonelo.

Sibo: "Please get over it Tata."

King: "The day I find you a wife."

Sibo: "I'm scared. Khaya, here's Zwe. He can help you with your girl problems."

Khaya: "Sbo! It's not problems. Just needing advice."

Queen: "Oh sweetie. Don't be shy. Who is she?"

Khaya: "She's no one Ma. It's okay." Why put me on the spot like this?

King: "Obviously she's someone if you need a whole Zwe for advice. Come on now. We have a minute." They sat down. Sibonelo was chuckling happily. He did this on purpose, throwing me under the bus like that so they forget about him. It's always been like this. When he's trying to get out of something he shifts their attention to Mngqobi or me.

Khaya: "She's just a girl I was introduced to and I like her. She's just going through a break up right now, so... I don't want to be too much."

King: "Or a rebound. You don't want to be a rebound. Trust me."

Queen: "Trust you from where because you've only ever been with me?"

King: "I remember from the movie, my love. Remember?"

Queen: "Khaya, please be there for this girl. Perhaps what she needs is a sweet young man like you near her. You're not rebound material baby. I raised you. Come, my King, we have a reservation."

Sibo: "What reservation?"

Queen: "Your father is taking me out to Greenlands. We're having our Sunday lunch there so you boys are on your own for the afternoon and evening."

King Biyela: "Find a wife." He held his wife's hand walking out.

Zwe: "Okay, I'm going out. Can I trust you not to corrupt Khaya?"

Sibo: "What do I ever do right in this house?"

Zwe: "Ask yourself that question. I'm out." He walked out as well.

Sibo: "Wanna smoke?"

Khaya: "He literally just walked out. Yes."

After a smoke session with Sibho, we went to Amelia's for food. They served the best seafood in the nation and this isn't an exaggeration. We got a table and ordered our food. I still wasn't drinking so I opted for juice. The high was nicely coming down.

Sibo: "How's the proposal coming along?"

Khaya: "What proposal?" He stared at me. "I'm kidding." I laughed. "We finished it yesterday. I just need to get a meeting with Prince Sikhosana."

Sibo: "Maybe you can ask his advisor." He nodded at the door. Mthunzi had just walked in, going straight to the bar counter to speak to the manager.

Khaya: "Right now?"

Sibo: "Go ahead, I'm watching you." I was suddenly nervous but I got up and marched over to Mthunzi. I can do this.

Khaya: "Sir Mthunzi." He looked at me, up and down then back up again.

Mthunzi: "Given up already?"

Khaya: "Excuse me?"

Mthunzi: "Aren't you supposed to be that one's advisor?"

Khaya: "I am." He chuckled.

Mthunzi: "And what will you advise, in sneakers?" He looked at my shoes.

Khaya: "These are Dolce and Gabanna."

Mthunzi: "Oh that makes it 10 times worse. Luxury doesn't make up for class. What do you want?" What the hell does this have to do with my clothes? Just because he locks himself in suits and armour doesn't mean we all aspire for that struggle.

Khaya: "I'd like to have a meeting with Prince Sikhosana. I have a business proposal he will be interested in hearing."

Mthunzi: "You can email the royal speaker to add you on the agenda for the board."

Khaya: "That will take months."

Mthunzi: "What, did you think it would take 20 minutes because you're wearing Dolce and Gabanna?"

Khaya: "What is your problem with me? You and I are the sam-"

Mthunzi: "We're no where near the same. I'm not an assistant, a lap dog or a pet. I'm the right hand man to a Future king. You can play business mogul with your little friends."

Khaya: "Is that why you're fetching his food? Listen here I'm going to have a meeting with him, whether you like it or not. He will listen to me. He will hear this proposal."

Mthunzi: "Oh really Khaya? You think you can go above me and get to him? I dare you to try. This won't even require me to lift a finger." He chuckled, taking the paper bag from Len. "Focus on school. You have a good gig coming up with your dad's company when you graduate. Don't fuck it up." He walked out. I'll be damned if I have to work for my father. Sikhosana is going to see me. I'll find a way.

NKOSI'S POV\_

I stood in my backyard staring at the stretches of land, filled with trees. All of it belong to me now, having transferred it from my family to fully mine and mine alone. My father or anyone else had no access to this area of land. It was probably the only place on earth he was restricted from. Mthunzi's car parked out front, I heard him get out and walk in the house. I walked back in, meeting him inside. He held a bag from Amelia's in his hand. My heart suddenly ached.

Mthunzi: "Thought you'd need some comfort food."

Nkosi: "Thanks."

Mthunzi: "How are you doing?"

Nkosi: "Fine I suppose. Just came back from a run."

Mthunzi: "Do you want some company?"

Nkosi: "Yes please."

Mthunzi: "I'll dish up for us." He went to the kitchen. The house was still bare. I didn't want any furniture in here, it didn't make a difference because it's not like I was living anyway. I went to take a shower, then dressed in tracksuit bottoms, walking bare foot to the kitchen. He gave me a glass of whiskey which I gulped down instantly. "Do you want to talk?"

Nkosi: "No."

Mthunzi: "Can I talk?"

Nkosi: "Yes." I sat on the barstool, my elbows resting on the island as I picked on my food.

Mthunzi: "The sanctions were lifted a week ago. I've been watching the environment around her. All seems well so far. She's still doing online learning, she hasn't left her room all week. She does however have a test on Tuesday. I'll have security up, looking after her through out the day."

Nkosi: "You think she's still in danger?"

Mthunzi: "I'm not sure but I'm suspicious. The sanctions just disappeared. It was sudden and with no explanation. Until I understand why, I'll continue protecting her."

Nkosi: "Have you asked?"

Mthunzi: "Yeah. Nobody knows either. Nobody except your father. He's worried about your absence."

Nkosi: "I'll probably be home tomorrow. The next royal council meeting is in a few days. The other families will start arriving from tomorrow."

Mthunzi: "Only Bathonga will be living with your family. The Nakhamula's, Phakamisa's, Mpondo's and Mufhuwalo's have houses reserved in Stellar with The Biyela's."

Nkosi: "Ok."

Mthunzi: "Someone came up to me today."

Nkosi: "Hm."

Mthunzi: "Khaya Solinga. He wants a meeting with you."

Nkosi: "Not in the mood."

Mthunzi: "I think you need to hear him out. The boy might be young but he's been working for his father for a bit. If he branches out on his own, it might be worth looking into. You need more allies near you. Ones that aren't influenced by royal decisions."

Nkosi: "He's basically a Biyela."

Mthunzi: "And that's well and good but you're a Sikhosana. Get him on your side."

Nkosi: "Not now."

Mthunzi: "Okay." We sat in silence while I stirred in my thoughts. I took my phone going through my gallery to look for the picture she once sent me. What the hell was this now? I clicked on the album, chuckling the tears out my eyes. There she was, her beautiful face all over my phone. She clearly stole my phone at some point and took pictures of herself and short videos making funny faces. The lump in my throat kept bobbing back up no matter how much I held my emotions. I switched off my phone.

Nkosi: "Please give me some work to do, Mthunzi." ...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

## Chapter 45

### SASA POV\_

It's been a very long day. I'd spent all of it doing my assignment, pouring all my energy into it. I had a bit to eat at least since Petu had come to visit. All my friends were trying and I too was, to be honest but I couldn't just forget. Petu had just left now. Amahle went with Nothando to her room. I'd asked for a bit of space. I wanted to clear my space and pray then sleep. I lit up a white candle, kneeling before it.

Me: "Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders. Let me walk upon the waters. Wherever you would call me. Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander. And my faith would be made stronger. In the presence of my saviour." I closed my eyes, singing. I opened my palms in a receiving motion. "Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders. Let me walk upon the waters. Wherever you would call me." A crackling of thunder hit the sky. My heart felt so heavy at this moment but I had to keep going. "Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander. And my faith would be made stronger. In the presence of my saviour." A tear rolled down my face, falling to the ground. "Please help heal my heart. Show me any guidance, path. I know you're somewhere out there. I know you can hear my heart bleeding. What am I supposed to do? Lift me to where the spirits are so they can show me where to go." My hands were shaking and I was freezing. The candle switched off. I opened my eyes looking around. No one was in the room but the cold was frightening. I got in my bed, under my blankets, closing my eyes. I can't believe I can't even pray properly. The rain poured outside hushing me to sleep.

I opened my eyes, waking up to a warmth I didn't expect. I stretched my body and tried getting out of bed but I struggled. It was dark in the room and my eyes starting to adjust to the darkness. I touched my belly. It was hard and swollen.

Me: "Amahle." I looked around. Where was I? This was not my room. I got up, looking at my stomach again. "AMAHLE!!" Why was it big? The

door opened. I looked around the room, this was definitely not my room. Nkosi walked in.

Nkosi: "Love. What's wrong?"

Me: "Nkosi? Why are you... Where am I?" His face softened into a smile.

Nkosi: "Pregnancy brain has got you once again." He kissed my lips then my belly. "I told you I'd get us away from that place. We're free."

Me: "I'm pregnant? We haven't..."

Nkosi: "Come, get in bed. I'll warm up some milk and rub your feet." I got in bed again. He walked out the room. What the hell was going on? I touched my belly again. Pregnant? How did this happen? He walked back in with milk, giving it to me.

Me: "We escaped Mountain Peak?"

Nkosi: "Yes. The only thing important now is our family." He held my stomach. "We're having a son."

Me: "Sizwengaye." He laughed.

Nkosi: "The spoilt one. I can imagine him knowing ukuthi Sizwengaye vele. He's the reason, we had to get out of there. He deserves normalcy. A life. What's wrong love?"

Me: "Nothing baby."

Nkosi: "Baby? You usually call me Baba. The baby is in your stomach Nonkosi, I'm grown." I chuckled. "I promise I'll protect you with all I have. I love you so much. I am nothing without you My Queen." He kissed my belly. "And of course my Prince." ...

Life had become easier. I woke up to breakfast every morning. Foot rubs after eating and a short walk were a routine. We walked back to the house.

Me: "I'm almost close to birth."

Nkosi: "Yes my love. Less than a month away. There's a midwife who has agreed to help us."

Me: "How long have we been here?"

Nkosi: "Five months now."

Me: "Where are we?"

Nkosi: "In the North East of our kingdom. The forgotten lands. This is Bakhoyo village. They're a little closed off from the world so no one here knows who I am."

Me: "They will Nkosi. They'll find us."

Nkosi: "Don't worry my love, they won't." We entered our little home. "Let me make you some tea before you nap." He bent to my face to kiss me but I turned away quickly. He chuckled. "And now?"

This was embarrassing. Thankfully, he left me alone. I sat on the bed, anticipating a knock down of the door at any second. He walked in the room.

Nkosi: "You look a little down. What's wrong?" I wasn't sure why I was here. It's not like I could reverse the past or change it. Why was it being shown to me then? This was confusing.

Me: "I'm not sure. Is your name Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "That's what you call me, yes."

Me: "What is your name?" A loud knock hit the front door. I looked into his eyes. A mixture of confusion, hurt and anger was in them. A cold swept over my body, I jumped up gasping. The lights were on. I was back in Res, my room, my bed. I stared at Amahle, then touched my belly. Flat again. An overwhelming feeling of hurt hit immediately. She looked at me. Did I just visit the past?

Amahle stood there watching me. I drank a glass of water, putting on a warmer gown.

Ama: "Are you okay?"

Me: "I'm fine. What time is it?"

Ama: "it's 5am."

Me: "That's impossible. I just fell asleep." I checked my phone." It was indeed 5am Monday morning.

Ama: "You were struggling to breath in your sleep."

Me: "It was a very strange dream Amahle. I dreamt I was...your grandmother."

Ama: "What do you mean?"

Me: "I was pregnant. Nkosi and I had escaped Mountain Peak together, living in a remote village. I called my baby Sizwengaye, I don't know where that came from. Nkosi called me Nonkosi. That is your grandmother's name, isn't it?"

Ama: "Yes."

Me: "That's why your grandfather named your brother Nkosinhle, in honour of his Late wife. He named his son Sizwengaye because that's the name his late wife chose. Apparently, he's the reason they escaped. To give him a normal life." She stared at me quietly. "I felt it all. The life inside me. Nkosi's- King Ngidumise's love. All of it. He really loved her."

Ama: "What were you doing before you fell asleep?"

Me: "I lit a candle and prayed then I felt cold so I got in bed to sleep."

Ama: "This is strange. I never would've thought you'd be able to visit the past."

Me: "But I can't change it Amahle."

Ama: "Obviously not, no. But there's something in it you need to take note of. Something that is still prevalent in the present we're in. Something wasn't complete."

Me: "Will I be able to do it again?"

Ama: "I hope so." ...

PRINCE POV\_

Monday morning. I didn't wish to see people least of all my family but unfortunately I didn't have a choice. This royal council meeting needed an agenda to go through and the other families were coming. They didn't need to witness this tension between my father and I. After being dressed, I made my way out the empty house. My guards were waiting outside. The weather was clearing up. Last night's storm was quite bad but it was a new day. I got in the car and we left for the palace. Mthunzi

was ahead already. My house was located on the outer skirts of the city but not near the place. No where near it. It took almost 50 minutes getting to it. I sighed as we parked, getting out the car. I walked in the palace, my family was having breakfast in the dining room. My father looked at me.

Nkosi: "Morning."

Sikhosana: "Son. You're finally home."

Nkosi: "Council preparations start tomorrow so I didn't have a choice."

Sikhosana: "Please have a seat." I sat down, refusing breakfast.

Nolwazi: "Mehluli, it's not good for you to be alone. Look at how you're losing weight."

Nkosi: "I'm fine."

Sikhosana: "Well, the Bathonga's will be arriving tonight. Can I expect you here to greet them?"

Nkosi: "I have a lot of work to get done."

Sikhosana: "That can wait."

Nkosi: "It actually can't. Father, I thought I made it clear that I'm not interested. What about that don't you understand?"

Sikhosana: "If you're still thinking about that common witch-"

Nkosi: "Oh shut the fuck up. You know it's not about Thembisa!!! You wanted her out of my life and now she is but don't think about forcing women down my throat because I will be violent. You got what you wanted. You want to protect the damn throne, you want me to be king? Get Bathonga away from me." He stared at me, stunned.

Nkwenkwezi: "That would've earned me a slap."

Nkosi: "Speak again and see if it won't." I got up, walking up to my office. Mthunzi was in my desk, going through paperwork.

Mthunzi: "Hey."

Nkosi: "I hate being here."

Mthunzi: "At least your meeting is soon, then you need to be in the city for the rest of the day."

Nkosi: "What's in the city?"

Mthunzi: "Mpendulo has some paper work for you regarding the community center in Mthinomkhulu."

Nkosi: "Fine."

Mthunzi: "Amahle was asking about you."

Nkosi: "Ok."

Mthunzi: "We're all worried Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I'm fine. As you can see, I'm alive and well." His phone rang. I sat in my seat, taking a stress ball out of my drawer.

Mthunzi: "It's a Biyela landline."

Nkosi: "What would Biyela want from you?"

Mthunzi: "Boggles my mind." He answered the call. "Mthunzi Mwelase."

Caller: "Hi there, General Mwelase. You're speaking to Zwe."

Mthunzi: "Prince Biyela. What can I do for you?"

Zwe: "I'd like to request a meeting with Prince Sikhosana at his earliest convenience."

Mthunzi: "I am not his assistant."

Zwe: "Can I have his assistant's number?"

Mthunzi: "You can contact the royal speak-"

Zwe: "No. You work closely with him. Just tell him I want to speak to him."

Mthunzi: "Prince Sikhosana is not available and won't be for a while."

Zwe: "The royal council is coming up in a few days. As the heirs of our families, I think it would be beneficial if he and I were to have our own meeting. After all, as future kings, he will need me by his side. So. If he may please avail himself. Thanks." He hung up.

Mthunzi: "This is obviously about that Solinga boy."

Nkosi: "Why do you think that?"

Mthunzi: "Zwe wouldn't insist this much on meeting with you. We invited him on a royal visit a few weeks back and he declined claiming to be busy. Suddenly he wants to meet you?"

Nkosi: "Clear a time for later today then. Let's hear this proposal if it gets them off my back."

The meeting with my father was very sour. He was pissed off at me and I didn't care really. The second we adjourned, I was on my feet marching out of his house. Mthunzi and I left for the city.

Mthunzi: "Zwe confirmed for 3pm today."

Nkosi: "Ok." I looked out the window watching the world pass me by.

Mthunzi: "Do you think we should shop for some furniture sometime?"

Nkosi: "No."

Mthunzi: "The house needs life Nkosi."

Nkosi: "It's fine as is. I'm not expecting company."

Mthunzi: "Is there anything I can do for you?"

Nkosi: "No." I sighed. "There's nothing anyone can do for me." ...

The meeting with Mpendulo was quite thorough. We had gone through all the legal documents of the construction and development. I didn't want to be outside in a restaurant or anywhere. The new Res is the only place that still had my office set up so that's where I'd meet Zwe.

Mthunzi and I made our way over there.

Mthunzi: "He's on his way." We entered the building.

Nkosi: "Ok." I entered the office, sitting on a couch, going through my phone. I don't know how many times I went through this album but I knew which photo came up next everytime. I knew which video she would smile in and which one she would make a funny face.

Mthunzi: "Got you some water." He gave me a bottle.

Nkosi: "Thanks." I drank the water.

Mthunzi: "This is the last meeting. Do you want to go to Amelia's for a drink after?"

Nkosi: "No."

Mthunzi: "Okay, should I order something for when you get home?"

Nkosi: "Hm." He nodded, walking out the door. In a few minutes, I could sense Zwelethu's aura coming closer. His heart beat. His thoughts. He was just as nervous as I was. We hadn't been in the same room alone for years. I don't even know what to say. He walked in the office.

Zwe: "Your Highness."

Nkosi: "Prince Biyela." I leaned back on the couch. He sat on the one opposite me.

Zwe: "Hope you're doing well."

Nkosi: "I suppose."

Zwe: "I don't want to waste your time. You know I wouldn't just come up to you without a valid reason. My younger brothers have a proposal you'd be interested in. Since your meetings in Mthinomkhulu village, they've been studying your projects and have an idea that would greatly benefit the village and of course build their profile whilst working with you." Part of me was relieved he wanted to speak about business and not our lost friendship.

Nkosi: "I have a few minutes to spare. I'd like to hear what they have to say." ...

## KHAYA'S POV\_

I sat outside the office, nervous as hell. Mthunzi was his usual self, standing by the door, hands in his pockets.

Mthunzi: "Do you want a glass of water?" I shook my head. Last thing I needed was a full bladder. I looked through my work once again. Mngqobi couldn't attend this meeting with me because he had another one with his father at Bi-motive. As much as he was my partner, we'd agreed that I'd hold majority shares in this consulting company and I'd be more

hands on. So I had to do this myself. Mthunzi stared at me. He was making things worse. I looked back at him.

Mthunzi: "Time to go in. Relax, he doesn't bite." He opened the door. I walked in the office. At least Zwe was here.

Khaya: "Good Day, Your Highness." As I had anticipated, he didn't respond. So far, we're doing great. This is how I'd practiced. "I'd like to introduce to you my consulting company. Seeing that you'll be building in Mthinomkhulu village, I expect your company will be doing the construction. I'd like to be involved by installing the electricity in the community center as a start. I have two highly qualified electricians who would be teaching the process to members of the Mthinomkhulu village. During that time, the members will gain knowledge and experience working on such, further being able to start their own businesses. I have spoken to the department of higher education and training, the department head is currently in the process of drafting a learning plan. Once that is complete, my two electricians will go through that training and by their competency will be able to teach that course to the village. Upon completion of this course which will include theory learning as well as practicals, they will receive certification. I am presenting this to you, hoping that you understand the vision I'm putting forward. As you will be sourcing electric installation from me and I producing it in the form of skill and labour, you will be paying me in order for me to pay them, the labourers. If you may receive the documents Your Highness." I knelt on the floor, placing the documents on the carpet then sat back up. Zwe taught me that, I'm not allowed to hand Mehluli anything hand to hand unless he asks for it. He took the documents, looking through them. For the first time, I properly looked at him. He looked exhausted and seemingly losing weight. Perhaps breaking up with Thembisa was also taking a toll on him. Now I feel bad but this isn't the time. I have to focus.

Nkosi: "Have you done this before?" This is the tricky part. I haven't. I don't have the experience or the knowledge of what the hell I'm doing but mentioning my involvement with my father's law firm will look braggish and privileged. I had to find a way of swaying past that.

Khaya: "No Your Highness, I haven't done this sort of work before. I have limited experience in legalisation of this type of company only. However, I have gone through the-

Nkosi: "I don't care about what you've gone through. I care about the safety of the innocent people who will be exposed to electricity without prior experience. From someone who's a third year law student." He looked at me. My body shivered. His eyes were scary as hell.

Khaya: "I- The uhm, the electricians I have on standby are highly qualified professionals Your Highness. Their competency however will not be determined by me, only the board and department can pass them and give certification to let us proceed. I will not put anyone's life in danger."

Nkosi: "Okay." He put the papers aside. What did that mean? What was okay? "I want to know every step. Once the department finalized the course, we'll go through it so I can understand what it entails and if it will be enough. I want to interview the two electricians and once I'm sure all of this is above board and without influence, we can proceed."

Khaya: "So... This means you're...saying yes?"

Nkosi: "Yes." I wanted to fucking scream and hug him but I opted for a nod and a thank you. This would be the beginning. I cannot and will not let him or myself down. On top of that, my father will be pissed to know I did something successfully without his help. It made this deal much sweeter. He would have no hold over my life again. However, there was a whole different problem now. How would I pursue the woman my boss was in love with? I had to make a choice. A possible future with Thembisa, possible being slightly faint. Or a successful future without her as my wife but just as a friend to respect my boss. I had to decide.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 46

PRINCE POV\_

The meeting with Khaya and Zwe was done. I was happy with this proposal, mostly because of its benefit to not only grow himself as a

businessman but to offer an essential skill to others. Mthunzi's assistant served us a bottle of whiskey.

Khaya: "I'll have to kindly decline, thank you. I don't drink alcohol." I could've sworn I've seen him acting a fool at a night club.

Nkosi: "Juice fine?"

Khaya: "Yes please." I nodded at the assistant and she hurried out.

Nkosi: "What are the basic requirements of enrollment on this program once it's approved Khaya?"

Khaya: "I wanted it to be Grade 10 at minimum."

Nkosi: "You do realize that most people in the village are uneducated?"

Khaya: "Yes Your Highness, I understand that. In the same breath I think the basic requirement plays a pivotal role in determining whether the said person can understand instruction and implement it into work." The assistant brought his juice.

Nkosi: "A person with a grade 8 cannot understand instruction?" I watched him sweat. I understood what he was saying I just needed him to come to the realisation of something else that he can do. Khaya was smart, it shouldn't take him long.

Khaya: "They can. In the prospect of theory. It will be rather safer to introduce a practical to someone with higher learning."

Nkosi: "So what do we do about the ones who don't have it?"

Khaya: "I can speak to the department head to see what they can offer. Perhaps another program apart from this project that offers education to those who need higher learning. Maybe their skill isn't in office, perhaps in trade but in order to achieve that, they need to learn more basic theory and understanding." There you go.

Nkosi: "Good. I'd love to see how that pans out. Keep me updated, Khaya. Once this works for the one village, we're spreading it across the province then the nation. I hope you have the ability and capacity to handle that."

Khaya: "I do, Your Highness." He finished his juice. "Thank you once again for this opportunity Your Highness. I won't disappoint you."

Nkosi: "Shouldn't be worried about me, be worried about the learners you'll be helping. A lot of them will be decades older than you." He nodded.

Khaya: "Yes sir. I should be on my way, Your Highness. Thank you again for your time. Thank you Bhut Zwe." Zwe nodded at him. Khaya left the office. I drank my shot of whiskey.

Zwe: "Thanks."

Nkosi: "For what?"

Zwe: "Allowing my brother to present to you. I know you're probably very busy."

Nkosi: "With the royal council coming up, yes."

Zwe: "Do you have any new business coming up?"

Nkosi: "No. All my business ventures are already public."

Zwe: "It's good things too. What you do for the villages." I looked at him.

Nkosi: "Thanks."

Zwe: "I should get going before the hospital runs to to the ground." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "How's that going?" Zwe had always wanted to be a doctor. I had no doubt he was a great one too. At least some of us got the opportunity to watch our dreams come true.

Zwe: "It has its days where it's really rewarding but a lot of the time, it's draining. It's nowhere close to what we used to talk about." I managed a small grin.

Nkosi: "Good old days."

Zwe: "At least you're closer to your dreams too. Here you are developing the nation one village at a time. Remember you said you wanted to build schools? You've got an entire university and residences now."

Nkosi: "Yeah. That's true. Forgot about that."

Zwe: "Do you still climb?"

Nkosi: "Yeah." I chuckled.

Zwe: "That's good. Trees make you happy. For a bit."

Nkosi: "Until I fall."

Zwe: "Yet you still climb higher, Nkosi. No matter how hard you fall, you never give up. You keep going up. You keep surpassing your own record. That's a good quality. Whatever you're going through, you'll come up much stronger." He stood up. "It was good seeing you again."

Nkosi: "You too Zwe." He walked out.

KHAYA'S POV \_

My ears were ringing in excitement. I can't believe how smoothly that went. Mngqobi was probably still in his meeting. I wanted to share my good news. I parked my car, going upstairs dialing Thembisa's number. She answered.

Sasa: "Kay."

Khaya: "Hey you. I have exciting news."

Sasa: "Please do share. I could do with some excitement." It was at this moment I hesitated. Maybe mentioning his name won't be a good idea? I didn't want to hurt her.

Sasa: "Khaya?"

Khaya: "Uhm.. okay. I was still contemplating in my head if I should tell you but you're my friend and I'm excited. I met with Mehluli. I had an idea to start off my consulting company. He accepted."

Sasa: "That's amazing Khaya. I'm happy for you. What does your company do?"

Khaya: "Well, I'm starting with providing a skill to the community of Mthinomkhulu village. Since he'll be building the community center there, they'll need electricity. I'll hire two electricians to teach members of the village so they can install their own electricity and when something needs fixing they can do it themselves. I'm sorry I'm speaking all over the place, I'm just so excited." She giggled.

Sasa: "This sounds really great. Congratulations Kay."

Khaya: "Thank you." I sighed. "How are you?"

Sasa: "I'm fine. How are you?"

Khaya: "I'm great. Have you spoken to Zimmy?"

Sasa: "No. I haven't spoken to anyone really."

Khaya: "If you ever need someone to talk to, I'm here okay?"

Sasa: "Really Khaya? I know how you feel about me, remember?"

Khaya: "Right... That hasn't changed but I can't cross the line now Thembisa. He's not doing okay either and he's my boss now."

Sasa: "So that means you're no longer pursuing me?"

Khaya: "Yes. Maybe it's good that we remain friends."

Sasa: "Thank you Khaya."

Khaya: "Uhm.." I looked around the passageway. "Thembisa, alot is happening regarding the royals right now. I know you don't like Sibonelo and honestly, you are justified. It's just... Talks are happening. Since the sanctions were lifted, he thinks you might still be in danger. The danger being the king." I whispered.

Sasa: "Khaya, I told you why the sanctions were lifted."

Khaya: "Thembisa, Sibonelo studies war tactics for a living. He plans wars, assassinations and alike. If he's nervous then there's a problem." She sighed.

Sasa: "Until there's more information, what can we do then Khaya?"

Khaya: "Please don't freak out."

Sasa: "What?"

Khaya: "Talks of ukuthwala have been happening. Please don't mention this to anyone but understand that it's not for malicious intent, it's to keep you safe and alive."

Sasa: "Khaya, I'm not with Nkosinhle. That's all the problem was. If I'm not with him, there's no reason to want to get rid of me. Kidnapping me to force me to marry someone I don't even like is wrong. I would quite literally rather slit my wrists and die than marry someone I don't want. Tell them that."

Khaya: "I know. All I'm saying is, there's talks. Nothing else. Nothing has been confirmed. Zwe shut it down and if he and King Biyela say no then it won't happen."

Sasa: "It better not happen. Honestly I'm beginning to actually hate this place. If I could, I would definitely relocate."

Khaya: "I'm sorry all of this is happening."

Sasa: "It's okay Khaya. Thank you for being honest with me."

Khaya: "Okay. I'll see you soon okay? Please be safe Thembisa."

Sasa: "I'll be safe. All of this will be over soon. Bye Khaya." I hung up, walking to my apartment door. I unlocked it and walked in. Jimmy was on the couch, passed out. What was this now? I took the glass off the floor, placing it on the table.

Khaya: "Zimasa." I shook her. "Hey."

Jimmy: "What?" She woke up.

Khaya: "What do you mean what? Did you even go to school?"

Jimmy: "You're back early."

Khaya: "It's after 4 in the afternoon. I attended class and a meeting. How are you only waking up?"

Jimmy: "Khaya, can you just lower your voice? I don't need this snob version of you."

Khaya: "Snob version?" I breathed. "Okay. Please get off the couch."

Jimmy: "You want me out your house? Fine. I'll be out of your fucking house!" She got off the couch, leaving the fleece on it, only wearing a t-shirt that barely covered her ass. I took the fleece, folding it then dusting the couch cushions. I tidied up here and there. The cleaning crew will thoroughly clean it in the morning as they usually do. Where was this girl? I went to the bedroom. She was on the floor next to the bed crying. I don't have the energy to deal with this.

Khaya: "Zimasa."

Jimmy: "I'm sorry. I'll leave." She stood up, wiping her eyes and packing her clothes.

Khaya: "I have a number for a therapist you could use. I'll pay. Just let me know when you're available so I can book your sessions."

Zimmy: "Do you go to the therapy you're suggesting?"

Khaya: "No I don't but I also know the answer isn't in alcohol. It almost destroyed my life. If it wasn't for Zwe, I wouldn't be here."

Zimmy: "I'm happy for you then Khaya. It's nice being related to a royal family that loves you like their own. Some of us don't have that privilege."

Khaya: "Pushing your friends away isn't doing you any good Zimasa. Fucking hell. We're all going through shit here. Can't you see that? You think you're the only one going through hell? I had to watch my father drive my mother to her grave too. And mine actually died by the way. Yes, the Biyela's were there for me, basically raised me but I knew I wasn't them and couldn't just relax. I stuck by my father's side and he treats me like shit. You know why I call the Biyela palace my home? Because that's the only one I have. My own biological father hates me. I'm trying to build a name for myself, using resources around me and I keep second guessing myself every step of the way. I keep asking myself why am I even trying? Why am I surviving through this shit? I keep asking myself who I'm doing it for? The woman I love and want to be with is inlove with my boss now. Do you think life is fair on her? Someone is trying to fucking kill her. Mngqobi is out there trying not to fall in love with two women but failing dismally even though he's promised for marriage to one. Wallowing in self pity will not help. Get a fucking grip and get help. That's all I'm saying. You have us as friends, we're trying to help you."

Zimmy: "You didn't have to yell at me."

Khaya: "Just, get it together man. We're all trying here." She wiped her tears.

Zimmy: "I'm sorry."

Khaya: "You know you're welcome here as long as you want. Just, get it together. Try. Go to school and stuff. Leave alcohol alone for a bit."

Zimmy: "Okay." She hugged me. "Thank you for being so patient with me. Especially this past week."

Khaya: "What was that all about anyway?"

Zimmy: "I was having a period."

Khaya: "Felt like a dragon lived in this house." She chuckled.

Zimmy: "Now you're being dramatic." She looked up at me.

Khaya: "Do you want to go out for dinner? I have good news." I looked away from her. There was this vibe that was starting these days and I wouldn't entertain it. I know that look. I've seen it from every girl that has wanted me in bed. I couldn't take advantage of her like that. She was going through a tough time.

Zimmy: "Maybe later."

Khaya: "Okay, I'll grab snacks and we can watch a movie then." I pulled away from her.

Zimmy: "Khaya."

Khaya: "Zimasa."

Zimmy: "What's going on?"

Khaya: "Nothing. why?"

Zimmy: "I know you feel something happening."

Khaya: "No I don't. Something like what?"

Zimmy: "Wow."

Khaya: "Are you going to let go of my shirt?" She moved closer kissing my lips. I pulled away. "Not like this Zimmy. You're my friend."

Zimmy: "I know. I just- I want you to hold me."

Khaya: "It's going to make things awkward Zimmy, I don't want to ruin our friendship."

Zimmy: "We're adults Khaya."

Khaya: "Yeah, until I bring another woman home tomorrow. Then plates and pots start flying." She giggled.

Zimmy: "You're overthinking this."

Khaya: "I'm not." This was a difficult situation and I hoped someone would knock or a phone rang. Something. Anything. I had never seen Zimmy in a sexual manner. Sure she's hot but she's more like my bro than anything. I can't just get a hard on with her. She walks around half

naked all the time and I never get turned on simply because she's my friend. Why now was she complicating things?

Zimmy: "What's this about Khaya?"

Khaya: "Zimmy You're my friend. Yes, you're sexy but I can't just forget the fact that we're actually friends." She rolled her eyes, letting me go finally. Thank God. "Our friendship means a lot to me Zimasa. I'm not going to let a moment of weakness ruin it."

Zimmy: "Fine. You're right. Let me take a bath and we can go for dinner?"

Khaya: "You haven't taken a bath?"

Zimmy: "I took a shower in the morning." She laughed.

Khaya: "Oh, that was very shocking for a second. I thought you propositioned me before taking a bath. I'd be so disappointed." She continued laughing.

Zimmy: "You're a snob."

Khaya: "You haven't met snobs Zimmy. Go bath, I'll wait in the lounge." I left her in the room to get ready.

SASA POV\_

Monday school day was finally over. I sat in my bed listening to music. My heart was heavy with memories. I missed being eNtabeni, being in his arms, on his lap. If I knew it would be short lived, I'd have taken full advantage of it. In the beginning, I really didn't think it would last until I fell in love with him and wanted it to. So badly. Amahle came in the room.

Ama: "Hello."

Me: "Hi Amy." I took out my earphones. "How was your day?"

Ama: "Long. I couldn't stop thinking about you and your dream."

Me: "Oh. I wrote down all the details in my journal. I didn't want to forget."

Ama: "That's good. Something is brewing. Something has changed but it's still blurry. I don't understand why."

Me: "Khaya called. He says Sibonelo thinks I might still be in danger. He's talking about ukuthwala. What if he kidnaps me and forces me to marry him? Is that the change? Please Amahle, I can't marry anyone least of all Sibonelo. That would break him."

Ama: "Then why can't I see it? It's just a blur of uncertainty. Unless the Biyela's used muthi to blind you but why would they? It's not like you can defend yourself from royals. Why is it blurry?"

Me: "Do you think it's just the Biyela's?"

Ama: "Oh hell... All the royals are coming. Starting tonight. They're all coming to town."

Me: "Amahle, what does this mean? I have an important test tomorrow. I tried asking Mr Mafani and he refused, I have to go into school for the test."

Ama: "You still have security. I know they'll intercept any potential attack."

Me: "You're worried."

Ama: "I thought going to the mountain meant I won't be dying anymore."

Me: "You feel you're about to?"

Ama: "No but the blurry thing is new. I don't know what it means."

Me: "What if a decision was made that changes the future and it's balance so it'll take a minute for it to show you?"

Ama: "Who else did you speak to?"

Me: "Absolutely no one except Khaya. I haven't even made any decision today so it can't be me. Maybe Nkosi?"

Ama: "He would've told me. Let's try the candle thing again. Maybe you might dream something again, something with a clue." I knelt on the floor, covering my shoulders like I did yesterday. Amahle knelt next to me. I lit the candle and started singing the same song, a few times. Maybe if I said the same prayer ?

Me: "Please, Show me any guidance, path. I know you're somewhere out there. My heart is bleeding, please Lift me to where the spirits are so

they can show me where to go." I held my hands out in a receiving motion but nothing happened. No thunder, no cold, no tire. "It's not working."

Ama: "Try again. Try and feel the same emotions."

Me: "That's the thing Amahle, I'm in the same emotions, I'm not even trying." I closed my eyes, silently praying. My tears hit the ground in splatters until my eyes went dry. Nothing was happening. I switched off the candle. "We'll try again later. Maybe it's the time."

Ama: "Yes it's the tim..." She stared at her hands, shaking.

Me: "What's wrong?" She wiped her hands on her pants and looked again.

Ama: "Nothing." ....

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 47

SASA POV\_

Amahle and I have decided to go to dining hall for supper. I've been locked in our room for a while so getting out a bit will be great. We walked to the hall. Nothando joined us, we got food and sat down. The meal today was a normal spaghetti and meatballs with sauce. I picked at my food, barely eating. Then something clicked. I looked at Amahle. She was already staring at me.

Me: "We should go to Bakhoyo."

Ama: "I don't even know where it is."

Me: "We can find it."

Ama: "It's already late today, after your test tomorrow we can go. What are we looking for there?"

Me: "I don't know. There's a reason I dreamt of it. As her. Between that and eNtabeni. I don't think it's safe for me to be eNtabeni though."

Ama: "Yeah, my father has the place on lockdown." I was pumping with adrenaline. I could still vividly see the street I was walking in and the house. Hopefully not much has changed in the past 50 years. Unlikely but we can only hope.

Me: "Is it still... Secluded?"

Ama: "Yes."

Notha: "And severely neglected."

Me: "There's a reason for that."

Ama: "What?" I looked around us to make sure no one else was listening.

Me: "Amy, it is said he burnt down a village because he didn't want to ever see it again. Why then, leave the village he spent the last month's of her life with her in untouched. Why just abandon it? Surely it held more memories for him. Why didn't he burn that instead?"

Notha: "Let's go. You can't talk about this here." We took our containers with food to our room.

Ama: "You reckon he left something there?"

Me: "I don't know but something is missing. Why did he burn uMcebo village to the ground?"

Notha: "Maybe we need to find out more about uMcebo village then."

Ama: "How? He destroyed all there is about it."

Me: "He left one person." I dialed my father's number, listening to it ringing. He picked up.

Xolani: "My child."

Me: "Hello Tata."

Xolani: "How are you?"

Me: "I'm okay Tata. How are you?"

Xolani: "I'm fine. What's wrong?"

Me: "Tata, please be honest with me and patient. I just need to know."

Xolani: "Okay. What do you want to know?"

Me: "Apart from Nonkosi, what was uMcebo village known for? Was it important in some way?" He sighed.

Xolani: "Why are doing this?"

Me: "I just want to know Tata."

Xolani: "This was over 40 years ago Thembisa. I don't know what it was known for. The only thing that comes to mind when it is mentioned is Nonkosi. Our village was normal to me."

Me: "Can you tell me about it?"

Xolani: "From what I remember, we had quite a lot of crops. We farmed our own vegetables, fruit. We traded for livestock. We were close to a river though, we mostly had fish rather than meat. Uhm... What else... Oh, the reason the king had visited was due to a rumor. Since the name refers to treasure, I think maybe he wanted to mine in our village. Turns out it was just a rumor. We didn't have any treasure in our land. Just rich soil for farming. Nothing else."

Me: "Oh. Okay. Do you know how the king met Nonkosi?"

Xolani: "Yes. It was the village's favourite story, they wrote songs about it. Apparently she was coming from the river. The main road and the path to and from the river join. He had just arrived, needing directions to the Chiefs home. She directed them and went on her way. It is said from there, the king had fallen in love with her. It was love at first sight for him."

Me: "I see." I sighed.

Xolani: "Why are you asking me this?"

Me: "I'm just curious about where you come from."

Xolani: "Well, the village is dead and gone now my child. There's no bringing it back."

Me: "True. Let me finish my work Tata. Thank you."

Xolani: "Goodbye mntanam." I hung up.

Me: "There's something about the village that we don't know."

Notha: "Already on it. Tried to Google but they've wiped it off the database. It's as if it has never existed ever."

Ama: "Not even the burning of the village?"

Notha: "Nope. It's regarded as folklore. Look. Apparently Queen Nonkosi is said to have come from forgotten lands."

Me: "Okay. This is suspicious."

Ama: "You're right Thembisa. We have to go to Bakhoyo. Something might come up."

Notha: "And what about the land of Mcebo village?"

Me: "It's nothing but ashes."

Ama: "Let's start at Bakhoyo. Tomorrow. If we can't find anything there, then we go to where Mcebo once was."

Notha: "Why not today? It's only a quarter past 5."

Me: "is it safe Amy?"

Amy: "We'll see ahead. Let's go." I got dressed in jeans, a polo neck, jacket and sneakers. They were already dressed warm since coming from school. We left Res, Amahle's driver drove us out.

Me: "Michael, do you know Bakhoyo village?"

He looked at me in the rearview.

Michael: "No."

Ama: "Find it." He looked back on the road.

Michael: "Yes, my princess."

We drove into the village as it turned dark. The sun had set, leaving an orange hue in the dark sky. The streets were empty, which was strange.

Ama: "Stop here." He parked on the side.

Michael: "My princess, I don't know if this place is safe."

Ama: "When danger arises, I'll give permission for you to attack. For now, stay close." We got out the car. The two guards walked behind us as we took to the streets of Bakhoyo. "Anything familiar?" I shook my head.

Me: "No. This place feels like time stood still since the 60's."

Ama: "Yeah." We entered another street still walking then another. At the end of the third street, under a tree, sat an old man. We walked up to him. The guards stood in a distance, holding their weapons. We stood in front of the old man who didn't seem to acknowledge our presence.

Me: "Hello." He looked up at me, confused. "Uyaphila Baba?" (Are you well, sir)

Him: "What are you doing here? You're not supposed to be here."

Me: "I'm looking for-"

Him: "The late king's house. I know. You're not supposed to be here."

Me: "Why?"

Him: "If the wrong people find you here. It would be doom for our entire nation." He drew on the sand with his stick.

Me: "I had a dream about this place. There's something here that I need to find. I don't know what."

Him: "It's not here."

Me: "Is it eMcebo?"

Him: "No. It's you. It is not by coincidence that two kings chose blood from the same soil. It was called The Treasure village for a reason. You must leave, before they find you. No one can know you have that blood. They burnt the village to the ground to get rid of any last seed of you, clearly they failed." He chuckled. "But do not provoke them. They can't know about you. Ever. It is best they believe you don't exist."

Ama: "And why is that?"

Him: "Her blood is worth that of a hundred kings. She can connect to ancestors beyond her own. Nations will go to war for her blood. Witches will stop at nothing to take it from her. Now leave. Continue your life as it was. Forget about this place. Go." We turned around to leave immediately. That familiar feeling of being watched started again. I covered my head and face with my hood until we reached the car.

We arrived back at Res, closing the door to our room. The three of us sat quietly.

Notha: "Okay, I'm just gonna say it. You heard the creepy old man. We're letting this go, right? It's not safe."

Me: "I wish I could Nothando."

Notha: "Did you not hear him say, your life would be in danger?"

Me: "Aren't you the least bit curious why?"

Notha: "Hell no."

Me: "Amahle?"

Ama: "I am but... What can we do? We don't have any other option now. Maybe next time we won't be so lucky."

Me: "Then what is the point of showing me this place? Now that I know of the treasure village, what is the point?" I sighed.

Ama: "I don't know. Surely, it's purpose will show itself soon." ...

## PRINCE POV\_

This Monday has finally come to an end. Even though my father and I weren't speaking, I had to be in his house. I sat in my office staring at nothing. Mthunzi walked in.

Mthunzi: "Bathonga just arrived." He sat opposite me. "Came with Samu." I expected that. The girl doesn't take no for an answer and it was irritating. Very soon I'm going to snap. "The Biyela's just received Nakhamula's. Phakamisa will arrive in the morning with Mufhuwalo's. Then later in the day Mpondo." I nodded, opening my drawer for a stress ball. "How's Zwe?"

Nkosi: "Fine."

Mthunzi: "It was good seeing him?"

Nkosi: "Yeah."

Mthunzi: "Maybe after first council you should invite him for a drink."

Nkosi: "No thanks."

Mthunzi: "You need friends Nkosi. You need to get your mind off-"

Nkosi: "I don't want to get my mind off her."

Mthunzi: "Okay. Maybe then, during the day, talking to some people might help?"

Nkosi: "You know I don't like talking Mthunzi. Least of all to royals."

Mthunzi: "Fine. What do you think about Khaya's proposal. It was good, wasn't it?"

Nkosi: "Yeah it was." He looked at me in pity. "Please don't. Don't feel sorry for me."

Mthunzi: "You're my best friend. It hurts seeing you like this."

Nkosi: "I'll be fine Mthunzi." He took out his phone, staring at it.

Mthunzi: "What the hell?" He stood up.

Nkosi: "What?"

Mthunzi: "Amahle's driver and guard are not in Mountain Peak. I just got a car alert."

Nkosi: "Where the hell are they?" He clicked on the phone. "MTHUNZI."

Mthunzi: "This is in the middle of nowhere. The car is moving again. How did this happen?"

Nkosi: "Is she inside the car?"

Mthunzi: "Yes. With Thembisa and Nothando."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi call her. Where are they going?" He dialed the number but it went straight to voicemail.

Mthunzi: "They seem fine but where did they go. The place the car stopped in is in the middle of nowhere. They're coming back toward Mountain Peak now."

Nkosi: "Are they safe?"

Mthunzi: "Seemingly. I'll have to reprimand their guards. Why did they not alert before they left? What if something had gone wrong? Most importantly, where the hell did they go? I'm going to meet them now."

Nkosi: "I'm coming with yo-"

Mthunzi: "Nkosi, you can't. You know how uncertain things are right now. I promise I'll make sure they're safe."

Nkosi: "Be quick Mthunzi. Tell me immediately what happens."

Mthunzi: "I will." He rushed out my office. I leaned on the desk with my elbows. My face in my hands. I'd been avoiding taking a run to the woods and the river because a part of me was quite angry at my grandfather. Sounded stupid because the man is dead but that was precisely why I was angry. He left this mess here for me to deal with and didn't even prepare me. Instead he glamourized it with love and sprinkles. Couldn't be bothered to remind me that he burnt people alive. I can't be near his spirit because I will say some very ugly words. I felt my birth mother's aura enter my office.

Nobantu: "My son."

Nkosi: "Mother."

Nobantu: "I'm not happy with the tension between your father and you."

Nkosi: "You only have him to blame."

Nobantu: "I don't think that's true Mehluli."

Nkosi: "It's very true mama. Don't you remember the conditions I had to come back here? Let me remind you of one. I get to marry who I want. What does he do? The second I make my choice, he threatens to kill her. So tell me, who is wrong here mother?"

Nobantu: "Your father is only worried about your safety."

Nkosi: "What safety, Mother? Thembisa is a full human. No abilities whatsoever. I'm the one who approached her, if anything she was scared of me. So who's safety was at risk here?"

Nobantu: "She went up your ancestral mountain Mehluli. That is forbidden."

Nkosi: "I took her up there first! I was the one who took her up to the altar and sat with her. This was the second time she went and only because she was helping Amahle." She stared at me.

Nobantu: "What do you mean that was the second time?"

Nkosi: "Exactly that. She only went up because she was welcomed."

Nobantu: "That's impossible Mehluli. Only the heirs can go up there. It's impossible that a commoner can."

Nkosi: "I don't know what you want me to tell you but understand that from this point on, our relationship in this house is strictly business and the throne. I don't know a family that doesn't want one to be happy."

Nobantu: "Now you're being childish."

Nkosi: "When was the last time father told you he loves you?" She looked at the floor. "Do you even know how it feels to be loved by him?"

Nobantu: "Mehluli-"

Nkosi: "Do you want that for me? Your only son? To not have love. To just exist to rule."

Nobantu: "I do have love. I have you."

Nkosi: "You don't have me anymore mother. As I said, our relationship in this house will only be business. If I can't be happy, nobody else will be." I walked out.

## PETU POV\_

Dinner with Mngqobi was great as usual. I don't know what this meant for us but he's taken me out almost every night. I was even running out of outfits. Nothando's words stuck with me though. She did say I must ask what this meant for us. We sat in the back of the restaurant, closed off from the other diners. He held my thigh, drinking wine with his other hand.

Petu: "Baby?"

Mngqobi: "Yes love?" He placed down his glass and looked at me.

Petu: "So, it's been two weeks right, since we've started hooking up."

Mngqobi: "Yes love."

Petu: "We see each other most nights. So I was just wondering what that meant. Are we still only hooking up or we're dating? I don't want to assume that you're exclusively mine." He smiled.

Mngqobi: "I'm exclusively yours baby. No one else."

Petu: "I don't want to put you in a spot because you did say you can't promise a future."

Mnqobi: "Yes, I can't promise a future but we can enjoy the present, right?"

Petu: "What if I fall in love with you Mnqobi? I'm not a princess-"

Mnqobi: "That isn't important baby. I don't know a way forward right now, I'm just kinda winging it. I didn't think I'd feel like this about you. Now that we've grown closer, I'm finding it difficult to let you go. Can we just figure things out together? I promise I won't let you down. Please trust me." He held my hand, holding it against his lips. "What have you planned for your birthday?"

Petu: "Me and the girls wanted to do a girls only party. Sasa has been going through a hard time lately so we haven't had time to plan it properly. I'll just check for a venue for now."

Mnqobi: "I have an open house in The Stellars."

Petu: "That's uncomfortably close to Sibonelo."

Mnqobi: "Okay. How about a hotel? I can book the penthouse suites."

Petu: "That sounds expensive." He chuckled.

Mnqobi: "They usually have a full package. Drinks, food, and any additions you may want. Don't worry about the cost, you're my woman. There's nothing too expensive for you."

Petu: "I don't know yet baby."

Mnqobi: "Okay. Maybe you'll know by the end of the week so I can make reservations." He kissed my hand. "Do you have a gift list?"

Petu: "No baby. I just want to enjoy my day." I snuggled closer to him, my head on his arm.

Mnqobi: "I want you to enjoy your day too but I want to get you something."

Petu: "An entire list though?"

Mnqobi: "I'll choose three items from it."

Petu: "Okay. I can just tell you then. I like handbags, Flowers and perfume." He smiled.

Mnqobi: "Okay my love." He kissed my forehead. "Royal council starts on Wednesday so the town will be flooded with royals starting from tomorrow morning. I also won't be able to see you for a bit."

Petu: "What is royal council? I mean I know you guys meet up and stuff but for what? Are you allowed to talk about it?" He chuckled.

Mnqobi: "No, we're not allowed to talk about it baby. But it's just revising the laws we have in the nation and discussing ways forward, new ventures, and of course the coronation coming up in a few months."

Petu: "Oh okay. And it takes like a week?"

Mnqobi: "Not a full week. Usually from Wednesday to Friday. Then Saturday there's a celebration at the King's Arena. Everyone leaves on Sunday."

Petu: "Okay then. Have fun at your little conference." He laughed.

Mnqobi: "This is a very important event my love. Come, let's go to the apartment, I want to hold you."

Petu: "I'm on my period baby."

Mnqobi: "Why didn't you say so?"

Petu: "Why would I have to tell you?"

Mnqobi: "I want you to be as comfortable as possible Petunia. You've been tense all evening everytime I touch you. I don't want you uncomfortable when you're with me baby." Even though I've known him for this short time, I couldn't help but feel safe with Mnqobi. He made me feel so comfortable and loved and taken care of. He was attentive to every detail about me. I've never been handled so gently, spoken to so softly and kindly. I watched him pay the bill then hold my hand walking out the restaurant, he pulled me closer to him his arm around my waist, kissing my lips while opening the door. I was finally the main girl with the sexiest boyfriend. I was spoilt, shown off and most importantly, cared for. There was no way I would let go of him. Mnqobi Biyela was mine. I don't know how but I had to make him choose me.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

## Chapter 48

### KHAYA'S POV \_

It was evening, I was on my couch watching TV. Zimmy was eating pizza, playing with her phone. The door opened. Mngqobi and Petu came in carrying a plastic.

Mngqobi: "Good evening beautiful people." Beautiful people?? People who are in love irritate me.

Khaya: "Hello Petu."

Petu: "Hi guys." They sat on the couch.

Mngqobi: "What are you guys watching?"

Khaya: "Isn't royal council starting this week Mngqobi?"

Mngqobi: "If it is, why are you here Mr advisor? You're supposed to be with Sibonelo as of now."

Khaya: "I'm going home in an hour."

Mngqobi: "I'll go with you mos. So what's the problem?" He took off her heels, placing her feet on his lap massaging them. What was going on? "Are you comfortable now?"

Petu: "Yes baby. Can you please get me a spoon first?"

Mngqobi: "Of course." He went to the kitchen to fetch one and sat back down in the same position. Heeee, Mngqobi was in love. What about Nothando? "Let me taste."

Petu: "It's nice." She fed him a spoon of ice cream. I shook my head, looking back at the TV. This was going to be a mess. I wonder if he told her about his marriage. I'll obviously have to ask him when we go home. Petu is not really my friend but she's close. She doesn't deserve what's about to happen.

Zimmy: "I'm going to bed." She got up. "Please let me know when you leave so I can lock up." She says to me.

Khaya: "You're throwing me out of my own house?"

Zimmy: "I'm not throwing you out, I'm asking you to let me know when you guys go."

Khaya: "You don't want to hang out with us?"

Zimmy: "I want to be in bed for a bit. I'm feeling cold."

Khaya: "Should I put the heater on?"

Zimmy: "No that's too much. It's okay Khaya." She walked to the bedroom.

Mnqobi: "Really bra?"

Khaya: "What?"

Mnqobi: "She's feeling cold Khaya."

Khaya: "I offered a heater, she said no. You heard her."

Petu: "Maybe she was hoping for a different kind of heater."

Khaya: "I only have a gas one. I don't have a different kind. It's pretty effective on its own."

Mnqobi: "Don't entertain him baby. He knows exactly what we mean, he's just avoiding it."

Petu: "Khaya, she likes you."

Khaya: "That is not a good idea, Petu. Very not good."

Mnqobi: "Come on bra."

Khaya: "I don't know why you people refuse to understand me. I don't want to ruin my friendship with Zimmy. I hardly have friends. I don't have the luxury to fuck up. I'm still going through shit and I need people on my side."

Mnqobi: "I mean I do get you. On top of that, you ghost people after you hit so maybe it's for the best you keep your distance."

Khaya: "So you're not sharing the ice cream you two brought into my house?"

Mnqobi: "No. Get your own."

Khaya: "Leave my house then."

Mnqobi: "Make me Khaya."

Khaya: "You're lucky Petu is here. I'd have dragged you the hell out." I got up walking to the bedroom. A part of me was feeling bad. I didn't want Zimmy to like me because I wasn't feeling her like that. I didn't want to hurt her. It's not like I was blowing my own horn but girls get quickly attached to me and I usually feel the opposite. "Hey." I got in the bed.

Zimmy: "Hey." She continued scrolling through her phone.

Khaya: "Came to keep you company."

Zimmy: "Those two are sucking face again?" I laughed.

Khaya: "No, feeding each other ice cream."

Zimmy: "They're so in love, it's irritating."

Khaya: "I think it's pretty cute. Maybe you should find your own prince."

Zimmy: "I'm staying Far away from royals. Besides, Sibonelo was dating Sasa. It's not like I can go back there."

Khaya: "You like Sibonelo?"

Zimmy: "Don't make it a big thing." I laughed.

Khaya: "Why didn't you say anything!"

Zimmy: "Like what? I don't like him anymore. It was only once off Khaya. Gosh."

Khaya: "Oh my God, you're in love with him."

Zimmy: "Don't be stupid. I feel nothing for Sibonelo. It's not a big deal."

Khaya: "You know I can hook you up right?"

Zimmy: "Please don't Khaya. I really don't want Sibonelo. It's going to be awkward."

Khaya: "And you think fucking me won't be awkward?"

Zimmy: "We're friends. It won't even count."

Khaya: "Of course it will."

Zimmy: "Look, let's just forget it. I'm talking to someone right now. Forget everything."

Khaya: "Hmm. Okay." I took my laptop and checked my emails. The head of department had responded regarding the curriculum to offer a learning program for people without high school education. I had made

sure to sprinkle in the future king's name in my future venture with him. I trusted Mehluli wouldn't go back on his word. Just as I was reading, I noticed another email from the royal assistant. It was a contract. See? I knew I could trust him. However as much as I trusted him, I still went through the contract thoroughly, writing my own notes on the side. I compiled a response back to the assistant with my notes. I was absolutely happy with everything, I just needed to ammend a few pointers and the contract will be perfect. Once I was done, I went back to the head of department in the education sector and fired up an even better response. I was now in business with a king, this curriculum needed to be approved as soon as possible and thoroughly so.

Zimmy: "What are you busy with?"

Khaya: "Had a meeting with Prince Sikhosana. He approved my business proposal so I'm ammending our contract."

Zimmy: "What!! I thought you hated him?"

Khaya: "I don't hate him. He's okay. Besides this is only business." I smiled.

Zimmy: "This is that business you spoke to Sibonelo about that weekend? You already registered it and everything?"

Khaya: "Yep. Company is registered already. All is above board. I'm just waiting for the department of higher education and training to finish on their side. I hope his name will mean urgency for them."

Zimmy: "Wow. This is amazing Khaya. I'm so proud of you." My phone rang. My father's name appeared on the screen, making my heart race. By now he probably knows.

Khaya: "I need to take this." I got out of bed, walking to the lounge before I answered. Mngqobi and Petu had gone to the guest room.

Mpendulo: "What the fuck is wrong with you?!!! I had to hear from the grapevine that my son has a contract with the future King. Why the hell would you go behind my back Khaya!!"

Khaya: "Tata, I wasn't going behind your bac-"

Mpendulo: "Yes you were. You thought you could trick your way into the big leagues. Khaya, you're nothing but a child. A worthless one at that! It'll be no longer than a week when you come running back to me to fix

your mess. You're fucking useless. Just like your mother. And if you know what's good for, you'll quit while you're ahead."

Khaya: "My mother was not useless. And neither am I. You cannot abuse me anymore tata. I'm going to succeed without you. Maybe that scares you but understand that I will not stop trying until it kills you to admit it." I hung up throwing my phone against the wall. Why did he hate me so much? I've never done anything to him. Why treat me like this? I sat on the couch, my hands shaking. Mngqobi sat next to me, his hand on my shoulder.

Mngqobi: "Him again?"

Khaya: "Ya."

Mngqobi: "Don't listen to him Khaya. You don't even need him anymore. You don't need his validation. Since you turned 21, this apartment has become yours. Your mother left it to you and he can't take that from you. You have us, you belong with us. You're a Biyela. Cut this man off. Even dad has stopped doing business with him now. It's okay. Blood is thick, but our bond is thicker. Please, my brother. Let this guy go. It's enough now." Mngqobi was right. There was nothing more I needed from my father. It was time. It hurt me deeply because he was the only tie I had to my mother but she was gone. There was nothing I could do...

## PRINCE POV\_

Tuesday morning. It was preparation day. Usually I spent this day with my father but I know it was probably going to be a sour day. He was still angry that I snapped at him yesterday. I got out of bed, dressing in my running gear and left the palace. I bolted to the river at full speed. No one could outrun me. Not even lightening itself. I knew they couldn't follow me and so I was alone. I arrived at the forest and slowed down until I reached the river bank.

Nkosi: "Where is he?"

Guide: "You're angry."

Nkosi: "Oh?? I'm Angry? Is that a surprise!!!"

Guide: "Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "You do NOT get to calm me down. Where is he?" I hissed.

Guide: "He's not here -"

Nkosi: "CONVENIENT. Do you know what I'm going through? Does he know? He said to me he wants me to feel the greatest love he's ever known. THIS ISNT LOVE. I'M FUCKING SUFFERING!!!!" I screamed. "I'm torn. Why is he not here?" I sat down, controlling my tears. "Why can't he tell me it gets better? That I get her back? I get to hold her again? Why must I suffer?" I wiped the lone tear on my face. "Please. I will do anything. Absolutely anything. Just tell me it'll be worth it. Tell me I get to be with her again. Even hold her for a second. Hear her voice telling me she loves me. Tell me this isn't how it ends. Please." The air around was still. A soft breeze only remained. No response. No reassurance. I was alone. Not even my guide appeared. "This is what you wanted. For me to be you." ..

I made it to the palace by breakfast time. I wasn't planning on staying long honestly. Before I could even go upstairs, my mother was waiting for me.

Nobantu: "Son, would you love to have breakfast with us?"

Nkosi: "No but I'll be there out of obligation." I went up the stairs three at time, turning into my wing to my bedroom. I took a shower, coming out to dress. My normal black suit and a black shirt instead was my choice. It's only from tomorrow I'll be in regal attire. After dressing, I left my room stopping at Amahle's door. I knocked and she opened.

Nkosi: "When did you get here?" I walked in.

Ama: "We have to talk." She closed the door.

Nkosi: "How is she?"

Ama: "Bad. She's trying to fill her time with something else." My heart ached at the thought of her trying to just forget me.

Nkosi: "Why are you here?"

Ama: "She's dreaming of the past."

Nkosi: "What?"

Ama: "I walked in the room and she was struggling to breath. I touched her and she woke up. Apparently, she was in Bakhoyo."

Nkosi: "What is that."

Ama: "Nkosi, that was the village Papa escaped to with uGogo. Thembisa dreamt that she was her. Described the entire place to precise detail. We went there yesterday."

Nkosi: "Are you crazy!?"

Ama: "We needed answers. And we got them." My interest suddenly piqued.

Nkosi: "What happened?"

Ama: "uMcebo village was burnt to the ground, right?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Ama: "Why?"

Nkosi: "I don't know. Something about Papa not wanting to ever see it again."

Ama: "He could've avoided it but he chose not to. He chose to burn it instead. Nkosi, that wasn't just a normal village. It was the Treasure village. He wasn't burning it because he was hurt. He burnt it because he didn't anyone to figure out what it was. Unfortunately, Thembisa's father escaped and he made her. She still has treasure blood in her. Which, is said to be worth a hundred kings. She is the last of her kind. The guy we met said we needed to keep quiet about this. No one is supposed to know she exists. It's dangerous." All of this information was overwhelming. I didn't even know how to process it.

Nkosi: "Amahle. I don't care about all of this. My heart is with her. How do I navigate that?"

Ama: "That's what we're trying to figure out brother. There's a reason your paths crossed. It can't be coincidence. For now, she's collecting more from her dreams. Our ancestors are guiding her to you. She's going to find the answer. Just be patient Nkosi." Honestly, I felt a little better than 20 minutes ago. I wasn't holding out hope but it was something.

We went down to the dining area for breakfast. I didn't have much to do today but I did have a luncheon with my father and Bathonga later in the day.

Nkosi: "When are you going back to res?"

Ama: "Now. I need to be in the city."

Nkosi: "Class?" She looked up at me, holding my hand.

Ama: "Don't worry." Of course I had to worry. We reached dining hall. The families had sat down, comfortable and chatting. Everyone seemed jubilant and annoyingly excited. Amahle held my hand tighter, I didn't even intend to let her go, I don't understand why she was so clingy today.

Samu: "My Prince. Good morning. I was told you prefer orange in the morning." She handed me a glass of orange juice. Amahle took it from my hand, about to drink it before Samu slapped it out her hand. The glass hit the floor, breaking on impact. The whole palace went silent.

Samu: "I'm sorry. Uhm. I... Lost my temper for a second."

Nkosi: "Did you just try to poison me?" All the guards drew their weapons.

Sikhosana: "STAND DOWN!! STAND DOWN!!" Not one of them complied. They didn't listen or take instruction from anyone but me. "I AM YOUR KING!!!" He shouted. Not one budged.

Nkosi: "Did you try to poison me?"

Samu: "No, Your Highness. I swear I wasn't poisoning you." She cried. "Please. I swear on my life."

Ama: "It's not poison." She let go of my hand, bending to the floor to scoop her finger on the juice. She tasted it. "Love potion." She smiled, satisfied. "You wanted him to fall in love with you. What you didn't account for, is me." She stood in front of me, facing Samu. Amahle was half my height but her presence was palpable. "He is NEVER going to love you. Not while I still live. And believe you me, I'm going to live longer than you can begin to understand. Father, what do we do to witches?"

Samu: "No. I'm not a witch! My King, please believe me, I was not trying to harm the Prince. I swear." She sobbed.

Sikhosana: "I think we all need to calm down."

Nkosi: "No. We don't. Father, what do we do to witches?"

Sikhosana: "Mehluli. You need to think this through. Samu is a princess. It's royal council. How do you even think-"

Nkosi: "What. Do we do, TO WITCHES, Father." ...

SASA POV\_

By the time I woke up Amahle was gone. I didn't know she had an early class. I took a shower and got dressed for school. It was one of the hot days so I wore my white maxi dress and sandals. I tied up my braids and went to have breakfast. I sat with Petu and Nothando. These two seemed closer everyday to an extent that Petu sometimes slept over at Nothando's room. It's happened twice but still. I needed to have a conversation with Nothando today because I didn't know Mngqobi well enough to slap my thigh confronting him. Royals take offense at everything here. I hated that this town will be filled with them by end of tonight but then again, it's not like I had anywhere to go. I'll finish with my test and come lock myself in my room once again. I had an assignment to finish and also, a book to read.

Me: "Hi guys." I sat down with my breakfast.

Petu: "Hey boo."

Notha: "Hello Sasa."

Me: "Where is Amahle? I woke up and she was gone."

Notha: "Went to the palace. She'll be back by midday."

Me: "Oh okay." I started eating a bit.

Petu: "How are you doing love?"

Me: "I'm okay. You?"

Petu: "You don't have to act strong for us, we're your best friends Sasa."

Me: "I'm honestly trying not to break down so... Maybe not talking about it will be better. Your birthday is coming up. What do you have planned so far?" I couldn't even tell them about the disturbing dreams I'm having.

Sure, Nothando knows a bit but no one knows how empty I'm feeling right now. Every few minutes my hand touches my belly and a pang of reality hits that I'm actually not pregnant in real life. Only in my dreams. It's only in my dreams that I have the greatest love growing inside me and also taking care of me. It was difficult to separate Nkosinhle from Ngidumise because he looks exactly like him. Those eyes defeated me just last night. And honestly I'm embarrassed. My cheeks flared with embarrassment.

Petu: "Mnqobi wants to book a penthouse suite for us. Apparently they offer a full package."

Notha: "Penthouse suite? He has an estate of luxury houses and he wants to book a suite at a hotel? Petu, harrass this man." I giggled.

Petu: "I can't Nothando. Besides, Stellars is where Sibonelo lives."

Notha: "So what? It's a girls party. Our guards will be there and also, I think Mnqobi can keep his brother occupied for the night. Petu, use your power please."

Petu: "What power, Nothando?"

Notha: "The guy is filthy rich. Don't settle for nonsense. Go higher and above."

Petu: "That's not me, Nothando."

Notha: "What did you learn at womanhood camp?"

Me: "Womanhood camp?"

Petu: "What is that?"

Notha: "The camp girls go to when they turn 16. Didn't you go?"

Me: "I'm pretty sure I've never heard of that."

Petu: "Same." Nothando frowned.

Notha: "Men, are the protectors. They protect you from harm. Whether it is family, enemies, anything. Their job is to provide full security. Within that security is finance. Why do you think every prince is taught their family business by the age of 18? They need to know how to generate enough money to give to their wives and children." I giggled.

Me: "Sorry Nothando. What then do the women do? What are they taught?"

Notha: "To nurture him and the children, to love him, support him and such."

Me: "You don't like it, do you?"

Notha: "Absolutely not. It's nonsense but Petu, take advantage of this now."

Petu: "I'm not a gold digger Nothando."

Notha: "Pretty sure the Biyela's don't even know what that means. Enjoy this moment. Act like a royal wife would. Besides, two of your friends are royal, and we're not allowed in hotels. So..." I laughed.

Petu: "Fine. Sasa, are you okay with a private house in Stellars ?"

Me: "Yes, if and only if, Mngqobi promises to keep Sibonelo away from me."

Petu: "I'll make him promise. Don't worry." She winked. We giggled.

My day was going well, I'd made it to school with my security and for once, I didn't care about the eyes and attention. I wrote my test well. Time for me to go back to res. I wanted to take a nap, hoping to have another dream. It sounded strange, I know but I honestly felt so much comfort in seeing his face light up and seeing the swell of my huge stomach. I missed the feeling of holding it. The kicks and movements. The guard drove me back to res.

Qhama: "Are you well?"

Me: "Yes." I smiled, holding my flat stomach. "I just need to take a nap. Is Amahle back?"

Qhama: "No." He looked at the rearview.

Me: "What?"

Qhama: "Nothing. Just checking security measures. So far everything seems normal."

Me: "Oh, good. It was a good day right?"

Qhama: "Definitely. Since the sanctions are lifted maybe you could get around a bit. Can't be nice being locked in a room like you're in prison." I chuckled.

Me: "Trust me, it isn't."

Qhama: "Thank you, Thembisa. It's not usual to be treated like a human in this job but since you, I promise I've seen more humility in my entire life. Not only from you."

Me: "How long have you been working for him?"

Qhama: "I work with General Mthunzi actually. I haven't worked for the throne specifically except you. It's been 8 years now."

Me: "That's quite a while. Do you enjoy it?"

Qhama: "Yes. The pay is amazing and the job is stable."

Me: "Do you have a family?"

Qhama: "Yes. My parents are still alive. They're raising my son, my girlfriend also lives with them."

Me: "How old is your child?"

Qhama: "Two." He smiled.

Me: "What's his name?" He chuckled.

Qhama: "Qhamani." I laughed. He parked the car. I got out the back, taking my bag from the seat. I heard someone screaming my name. I looked up, closing the car door. Qhama came rushing to me, just before he reached me, his body fell to the ground. My whole body froze for a second before I registered what was happening. Amahle was running at full speed toward me. And that's when I felt it. A cold bullet pierced my left rib, numbing my entire body to a shivering pause. She jumped on me, shielding me from impending impact from the rain of bullets but my body had shut down. I couldn't feel her touch. I couldn't hear a thing. Not the deafening screams. Not the bullets pouring at my body. Not the crackling of thunder in the sky. My eyes shut closed. Feeling Nothing.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 49

PRINCE POV\_

The luncheon was in our home garden. My mothers had gone all out. Fortunately for me, I wasn't stuck with my family only. Bathonga, Biyela, Nakhamula, Mufhuwalo and Phakamisa had joined us. The only family that was late was Mpondo. It was his thing and that didn't even bother me. The situation of this morning was still hanging in the air. My father had refused to punish Samu because it is royal council week. Apparently we had to deal with this after. I'm not letting him get away with this. Can you imagine trying to juju me? The sickness of it all. Her entire family was embarrassed and I'd make sure they feel it. Everyone seemed to be having a good time so far. The queens sat together having a chat at their table. The Kings had their own table. The princes also had their own. I was the only one sitting by myself. I didn't belong here. The only person I would've tolerated is Zwe and he isn't here. My father called me to their table and I had a good mind to tell him to leave me alone but everyone was already staring at me. I went to sit next to him.

Sikhosana: "My Prince, the other royals and I were talking about the coronation in a few months." I looked at him, daring him to say it. He swallowed. "I can't believe I created those eyes. Scary, aren't they?" They laughed.

Mthunzi: "Nkosi!!" He ran out to the backyard. Everyone stopped to look at him. His eyes focused on me. Tears. Shaking.

Sikhosana: "Are you insane!? What kind of disrespect is this!?" I got up, looking at Mthunzi to speak. He could barely breath.

Mthunzi: "I'm sorry." He whispered. My heart stopped. "We have to go."

Sikhosana: "You're not taking hi-" I bolted to the car with Mthunzi on my tail. He grabbed my arm, pulling me away. I noticed the helicopter firing up on the pad. We got on and buckled up before it lifted into the air and flew toward the city. My heart had grown ice and I didn't even know what was going on. I just knew. I knew if Thembisa was hurt, I wouldn't be able to stop myself from hurting my father. I felt a hand holding mine, I looked down. Mthunzi.

Nkosi: "Is she..." The silence cut me deeply. By the time the helicopter landed on the hospital roof, I jumped off, running to the entrance. A group of guards met me inside surrounding me. I pushed them away, walking faster to her scent. I could smell the spill of her blood turning me blind with rage. Finally reaching the operating room. I looked at the small window, Zwe looked up and back to his work. Mthunzi pulled me away.

Mthunzi: "Let him work. Amahle is in ICU. Come." He dragged me back up to the ICU ward. I walked into the room, holding my sister's hand. She tried. She tried to save two lives and keep them both alive all in one day. I held her in my arms, hugging her tight.

Ama: "Ouch Nkosi." She coughed.

Nkosi: "Are you fine?"

Ama: "I got 29 bullets in me, a few in my head. So no. No I'm not fine. Hurts like a bitch. You're shaking."

Nkosi: "One bullet hit her." The familiar feeling of instant rage hit once again. I stood up, Amahle pulled me back down.

Ama: "Zwe is good. He'll do his best."

Nkosi: "Amahle." I looked at my hands. She looked at my shaking hands. They started to shape like claws. She held them.

Ama: "You have to try Nkosi. Try your best."

Nkosi: "I'm going to kill him."

Ama: "You can't do that-"

Nkosi: "Amahle. I will kill him." She hugged me. "How could they do this to me? Why would they let this happen?"

Ama: "She is going to be okay. She will be fine." The door opened. Mthunzi peeping in. I followed him out, walking to the operating room again. Zwe walked out, taking off his gloves. I stood in front of him, shaking with a terror I've never felt in my life. It was taking all of me to hold it together. My chest tightened with every growing second. He pulled me in, hugging me.

Zwe: "Stable." He whispered. My chest gave in but he held me tight. "She's going to be okay. She'll be fine. Breath." The knot in my chest started to loosen as I took a deep breath and exhaled. "Again." He patted my back. My senses slowly returned. "There. She's okay. Just unconscious. She'll be up in a few hours but we have to lockdown the hospital. All guards have to go. Every single one. We don't know who ordered this hit yet and they could still do it while she's recovering." I nodded, pulling away from his hold.

Nkosi: "Thank you." I turned to Mthunzi. "Get rid of them. All of them."

## SASA POV\_

I got out of bed, struggling with my huge belly. Two women dressed in servants clothes walked in.

Me: "Good morning." They both bowed, helping me dress in a gown. The door opened once again. Nkosi/Ngidumise walked in. He was dressed in his beautiful regal suit.

Nkosi: "Love of my life." He kissed my lips. "You kicked me out of bed."

Me: "You kept squeezing me Nkosi. How am I to sleep if two people are pulling me apart? One is trying to get out, the other wants in. No, you two hate me." He laughed.

Nkosi: "My boy wants to play with me. Please allow him mama. Come, it's time for your bath."

Me: "The ladies can help me."

Nkosi: "The ladies must find something else to do. Come my love." He led me to the bathroom, running water in the tub then taking off my clothes with so much care and gentleness.

Me: "I don't want to mess on your important suit, baba."

Nkosi: "This suit is not even a thread as important than you." He kissed my shoulder, leading me into the bath. "Is the water okay?"

Me: "it's perfect." I sat down. He knelt on the floor, taking the sponge. "How is the family?"

Nkosi: "They'll be fine. Everyone is excited for this one." He caressed my belly. "Sizwengaye Dumisile Sikhosana."

Me: "I want him to be the good king. Like you." He smiled. "INkosi yam enhle."

Nkosi: "Your wish is my command Mrs Sikhosana. Why didn't you want a big wedding? The nation is waiting."

Me: "Maybe after a year sthandwa sam. I was too tired. Sizwe is very heavy."

Nkosi: "He's a future King, of course he's heavy." He kissed my lips again. "I'm being crowned tomorrow. It would be amazing if my little prince joined us too."

Me: "So that I miss this important day? The prince must wait. I want to celebrate my man." He laughed, full and loud filling the room like the majesty he is.

Nkosi: "I love you so much. Do you know that Nonkosi? I love you with my entire heart, soul and spirit. Even the day I leave this earth, I'll enter the after life in search of you. Please come and find me sthandwa sam. I will never rest if I can never hold you in my arms again."

Me: "I'll search to the ends of all spiritual realms for you. I love you too my King." ...

We walked out the room, after I dressed in my regal dress. Nkosi held my hand to the dining hall. He pulled my chair helping me sit.

Me: "Thank you." I whispered. "Good morning my King and Queen." The King looked at me.

King: "Morning." The queen drank her juice, ignoring me.

Nkosi: "Junior is getting ready to join us soon." He rubbed my big tummy.

King: "That would be good. I'm looking forward to meeting our future. Have you chosen a name, Ngidumise?"

Nkosi: "Yes father. The name for the prince is Sizwengaye Dumisile Sikhosana." He poured me some juice.

King: "Sizwengaye?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Sizwengaye."

King: "Okay. Sizwengaye, it is. It's good that you two got married before his arrival but the nation will want a bigger wedding. We have to include them."

Nkosi: "Yes father. We will have a bigger wedding after one year."

Queen: "Ngidumise, you're a future king. You shouldn't be tending to dishing up plates. Leave that to the maids."

Nkosi: "I'm tending to my wife, mother." He placed the plate in front of me.

King: "Your mother is right. Yes, it's your wife but we have a way of doing things in this family."

Nkosi: "Father, you are my family but I've chosen Nonkosi to be mine too. Understand that, I will have a way of doing things with her as my family. How I choose to tend to her and our child will be my decision and mine alone."

Me: "Nkosi." I whispered, holding his hand. "Your family is right. You're a future king. I can still work my hands, baba."

Nkosi: "I'm a future king to the nation. I'm a husband to you." He kissed my hand. I could feel the queen's piercing gaze on me. My only sin was to be loved. I hadn't done anything wrong.

Queen: "Today, we have our queen's council. Perhaps it would be good for you to join us, Nonkosi."

King: "We also need to give her a family name."

Nkosi: "She's pregnant."

King: "She will stand beside you at your crowning and she needs a name by then. We can't postpone again."

Me: "I can take it, my King. Maybe we can see how I can fit into both schedules?"

King: "You'll start with me. The naming will not be long. Then after, you can attend queen's council."

Nkosi: "Will you be okay, my love?"

Me: "I'll be fine." I smiled. We had our breakfast quietly. Once done, I got up with the King.

Nkosi: "Guards, you'll be with Nonkosi for the da-"

King: "Ngidumise!! You can't do that. Nonkosi will be safe, she has me and my guards. I will not harm her."

Nkosi: "Don't." He warned. The King stared at him in shock. The tension in the palace was becoming heavier by the day. The baby in my belly kicked and stretched. I had to hold it in and not make a sound because if I dared showed discomfort, Nkosi would not let me out of his sight. He

kissed my head. I followed his father to the council quarters with the baby still dancing in my tummy.

Me: "Hush my little honey." I whispered. We entered the quarters, the elders sat on the stage. A grass mat was laid in front of them on the floor. I knew I had to sit on it, I bowed to the king and went to the mat. He held my arm.

King: "Not so fast." He nodded at the door. What was happening? "Melaphi." A short man, came forward with beads all over his body. I stepped back. "Don't be afraid. You say you are carrying the future King. If you really are, there is nothing for you to worry about."

Me: "What's going on?"

King: "This man will help us understand if you're telling the truth." I know I had nothing to worry about because I'd only been with Nkosi but this didn't look safe. "Kneel." I went on my knees. Melaphi held a bag that was rattling as he shook it. He blew inside it and burped then looked at me. He held out his hand. I stared at it then at the king who was standing over me. I gave him my hand. His sharp nail sliced at my palm cutting me. I pulled my hand away in pain. Some of my blood remained on his nail. He dropped the bag, spilling its contents.

Melaphi: "Treasure." He shook.

King: "Treasure? What does it say? Is she carrying my future?" Melaphi fell to the ground, convulsing. "What the hell are you?!!" He bellowed. I started shaking, looking at the man on the floor having a seizure. That wasn't my doing. Please survive. Please wake up. Finally his body stopped moving. The elders surrounded us. The King gripped my hair, with a sword on my neck.

King: "WHAT. ARE. YOU?" Melaphi breathed, waking up.

Melaphi: "She has the blood." He whispered, trying to sit up.

King: "What blood?"

Melaphi: "Treasure blood. The village is made with soil that births companions of the throne. She's, carrying the future." He breathed. The grip on my head loosened. The sword was removed.

King: "What does this treasure blood mean for us? Is it good?" The man stared at me.

Melaphi: "No. She has a blood stronger than yours. She can kill you."

Me: "You're lying!!" I screamed. "I would never kill anyone!! Least of all my child's grandfather. Stop lying!" I spat. The King walked away.

King: "She is carrying my future. Name her." He sat on his throne staring down at me with bright orange unkind eyes.

## PRINCE POV\_

I sat on the chair next to the bed, holding her hand. Even in sleep, she looked angelic. The surgery was a success but she was still on life support.

Mthunzi: "They're almost here." I'd sent a car to fetch her parents, Mthunzi had to hire someone already in Mthinomkhulu to pick them up. "What is Zwe saying?"

Zwe: "Zwe is saying good afternoon." He walked in.

Nkosi: "Why is she not up yet?" He bent over to check her again.

Zwe: "She's okay, doing quite well even but she needs to rest."

Nkosi: "But she will wake up right?"

Zwe: "Yes, she definitely will. I wanted us to talk about something else." He looked me in the eye. He and Mthunzi are the only people who can. Apart from Thembisa of course.

Nkosi: "what?" He lowered his voice.

Zwe: "I've concealed Amahle's medical record. I'm the only one that can access it. I've had the doctor who was helping me sign a lifetime NDA. Nkosi, Amahle died. She was dead on arrival. The minute I checked her, calling the time of death, she woke up. She complained that her head hurts and something was disrupting her heart. She had bullets all over her. Nkosinhle. What is going on." Fuck.

Nkosi: "Zwe." I sighed.

Zwe: "You can trust me."

Nkosi: "Can I? I don't know that."

Zwe: "Are you serious? The first time you turned, I was with you. Why now are you acting brand new?"

Nkosi: "Right. I forgot about that."

Zwe: "You seem to forget alot these days. So? What's this?"

Nkosi: "She's immortal."

Zwe: "Wow. I was not expecting that. Uhm, okay. Don't worry, since I've already concealed the records, they'll need your stamp so no other royal can summon them, not even me."

Nkosi: "I trust you Zwe."

Zwe: "I'm not talking about myself Nkosi. Media is crawling outside like bees to pollen. A Sikhosana princess was riddled in bullets. No one expects her to be alive. When she shows up, there will be questions. Questions from my father, and all the other kings. Conceal it Now." I nodded.

Nkosi: "I'll do it." I looked back at Thembisa, kissing her hand and keeping it on my lips. "Please wake up my love." Mthunzi got up, walking out with Zwe. "There's so much I want to talk to you about, I feel like bursting. I miss you so much Thembisa. I'm so lost with you. You can't even imagine how bored I am, please come colour my life. I'm sick of these restrictions. I'm done now. I'm fighting back. Trust me, the person who did this will be gone by end of today." I kissed her hand. "Its been a horrible two weeks baby. This is the peak of my pain. I hate you're here, in this bed, because of me. I felt air behind me change. "I love you." I kissed her head, getting up to face him.

Xolani: "How dare you?"

Mama: "Haibo Xolani, you can't speak like that to a king-"

Xolani: "I don't care what he is, he tried to murder my child!!!!" He screamed. Zwe walked in again.

Zwe: "What's going on?"

Nkosi: "I'm sorry sir-"

Xolani: "Get Out."

Mama: "Xolani, khazibambe!"

Xolani: "Don't ever come near my child. Do you hear me? I will rather go to jail or be hung but the petrol I throw at you would set you alight regardless. Stay away from my daughter. This is the last time I will ever see you or hear of you near my child. Please, I'm begging you your highness, try me." He spat, with an unmistakable hatred in his eyes.

Thembisa: "can't kill king." She mumbled. Zwe rushed over to her other side. I held her hand, moving.

Nkosi: "What was that, baby?"

Thembisa: "Can't... Kill... A... King."

Zwe: "This is impossible. She's not awake." He checked her and looked at me. The machine beeped in a straight flat line

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 50

PETU POV

I walked out of school in a bad mood, it had been a very long day. The streets were quite busy and full. Helicopters were buzzing all over the sky.

Petu: "What's going on?" I asked random girls who were busy taking videos.

Girl: "People got shot at res." I immediately started running. No one gets shot at for no reason and since Thembisa has already said her life was in danger, I couldn't think twice. By the time I reached the res, it was closed off with police tape. No one was allowed in. Everyone was shocked, others in tears shaking. I tried looking inside. I only saw Thembisa's car, all doors opened with blood on the floor. My hands were shaking dialing her number.

Petu: "Please God, don't let it be her. Please." The phone went straight to voicemail, Amahle as well. I felt a hand grab my arm, pulling me

away. Mngqobi. We got in the car and it drove off. Nothando was in the back with me. Sibonelo drove, Mngqobi in the passenger.

Petu: "What happened?" I cried.

Notha: "Thembisa and Amahle got shot." She wiped her tears.

Petu: "Are they okay?" She shook her head. My heart broke more than it ever has. She held my hand all the way to the hospital. Sibonelo used a different entrance and parked underground.

Sibo: "The press isn't allowed this way. Come." We got out the car walking in the hospital building. Immediately meeting bodyguards. They held their guns up.

Sibo: "Tell Zwelethu, Dr Biyela, it's his brothers." One guard went away while the others stood in the same position. "You do know it's illegal to aim at royals right? You want to wipe out the entire Biyela family? Think about that." The guards looked at each other. The other returned and they leveled down their weapons. We walked through the passage to an empty waiting room, finding Khaya inside alone and we sat down. Notha held my hand throughout. I was so glad for her comfort, I know she hates talking and feelings but she was really showing up today.

Sibo: "What the hell happened?" Khaya had blood on his shirt and arms.

Khaya: "I came out of school and I heard the shots going off. That's when I called you to ask if there's a parade or something because it sounded scary. I thought it was fireworks. It was just too many shots. When you said no, I saw people running that's when I drove toward the res where it sounded like it was coming from. As I arrived, another car sped past me. I focused on the inside of res parking. Everyone had run away. They just lay there on the floor. I went over to them, it was Thembisa and Amahle. A bodyguard came over to take them into a car and I helped carry Thembisa, we drove here immediately." His hands were still shaking.

Sibo: "The car that drove past you, do you think that's who did it?"

Khaya: "I know that's who did it. He still had the gun on him."

Sibo: "Would you be able to recognize him?"

Khaya: "Yes."

Sibo: "Fuck!" He paced the floor. "Khaya you don't tell that to anyone. Do you hear me? Don't say a word to anyone without Zwe by your side and given his go ahead."

Petu: "And why is that? Did you send them?"

Sibo: "What would I gain in killing two girls? Don't disrespect me. Khaya shut your mouth. Who else knows that you saw this?"

Khaya: "Amahle's guard, the one I helped."

Sibo: "He was the only one?" Khaya nodded. Sibonelo checked outside the door before closing it again. "We need to get you out of here. King Sikhosana will be here soon. His youngest has been shot. We don't know what happened but if he sent that hit, he won't want any fucking witnesses. You can't open your mouth. We need to shut that guard up." He typed on his phone.

Khaya: "Do you really think the king tried to kill his own child?"

Sibo: "Definitely not. That's his favorite. She must have been in the firing line. The hit was definitely for Thembisa. I just wish sometimes you people could listen to me for once. If only you fucking listened. You can't get win wars fighting with emotions." He paced the floor again. Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "Why do you keep texting me?"

Sibo: "What's the word?"

Zwe: "Sibonelo now is not the time. I just got out of operating. Thembisa is fine, I've removed the bullet. She's still on life support but stable. Amahle is in ICU, she's better than her. That's all you need to know. You don't need to be here."

Sibo: "Your brother saw the hitman." The colour drained from Zwe's face. He immediately looked at Khaya.

Zwe: "Who else knows this?"

Sibo: "Apart from everyone in this room now, Amahle's guard."

Zwe: "Shit. I have to tell Nkosi. The King will be here any minute. Get Khaya out of here-"

Sibo: "He's not leaving my sight Zwe. You know what's about to happen in Mountain Peak."

Zwe: "Then take him to my office Sibonelo." My heart started racing. What was about to happen? "I can't do anything right now, Thembisa is very fragile I need to be near her. I'm going to need you to take care of things. Guards aren't allowed inside my hospital, since the hit wasn't random, I can't risk another attempt inside. Sibonelo, I'm trusting you to keep the family safe."

Sibo: "Done." Zwe walked out the waiting room. I was so scared of asking but thank God Khaya had the courage.

Khaya: "What's about you happen in Mountain Peak?"

Sibo: "Not just Mountain Peak. The province might be locked down. A Sikhosana princess was shot. Even if her father did it which we don't know yet, he will shut everything down. As you can see, Zwe has already closed off the hospital. This is still stage one. Since guards aren't allowed in, we need to make additional reinforcements. Thembisa is still inside here, if whoever did this gains entry into the hospital, aka the king, they will kill her." He sighed, typing on his phone.

Mnqobi: "Should we call father?"

Sibo: "No. Until I'm sure where the hit comes from, we shut our mouths. Do you understand?" He looked at Nothando and I. We both nodded. He checked down the passage again. "Khaya, come let's go. Take off that t-shirt, here." Khaya took off his t-shirt wiping his arms. Sibonelo took off his blue shirt, handing it to him. He had a vest underneath so he wasn't exactly naked. I noticed a tattoo on his bicep. "Let's go." They walked out.

Petu: "I think we should pray. I can't take this uncertainty and anxiety. I'm so scared."

Mnqobi: "If it helps." He knelt in front of us, holding both our hands.

Petu: "Our father, who art in heaven..."

## KHAYA'S POV

We entered Zwe's office, where his one guard stood watch. I sat on the couch, scared shitless. Now I too, was in danger? It wasn't enough that I

had to carry someone I love into a hospital while she was unconscious? What kind of sick game are these people playing with our lives?

Khaya: "What's going to happen now?"

Sibo: "Khaya please!" He snapped. If Sibonelo Biyela was stressed, how was I to cope? He's supposed to be the calmest of all my brothers. Now he's not. I looked at the stains of blood I still had on my jeans and hands. He looked through a cupboard, finding a clean t-shirt that belonged to Zwe. He answered his phone while putting it on.

Sibo: "Any word? No? I'm still in hospital. I can't confirm anything. Yes. I don't know, the family will make a statement. Where? Shit, okay." He hung up. "King is on his way. He just declared the city to be locked down."

Khaya: "Why?"

Sibo: "He's trying to remove the press and the public from the hospital. If everyone is not allowed outside, he can control the narrative. Which means, something is wrong."

Khaya: "Shouldn't Amahle be in the Oceans medical facility? She's royal."

Sibo: "Yes, that. How many shots did you hear?"

Khaya: "Many. Possibly more than 20."

Sibo: "And they hit two people?"

Khaya: "And a guard. Most of the shots hit Amahle I think, she was bleeding the most."

Sibo: "Something is off but that doesn't matter. It's a miracle they're both still alive but we can't disclose that as of yet. There's a reason Zwe is keeping Amahle here. And I feel that's why the King has immediately announced the shut down. I think Amahle is dead." My body shivered as if it was freezing. The shock started to settle into bones. I had acted on instinct. When I got to res. I couldn't see straight, I just saw the car with doors open and people laying on the ground. I got to them in lightening speed, seeing Amahle with her eyes open and not breathing on top of Thembisa. She was shielding Thembisa. Her body was limp when her guard picked her up and I focused on picking up Thembisa. We were almost mechanical as if we knew what to do next. The drive to the hospital was clear and within a blink of an eye. Both of us, carrying them

inside. I'd managed to call Zwe on the way and so he was waiting. The stretchers took them both away, a nurse led me to the waiting room. It was a very numbing experience and now my nerves were coming undone. I tried to breath.

Sibo: "Hey. Hey. Listen to me, this isn't your fault. You did great out there. Breath."

Khaya: "I think she might be dead."

Sibo: "We can't confirm that yet. Let's trust Zwe." He looked through the cupboard again finding a bottle of pills. "These are for shock." He gave me two pills and water. Taking another two for himself. "he gives those for anxiety and shock. I need to think." I drank the pills.

Khaya: "What if they kill Thembisa?"

Sibo: "Khaya what can we do? Nothing. Like I said, if this is Sikhosana's doing there's nothing we can do. Stay here, don't open for anyone. I need to clear my head and hear what's going on outside. Don't move Khaya. Only a Biyela guard is outside. He will protect this door until I or Zwe come in." I nodded, dreading to be alone. He walked out.

The door opened after a while and I jumped up with a fright. Mehluli walked in with his advisor. My heart was in my throat. Zwe walked in behind him. My sigh of relief was a gasp, as I sat down.

Zwe: "Are you okay?" He touched my forehead.

Khaya: "Sbo gave me anxiety pills but I fear they have made my panic much worse. My heart isn't doing what it's supposed to do." He took off my shirt, using his stethoscope on my chest.

Zwe: "Breath in. Hold it." I did just that but failed. "Fucking Sibonelo. How many did he give you?"

Khaya: "Two." My whole body was shaking.

Zwe: "Are you sure?" He looked through the cabinet.

Khaya: "Yeah, he also took two. I keep having flashbacks Of ..." I looked at Mehluli who was staring down at me.

Zwe: "Of the scene?" He gave me one small pill and water. I nodded, drinking it. "You're safe now. Okay? Where's Sibonelo?"

Khaya: "He left about 20 minutes ago."

Zwe: "Okay. Let me find him." I held on to him not to leave me here. Absolutely no. "He's not going to hurt you, bug. I promise." I let go. Zwe walked out.

Nkosi: "Describe the person who did this." His voice was dark and it filled the room.

Khaya: "Uhm. He was light in complexion, had a square face with remainders of a beard. The skin on his cheeks looks burnt and he was wearing the guard outfit but it was all black, no colours." He looked at Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "Was he alone?"

Khaya: "No. I think at least four of them were in the car."

Mthunzi: "Where was Amahle's guard when you approached?" I thought carefully.

Khaya: "He came out of nowhere. I reached them first, Amahle and Thembisa. Amahle was on top of her. The other guard only a few steps away. I think he wanted to shield her too but got shot before he reached them. All doors were opened so they'd probably just arrived from school. I don't know where Amahle's guard came from. By the time I got to them. Trying to pick them up, he got there and took her body, I just followed with thembisa." I looked at my hands. "Are they okay?"

Mthunzi: "The girls are alive." I knew I couldn't question anything else. I didn't want to disrespect him. I kept looking at the door. "The guard has been taken care of Khaya. No one will hurt you." Whatever that means, it didn't calm me down. Zwe came back with Sibonelo. He gave the prince a file and a tablet. Sibo: "You okay?" I nodded.

Mthunzi: "Need to check Amahle."

Nkosi: "Please bring her to me." Mthunzi walked out.

Zwe: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "If I so much as see him." A nasty growl voiced out his throat making me jump. Sibonelo held my hand with his shaking too. What the fuck was that?

Zwe: "You need to calm down." He hissed. Did everyone hear the same thing I heard? I heard a growl, like a tiger or a lion was inside the room. I

have to be going insane. I have to be. But the eyes were confirming. I know he has scary eyes but right now?

Khaya: "Bobo, I need to pee." I whispered.

Sibo: "Zwe, can I take this one back to his twin?"

Zwe: "Yes, the guard has been taken care of, so are the cameras. No one knows he was first on scene or witnessed anything. Take him to Mnqobi. I'll call you when I need you." Sibonelo led me out the office to the bathroom first.

Khaya: "You heard it, right?"

Sibo: "I did. I did, bug. Let's go." So I'm not crazy. What the hell is going on here?

SASA POV\_

The day had gone well. My name had been chosen as Nobomi Nonkosi Sikhosana. The queen's council was less welcoming than I expected. None of them seemed to like me but that's okay. I had enough time to change their minds. By the end of the evening, I made it to bed, tired as hell. My back was paining a little and my feet swollen. Nkosi walked in as I tried taking off my dress. I looked up at him, smiling. He had sly smile on his face that made my heart race. God, this man was beautiful. He knelt in front of me in between my legs.

Nkosi: "How's my baby?"

Me: "Fine. He's been quiet today."

Nkosi: "Has he moved?"

Me: "A little bit, yes. There he goes. So he wants you? How rude." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "Hello my boy." He kissed my belly. "How was your day my love?"

Me: "Good." I tried undoing the strings to my dress. He held my chin making me look at him. There it was. The dangerous look that had my child kicking wildly inside me. How he could feel it was crazy.

Nkosi: "What happened today?" I couldn't lie to those eyes.

Me: "Your father had the healer check if I'm carrying your ch-" he stood up, marching to the door. I quickly grabbed his arm. "Love, please. Please calm down." My hand burnt from touching his skin. "Ow!" I stepped back. He looked back, immediately calming down. His ability was fire and whispers. He could penetrate the mind and conjure fire with just his anger.

Nkosi: "He has no right!" He cooled off his fiery hands and touched mine. "I'm sorry my love. I didn't mean to hurt you."

Me: "I know you didn't baby, I'm the one who touched you. But you can't kill the king. You can't hurt your father. Your son's grandfather. Please."

Nkosi: "This is the last straw Nonkosi, I'm not holding back the next time he double crosses me." He led me back to bed.

Me: "Love, the child and I are fine."

Nkosi: "Are you sure?"

Me: "Yes, he's dancing in there now." He checked the time and laughed.

Nkosi: "My boy is always on time. It's time for our dance Mrs Sikhosana."

Me: "Oh Nkosi, I'm so tired."

Nkosi: "You promised me in our vows that you will dance with me every night while I sing to you. The gods will be upset." I laughed.

Me: "I'm sure the gods will allow me this one night. Their little person is very heavy and currently active." He kissed my lips.

Nkosi: "Lie down then so I can massage you and sing for you." I lay on the bed. He helped me out of my dress, kissing my body. "The first time I met you, the sun was shining bright as the gods led me to you. Our paths crossed for the first time, I was mesmerized by your beauty, my heart skips everytime i turn over and see you. You accepted my form as brutal and true then tamed me to only be for you. My soul belongs to you." He kissed her belly, still massaging her softly with his warm hands. She had fallen asleep. Ngidumise stood up, looking down at his beautiful wife. He snapped his hands, and they came ablaze with fire.

Nkosi: "I will kill everything in my way that tries to take you from me. You are mine Nonkosi. Now and in the after life." He flickered off his flames. "They'll know me." ...

Chapter 51

PRINCE POV\_

The machine beeped, numbing my whole body.

Nkosi: "Zwelethu." He worked fast, clicking and checking her but the beeping wasn't stopping. Then it went quiet. Amahle walked in. She got in the bed next to Thembisa immediately falling asleep.

Xolani: "And then? What is going on? Who's this?"

Zwe: "This is the girl that saved her life. Twice now, I guess." He sighed. "Her wounds still haven't healed." I fixed the blanket over them.

Xolani: "Why is she in her bed? My child needs to heal!"

Zwe: "And she is healing. The machine going off was a sign that something is wrong, she's okay now. Amahle needs to be next to her for a bit."

Xolani: "I have asked you once, to get out." He said to me.

Zwe: "Unfortunately he can't. This is his sister."

Mama: "She was also shot?"

Zwe: "Yes. She suffered most of the shots trying to shield Thembisa."

Xolani: "Do you see Ntombenhle what I said about this god-awful place? What is this?" My only saving grace was that my sister was here but that meant I had to keep my father out. It would be hard because Amahle was his favorite child.

Mama: "Xolani, you need to be calm. The doctor knows what is best and you can't keep disrespecting a king. Stop it. Please. Your Highness, I do apologize for my husband."

Nkosi: "Don't apologize mama. I understand Mr Ntaka but I'm only trying to protect Thembisa. All of us here, are. We need to understand we're on the same side." I could still feel resentment from Thembisa's father but at

least he kept it to himself. "Zwe, my father will want to see Amahle. I don't want him in this room. What do we do?"

Zwe: "I can't remove Amahle yet. What if it affects Thembisa? And I can't lie to a king."

Nkosi: "I can."

Zwe: "You're way too angry to speak to him."

Nkosi: "That can only be his fault." Mthunzi walked in.

Mthunzi: "My princes, the king is here."

Nkosi: "I'll sort it out." I walked out.

Zwe: "Mthunzi please." Mthunzi followed right behind me. My father had his guards surrounding him at the entrance. No one was around this area besides the guards and him.

Sikhosana: "Mehluli. Where's your sister?" He came to me. My whole body gripped in anger as I roared at him. He stepped back. "Stop it." He hissed.

Nkosi: "Get out-"

Sikhosana: "My boy, we're in public. We can sort our differences at home. Not like this."

Nkosi: "I don't care about the fucking public!! When you shot at her, you didn't care!!!" My body morphed into its vicious overgrown form, roaring. "You can't start to care now." I growled. He stepped back from me. Mthunzi stood in front of me.

Mthunzi: "Nkosi." He was shaking but knelt in front of me. "You heard Thembisa. You can't kill a king. You shouldn't. Think about Thembisa. She needs you." My body slowly transformed back to my human form. I walked back to the room.

KHAYA POV\_

We were back in the waiting room. I sat with Mngqobi and the girls. Right now I wanted to go home. Being here felt so scary. Sibob was pacing the floor clean before he sat next to me. His phone rang. He answered.

Sibo: "Zwe."

Zwe: "Shut down the power. All of it. Cameras and all. Now."

Sibo: "Haibo Zwe, what about the life supp-"

Zwe: "NOW!!" He hung up. Sibonelo took his tablet. I knew better than to annoy him with questions so I just stared at the tablet as he worked. He was doing security settings. He shut down the first block, moving on to the next set of screens, shutting down the second and then the third. The last screen had again, many blocks each with a different camera or video. He looked closely at the screen getting up. I could see he enlarged the video but looked at it by himself. I couldn't read his facial expression until I saw pure horror on his face. He quickly clicked the screen and shut it down.

Mnqobi: "What? What did you see?" A loud roar screeched through the walls making all of us jump to our feet. Sibonelo locked the door, standing against it. "What the hell was that Sbo!!!"

Sibo: "Shut your Mouth." He hissed, switching off the lights. I know he knows. He saw something on that tablet and it scared him. I didn't want to know but I needed to prepare. That couldn't have been Mehluli? It was, wasn't it? What does it mean? He can make animal sounds when he's angry? Why? If it's to scare people then that's a very useful skill but it has to just be his voice, right? There's no way it can be anything else. Why did Zwe want Sbo to switch cameras off?

Khaya: "No. Absolutely not."

Sibo: "Khaya!"

Khaya: "It's him, isn't it?"

Sibo: "What part of shut your mouth do you not understand?" I can't shut my mouth. I can't. I need to understand where we were because surely this isn't the hospital I was born in, in the city I grew up in. I'm not stuck in a private waiting room with a vicious animal outside. This is not a video game. So before I lose my mind, I need someone to say something. We stayed in silence a few minutes before A knock disrupted my thoughts.

Zwe: "Open it's me." Sibonelo opened the door, switching on the lights. Oh he was pissed. Sibonelo that is. "Nothing can be confirmed right now but Both girls are still stable. Thembisa is the only one still in a coma but

she's breathing and I'm hopeful. Sibonelo, You need to take these ones home. The palace. Since the city is in lockdown, you can't move around too much and there's no reason for you guys to be here." Sibonelo looked at him with a look I've never seen him give his brother. He was not impressed by something only known to them both.

Sibo: "Mnqobi, Khaya. Take the girls to the car." No need to repeat yourself sir, I'm glad to leave. We walked out the waiting room, down the passage in caution and used the exit we had come in.

\*Narrated

Sibonelo stared at his brother. A mixture of emotions running through him.

Sibo: "How could you?"

Zwe: "Sbo."

Sibo: "No. Not Sbo. How long?"

Zwe: "How long wha-"

Sibo: "How long have you known!"

Zwe: "Sibonelo I don't answer to you-"

Sibo: "Because you answer to Nkosi!!!"

Zwe: "I don't answer to anyone."

Sibo: "Really? You just casually kept the secret that he changes into a monster when he is angry?"

Zwe: "He's NOT a monster!!!"

Sibo: "An animal then! Zwelethu, we don't keep secrets. We know things about each other no other human being knows. Why would you keep this from me? You've gaslit me for YEARS when I kept telling you something is fucking wrong!! Now that it's uncontrollable, I must help?!"

Zwe: "It's not my business to tell you about my friend's lives-"

Sibo: "YOUR WHAT!!!!!" He screamed.

Zwe: "Calm down. Nkosi has always been my friend. You know this."

Sibo: "And what am I?"

Zwe: "You're my brother Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Yet, here we are. You use me to protect your so called friend. Is that what brothers do?"

Zwe: "I'm sorry."

Sibo: "You're not because you want something else from me. Again. You want me to keep your bestie's secret?"

Zwe: "Among other things." Sibonelo stared at him, in anger. There was only one way to soften his heart. "Remember what our parents always say? That you followed me straight from heaven, you couldn't even wait a few years after I was born, mama immediately got pregnant with you. I know you will follow me to the ends of earth. My battles are yours. You're my brother Sboni. I trust you. I know you. Please."

Sibo: "What do you want Zwelethu?"

Zwe: "The Sikhosana family is going through alot right now. The king and prince aren't on good terms and the last princess was shot."

Sibo: "Did she turn into a mermaid?"

Zwe: "That's mean, no. Someone needs to make a statement. Someone who has the emotional intelligence and knows the guide of being royal-"

Sibo: "That's their speaker's job."

Zwe: "It's not, Sibonelo. It's a royals job. The whole city is locked down. The citizens are scared and clueless. They don't want to hear a diluted speech from a speaker. They need a royal to address them."

Sibo: "What do you really want me to say out there Zwelethu?"

Zwe: "That the princess is fine. Her injuries weren't major. Ease them into knowing that most of those bullets were strays."

Sibo: "Khaya heard more than 20 shots and you want me to convince the public that only a few hit her but not fatally?"

Zwe: "Yes." Sibonelo sighed, shaking his head before walking out.

PETU POV\_

Sibonelo drove us to the palace. I wasn't too worried because I'm sure the Biyela parents were still at the Sikhosana palace. I was only nervous because this is my first time at Mnqobi's home. The car drove into the massive yard and parked. We got out, walking to the entrance. Notha was still holding my hand and I was glad for it. We walked in, to my surprise. The king and queen were here. I froze.

Queen: "Oh my angels." She hugged Khaya first. "When I heard you still in the city in the time of the shooting, I was so worried Khaya! Are you okay?"

Khaya: "I'm fine mama." She moved on to Mnqobi, checking his ears.

Mnqobi: "Ma."

King: "What's wrong son?" He asked Sibonelo, who still looked despondent if not angry.

Queen: "Oh, the girls. Nothando!" She enveloped her in a hug. "I was so worried! Who's this?"

Notha: "This is my friend Petu, mama."

Queen: "Hello Petu."

Petu: "Good afternoon my king and queen." I bowed.

Queen: "Oh don't be silly, child. I'm Mama Biyela." She looked at Sibonelo too. "Sweetheart, what's wrong?"

Sibo: "Zwe wants me to address the nation. The king and prince are unable to."

Queen: "Oh no."

King: "Why? What's wrong?"

Sibo: "I can't say."

Queen: "Sibonelo, we're your parents!! What's going on? Is the princess dead?"

Sibo: "Fortunately, no."

King: "So why are the Sikhosana's unable to address the nation? Where is their speaker?"

Sibo: "Tata, I'm only doing what I'm told. I don't know where their speaker is. I just know Zwelethu has placed this gigantic burden on me."

King: "It's okay, boy. I can do it."

Sibo: "No Tata. I have to do it. Khaya, Mngqobi. Can we meet in my office. I need to make a statement on the 6pm news." He walked away.

Queen: "Come. You two need tea. What a stressful day." She pulled us away from the boys.

We sat in the beautiful garden. I was so enchanted. It felt like I was in a Disney movie. Everything looked so prim and proper. We sat under a very luxurious gazebo, having tea and scones. Mama Biyela was so beautiful. She had a gorgeous plump face with such little makeup on her. Her head wrapped in a designer scarf that I think may have been a limited edition. She wore a navy blue dress with white pearls on her neckline. Her hands looked so soft, donning long white nails. Even the way she sat was royal. I loved her immediately.

Queen: "What happened out there?"

Notha: "I don't know mama. We were still in school. Petu came out first." The queen looked at me to continue.

Petu: "When I came out of school, I saw the helicopters and asked a few girls. They said someone was shot at Res and so I ran there because I was worried. By the time I got there, the building was taped off from the gate. That's when Prince Sibonelo and Mngqobi arrived with Nothando to take me."

Notha: "I was worried because I thought you were already at Res."

Queen: "Let's thank the gods that you're safe. All of you. I am so worried about that poor princess. You know how the media is. They exaggerate everything. According to them, there's no chance of her being alive because she got shot in the head a few times. Some sources say there was more than 25 shots that went off and they hit her. What utter rubbish." My heart skipped an uncomfortable beat but I had to trust Zwe, he said they're both stable.

Notha: "She's fine mama. It's our other friend that we're worried about. Thembisa."

Queen: "Another girl got shot too? Was it related?"

Notha: "Yes they were together. She's currently in a coma."

Queen: "Oh sweet Jesus, that poor girl. In a coma? Woow." She sipped her tea. "Why would the king even want to kill his own child? Whoo. Babu Biyela has some questionable friends. Let me go and ask him." She got up, walking back to the house.

KHAYA POV\_

Sibonelo's office was quiet. As the advisor, I had no advice. This whole situation was a first in my knowledge. No princess has ever been shot before as far as I'm knowledgeable. Sibonelo really looked out of it.

King: "Son, let me help you. You don't look too good." Sibonelo snapped out of his thoughts. What did he see that has him so shook? Why did I want to know because myself I'm not confident that I'd be okay if I knew. If it can stress a whole Sibonelo. Ya no, I'm good.

Sibonelo: "I'm fine Tata. The brief I have is that the last princess was shot. Only a few of those bullets hit her and so far she's recovering well. The rest of the bullets were strays." He swallowed. I didn't believe him. Why was he lying?

Mnqobi: "What about Thembisa?"

King: "Who is Thembisa?"

Khaya: "The second girl that was shot. She's in a coma."

Sibonelo: "What do you think, Tata?"

King: "Don't mention her. Right now, we need the nation calmed. Any distraction or additional information might cause panic. If the public think civilians are being shot at, they will riot. They will think of the cruel king. We don't need an unstable country right now. Focus on the princess and that she's doing well."

Mnqobi: "Tata is right. Even the news outlets haven't mentioned her or the guard that was shot. Pace behind them and only reveal information as it causes a stir."

Sibonelo: "Bug?"

Khaya: "As much as that's a good idea, if we reveal information as it arises, sooner rather than later, the public will panic and think something is being hidden. Offer them something they don't know now so they can gain your trust. Mention the two civilians that were shot. Offer your support to them too and not just Sikhosana."

Sibo: "Won't that upset the King? I- I don't want to ruffle his feathers today." Something was making me very uncomfortable with Sibonelo's silence. He looked rattled.

King: "I will speak to him. He's possibly distracted right now and needs assurance that we're on his side. This is good, Sibonelo. We need to be behind the Sikhosana family. This will rebuild our relationship with them."

Sibo: "Mnqobi, please organise the media. I'll address the nation at six." Mnqobi got on his phone immediately. Mama walked in.

Queen: "Is everything well?" She stood next to Sibonelo. "You look sick."

Sibo: "I'm fine mama. Just a stressful day."

Queen: "Is there anything I can do Baba?"

King: "Yes my love. I suspect the King will want to be in the city for a bit until his princess is out of hospital. Please organise his house for him."

Queen: "The house you built for him 10 years ago and he's never stepped foot in? What makes you think he'll use it now?"

King: "Love."

Queen: "Your friends are very questionable, Mziwabo. Very very dodgy."

King: "You can't say that about the king Thandeka."

Queen: "Fine then, but at least you know. I doubt he'll even come to his special house you built for him because we're peasants to him. Fine. I'll take the girls with me, to make the house presentable for his arrival. I'm sure they need to be distracted a bit."

Mnqobi: "Absolutely not! No mama. You can't take them anywhere near the King. We don't know what's going or how his emotions are right now. We don't want another case of the cruel king who kills commoners that dare look his direction. Absolutely not. Petu and Nothando are not going anywhere near him!" I held my mouth trying hard not to laugh in this very serious moment.

King: "Mnqobi is right. In fact, I don't think I want you near him either. Perhaps just send the cleaners, I'll welcome him into the house myself. Come." They walked out.

Khaya: "Yes wena, husband of two wives."

Mnqobi: "Please shut up Khaya. Mxim." He stormed out the office, no doubt going to check on his wives. I giggled then focused back on Sibonelo. He was staring at his tablet quietly.

Khaya: "Bobo?" He looked up.

Sibo: "Right. I'm drafting now." He started typing on his laptop. I waited until he finished his speech which was no more than 7 minutes long. "Please proof read this and check for grammar, information accuracy and of course if it's in proper format." I took his laptop and read while he went to the small table that had a whiskey on it, pouring himself a glass. I read the whole speech, changing the format a little to suit civilian understanding and empathy. I'd extended it just a bit. Possibly by a minute only. I don't think he could be on TV for long seeing how he's going in that bottle. I placed the laptop in it's place, going to fetch the bottle from him.

Khaya: "What did you see Sboni?"

Sibo: "I can't tell you that Khaya."

Khaya: "It's affecting you badly. Is it Zwe? Is it about the roar we heard?"

Sibo: "Khaya stop. Stop with these questions. Leave it alone. Let's focus on work now."

Khaya: "Do you think this address will be the only one? Seeing that alot is happening behind the scenes at Sikhosana."

Sibo: "No it's not going to be the only. The Sikhosana family is already fighting among themselves. We might need to hold the fort for a bit but the other royals can't know this, Khaya. I'm already being harassed by them all. They're going to spill over to you and Mnqobi, be clueless. Say you don't know a damn thing." A vein throbbed in his forehead.

Khaya: "Tata was right though. This is good for the family. To rebuild the relationship with Sikhosana and having their back in this time." He chuckled.

Sibo: "This means nothing to Sikhosana, Khaya. Once he's back in top form, he will take over Again without so much as a thank you or glance. That's who they are. We are nothing but their workers. Always has been that way and it always will be. Who do you think was addressing the nation while King Ngidumise was burning it left right and centre? My grandfather. My family had to fix it. Did that mean anything to them? No. Frankly, the only reason I even agreed to this shit is because Zwelethu asked me. If it wasn't for him, the world would know who they really are." He finished his drink and sat down. "Please ask the tailor to get my regal attire ready. I need to practice my speech." ...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 52

PRINCE POV\_

Zwe gave me a clean change of clothes in his office as I had ripped my own. I tore off the remainder of my shirt, and it caught on fire. I quickly threw it on the ground and stepped on it.

Mthunzi: "Okay? What was that?"

Nkosi: "My hand just caught on fire."

Mthunzi: "How?"

Nkosi: "I don't know Mthunzi, I'm right in front of you." Zwe looked at my hand, smelling it.

Zwe: "No sign or smell of inflammables." He picked up the fabric piece. It was burnt. "Are you still angry?"

Nkosi: "I'm fucking livid." He looked at me.

Zwe: "Put this shirt on. Try and calm down." I wore the shirt he gave me and the pants. "You do know your grandfather had the ability of fire right?"

Nkosi: "I already have my abilities. I can't grow new ones as an adult."

Zwe: "Then perhaps it was dormant all these years. Have you ever been this angry before?"

Nkosi: "No."

Zwe: "What you need to do now is calm down. You don't want to scare Thembisa's parents." He checked his phone. "Sibonelo will be addressing the nation in less than an hour."

Mthunzi: "Sibonelo? Are you sure about this Zwe?"

Zwe: "Yes. He may be unstable but he won't defy me. We can trust him."

Nkosi: "Zwe, this is a very sensitive matter to just hand over to the brother who thinks I stole his spotlight from your life."

Zwe: "Leave Sibonelo to me. Do you want to tell me why your father wants to get rid of your girlfriend?"

Nkosi: "I don't know. He just lost his mind on the first time he saw her."

Mthunzi: "She went up the mountain with Amahle."

Zwe: "Dlozi trail?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Claims she's a witch."

Zwe: "That's insane. You told me only those with a pure heart could go up there."

Nkosi: "That's what I was told. He's been after her since. Even tried to bribe me to marry Samu."

Zwe: "Bathonga? She's always had a thing for you." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "Yeah, this morning she gave her thing for me in a glass of orange juice."

Mthunzi: "What does that mean?"

Nkosi: "She put love potion in my juice."

Zwe: "Nkosinhle!" I could feel the anger vibrating off Mthunzi from where he was sitting.

Nkosi: "Amahle took the glass from me and she slapped it out her hand. That's when she admitted it. The crazy thing is, my father didn't even react."

Mthunzi: "Now I have to get a guard to taste all your food before you eat Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "I'm fine." A phone rang. Zwe looked at it, his.

Zwe: "The other royals are panicking. Council should be starting tomorrow and now this." He switched off his phone.

Nkosi: "Council should continue. Maybe that will take their minds off us."

Zwe: "Who will lead council? Your father is still in the city and possibly angry at you but worried about the last princess."

Nkosi: "Then I don't know Zwelethu. My focus is not out there. My life is inside this hospital. Anyone else can deal with everything else." I got up walking to Thembisa's room. Her parents were sitting on her one side, holding hands. I hated feeling like I was intruding but I didn't really care, I had the right to be here. They can't throw me out. I sat on the other side, her father's eyes burnt through me. If I even dared look up at him, the stare would not last. I brushed Amahle's head. She hates that, I know. It must be worse now that it's in pain.

Zwe: "I have to remove the last two bullets from her head tonight. She didn't want to earlier. Said it hurts." He stood next to me.

Xolani: "And Thembisa? How is she?"

Zwe: "She only had one bullet in. It missed her heart by a small fraction. I removed it already and I've made sure that nothing else is damaged."

Mama: "How is the other girl still alive but she has bullets in her head?"

Zwe: "The bullets in her head were lodged in soft tissue that didn't harm her, thank the gods. The others only lightly grazed her."

Mama: "That is a miracle. Yoh! The gods must love her."

Zwe: "A miracle indeed. The address is about to happen Nkosi, do you want to watch it?" I nodded. Slightly nervous with Sibonelo holding the fort. He was very foolish, that's all I'm sure of but Zwe trusted him. The room was already equipped with a television and he switched it on. Mthunzi stood next to me with a hand on my shoulder. We waited till 6pm hit and he stepped on the stage. Fully dressed in his regal attire. So far, good. Shows seriousness.

Nkosi: "He's drunk." I snapped.

Zwe: "He isn't, Nkosi." I folded my arms staring at this boy with my heart in my throat. If he even dares.

Sibonelo: "Good evening to the city of Mountain Peak, and the nation at large. I am Prince Sibonelo Biyela. I'm standing in front of you today to address you all on the incident that has befallen our peaceful city. It is unfortunate to have to announce, the last princess of the throne has been shot. We are grateful to the gods and the medical team's efficiency that she has survived. The cause of the shooting remains unknown and speculations are strictly forbidden. False news and those who spread it, will be punished severely. The princess suffered only a few wounds as most of the bullets were strays. We ask that you give the royal family some privacy to deal with this internally. The city is currently under lock down to prevent unnecessary chaos and panic to the hospital. We understand that you all are concerned and would love to show support to the family, please do so, in the comfort and safety of your homes. In addition, two other people were hurt. A learner and resident of the Mountain Peak University residency, whom, for privacy and respect will not be named as of yet. She too, is recovering in hospital with her loving family. It is however, with regret that I mention, the guard who was around the residence at the time, suffered a fatal shot. We extend our sincere apologies and condolences to his family and the citizens who are deeply affected by these terrible news." He paused looking at his notes. He's been doing well, he can't mess up now. I sat up, watching closely. His hands were shaking.

Sibo: "The throne thanks you for your unwavering support. We thank you for your patience. Your prayers. We will continue to update you further when we have more details. Royal council has since been postponed as we help our royal family and support them in these trying times. I thank you." He stepped away from the podium, walking out with his guards. I looked at Zwe.

Zwe: "He did well?"

Nkosi: "Incredibly. Thank you." I turned back to look at my two girls. Now all I need is for my woman to wake up so I can think straight.

SASA POV \_

Coronation Day was stressful. Nkosi was refusing to wake up today. He just snored away without movement. I kissed his face..

Me: "My love. You're going to be late." He cuddled further under the blankets, squeezing me again. "King Sikhosana. Wake up." He opened his eyes.

Nkosi: "It's cold."

Me: "You're the last person to say that. Come. It's time to wake up. Even Sizwe is more ready than you." The baby kicked in my belly, toward his side. "See? He's asking for you. As usual. This child doesn't like me." He laughed.

Nkosi: "My boy will absolutely love his mommy." He kissed my heavily pregnant tummy. His fingers traced over it lovingly.

Me: "Are you excited for today?"

Nkosi: "Not really. I hope it's quick. I want to spend some time with you alone. Prince will be here any day now. We haven't had a moment alone since we arrived."

Me: "Alright then but for you to spend time with me, you have to address your nation as King." I smiled.

Nkosi: "By the end of the night you'll be a queen of a nation."

Me: "I still prefer just being your wife. I don't care about the title."

Nkosi: "I know my love. That's why you're perfect for me. Let's get up before the country knocks down my door." I giggled. He helped me out of bed, running my bath water. "Are you in pain?"

Me: "A little bit. The baby is adjusting." He led me into the tub, washing me.

Nkosi: "I'll cut the ceremony short-"

Me: "No! You're a king and deserve the full ceremony. I can handle it."

Nkosi: "Okay but you'll be by my side the whole day so don't even try to act strong. Any discomfort, let me know." He kissed my shoulder, washing me.

It took a while but we were both finally dressed in full royal attire. A hair dresser helped with my hair as Nkosi had his barber cut his. Even as we prepared, we stayed side by side, him holding my hand. It was time. We walked down the stairs to the dining hall where the king and queen waited.

King: "Finally. We're an hour late."

Nkosi: "No we're not. I'm the king, I decide when we start. My wife needs to feed our child in her belly." He led me to the table to sit and fixed my plate. I was quite embarrassed at how he was so callous toward his parents. We would have to discuss this tonight, it can't carry on like this. We had our breakfast and immediately left for the Kings Arena. It was filled to the brim with screaming and singing civilians. The nation was overjoyed. The guards led us onto the stage. Nkosi held my hand all the way letting me sit down finally and he next to me. His father and mother were on his other side. The royal speaker stepped forward, joyous and excited while introducing the King.

Speaker: "BAYEEEEEDE iNkosi!!" The crowd responded. "uSikhosana, Musi KaMhlanga. Mhlanga ayihlangani ihlangana mhla kwezithebe! Somboni, Msamkhulu." The crowd clapped and danced in response. I looked at Nkosi. He stared at the stadium with no emotion. I squeezed his hand. He turned to look at me and smiled, kissing my lips.

Me: "You're not allowed to do that."

Nkosi: "I'd like to see who will come up and tell me that nonsense. You look heavenly, my love."

Me: "Thank you but try to smile so that you too can look cute." He chuckled, looking back at his people. "They're really happy about your kingship. They love you."

Nkosi: "Hm." He kissed my hand and settled back in his frown.

Speaker: "It is my great honour, to introduce the King His Majesty Sikhosana alongside our future, the heir, His Highness Prince Ngidumise Sikhosana." He knelt on the floor. The king stood up along with, Ngidumise. The royal crown was presented to the king. He took it off the black cushion, lifting it in the air.

King: "By the power vested in me. Granted by the gods. I pass my reign to the rightful heir. Ngidumise Sikhosana." Ngidumise knelt in front of his father who placed the Gold, Purple and Black crown on his head. "My

King, as you rise, so does your legacy. Bayede." Ngidumise stood up, facing the crowd.

Crowd: "Bayede!!!!" They clapped and celebrated. As they settled down. The king spoke again.

King: "Introducing mother of the nation. Queen Nobomi Nonkosi Sikhosana. Mother of the future heir of our kingdom." I stood up, walking to them. I knelt in front of them, Ngidumise held my arm helping me down. He accepted the crown from his mother and placed it on my head. "Mother of the nation, as you rise, may you nurture and fertilize the great of this nation. Bayede." Once again, the crowd responded. Nkosi helped me back up and held my hand. It was done. I felt a pierce in my back. I know it was coming from inside. Sizwengaye wanted to come out. The first contraction and I held it in, looking forward and gracious as a Queen should. I practiced my breathing slightly and quietly. I really wanted to at least groan the pain away but the nation was watching. We sat back in our seats, watching the entertainment throughout the day. Dancers from all cultures performed, gifts were offered by the other royals. Eventually, We made it down the stairs, into the middle of the parade so the crowd could see us better. A slow walk around as acknowledgement. The nation tour would probably be after Sizwe's birth if he comes in the next few days.

Nkosi: "Love."

Me: "Yebo baba?"

Nkosi: "You're shivering. Are you in pain?"

Me: "Just some discomfort." He stopped immediately. "Nkosi, let's finish this part please. It's not too bad."

Nkosi: "Only this part and we leave."

Me: "You're being dramatic my love. Sizwe will take another few days. He's probably annoyed because it's hot."

Nkosi: "Me too, my son. I'm just as annoyed."

Me: "You two are one person, honestly. People want to see you, and you're just bored of it all."

Nkosi: "They've seen me enough for a day. What else can they do? There's a whole broadcast with my face on TV, they can watch that."

They do say pictures last longer anyway." He stood in front of me. "I love you Mrs Sikhosana. Thank you for being my wife."

Me: "You can't thank me for something I enjoy." He smiled, looking into my eyes.

Nkosi: "You're definitely in pain. It's time to go now." We walked to the cars, leaving the Arena. The next contraction attacked me on the way to the palace. I didn't hold it in this time. Nkosi rubbed my stomach, unsure of what to do. "I'm sorry love. We're almost home."

Me: "My King, Please promise me you'll take care of my child."

Nkosi: "We'll do that together my love. You'll teach me. You know I know nothing about babies so you have to help hold the leg while I wipe a bum." I chuckled.

Me: "This is not the time for jokes." We arrived at the palace, walking in.

Nkosi: "Get the midwives immediately!!" He barked at the servants.

Me: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Shhh. Come." He led me into the birthing quarters. Everything was ready as of this week. He helped me undress and put on a comfortable light frock.

Me: "Nkosiyam."

Nkosi: "Yes love."

Me: "I love you. Remember I'm yours even after this life."

Nkosi: "Don't talk like this Nonkosi. You're not leaving me here with this child. You know I can't handle that. I'm not strong enough for that. Please don't upset me."

Me: "You are strong, my king. You are courageous, victorious, and great."

Nkosi: "Nonkosi! Stop it right now! I don't want to hear another word. We'll talk once you've given birth since you're adamant on making me feel pain for no reason." He rubbed my belly. "I'm not raising this child with anyone but you." Another contraction hit. I held his hand, crying. The midwives came in. Three of them. One lit up some incense, the other checked how far I was.

Nkosi: "Is my son coming?"

Midwife: "In a while, my king. The incense is for her pain so long." He kissed my cheek, brushing my hair.

Nkosi: "I'm sorry I yelled. You scare me when you talk about leaving Nonkosi. Don't do that please, I will not be a good person without you."

Me: "Yes you will. Uyi Nkosi yam enhle."

Nkosi: "I'm not hearing another word from you."

It took hours. The labour was exhausting me but I felt strong enough to carry on.

Me: "Where is my husband?"

Midwife: "You're so close to birth my queen. The king cannot be inside -"

Me: "Call my husband inside here." She went out to call him. Nkosi came in, running.

Nkosi: "You're close my love." I looked at his face.

Me: "Pictures last longer you said. Can the soul take pictures?"

Nkosi: "Yes. It's called memories." He smiled.

Me: "I love you my king."

Nkosi: "Is that why you called me here Nonkosi, you thought I forgot?" I laughed. "I love you too my queen." He looked into my eyes but his smile disappeared. "Please don't leave me."

Me: "I'm always with you. Sizwe is here."

Midwife: "It's time, my king." He knelt next to the bed, holding my hand.

Nkosi: "Go ahead."

Midwife: "With the next contraction my queen, push." I waited and felt it so I pushed. "There's the head. Again my queen." I pushed again and one last time. Feeling him finally come out of me.

Nkosi: "You did it, my love." I smiled. He kissed my lips. "How are you feeling."

Me: "I'm okay. Just tired. Let me see you hold him Nkosi." The midwife handed the baby to him. The baby stopped crying immediately. "He has your eyes, doesn't he?"

Nkosi: "Yes of course. Look." He smiled, bringing the child closer.

Me: "He's beautiful."

Nkosi: "Yes. A you with my eyes." He kissed me again. "Thank you my love. It's time to rest now. This one must go meet his grandfather." I kissed the baby, giving him over to his father. The queen entered the room.

Queen: "The heir has finally arrived. We thank the gods."

Nkosi: "He has my eyes."

Queen: "Indeed, he does. He is a true Sikhosana prince. Nonkosi, how are you feeling."

Me: "Well my queen. Just quite thirsty."

Queen: "That would be normal. You've just birthed a prince." She smiled.

Nkosi: "I'll be back my love. I'm handing him over to father." He walked out. The queen poured water from the jug into a cup, handing it over to me. I held it in my hand looking at the pure water and back at her. She stared at me with no emotion.

Queen: "You need your strength back, queen. The baby will need you in a few hours." I nodded, looking at the glass and drank the water. They removed the bedding, quickly putting a new one in. I laid back on the bed, trying to rest a bit but my body started shaking a little.

Me: "Can I have another blanket?" The midwife brought another and tucked me in. I closed my eyes, trying to catch my breath and rest. My brain refused to shut down. It fought hard to keep me awake but my body was tired. Nkosi walked in.

Nkosi: "Love." I couldn't speak. He pulled back the blankets, seeing blood pooling on the bed. "Nonkosi?" His warm hands holding mine. "What's going on? Why is she not speaking?!" He asked the midwife. They all busied on their queen, checking her health. I closed my eyes to try and rest once again. "I swear to the gods, if she dare dies, you'll all be screaming my name in hell for the rest of eternity. That I promise you. WHAT'S WRONG!!"

Me: "Nkosi enhle. Please bring my child."

Nkosi: "Bring the child!!" He shouted over his shoulder. "Nonkosi, don't do this to me. Please. Sthandwa Sam, I am on my knees begging you."

Me: "I love you."

Nkosi: "No. Not that. Just stay alive. Be here with me. I don't want to be without you."

Me: "Promise me, you can forgive him. Promise me and I'll come find you in any life."

Nkosi: "Nonkosi. Do not. Do not break me like this."

Me: "Forgive him Nkosiyam. He doesn't know. Your father doesn't know. You can't kill a king, Nkosi. You have to make this promise to me." His eyes filled with tears.

Nkosi: "No."

Me: "Sthandwa Sam."

Nkosi: "Please don't leave me." The midwife brought the baby in. "Please Nonkosi."

Me: "Let me hold him."

Nkosi: "No." He held me in his arms. "No. He doesn't get to hold you. You can't do this to me." I hugged him.

Me: "Okay, then you can hold him like this for me until you join me. Nkosi, I can't hang on." His hold was tighter, his face buried in my neck. "Nkosi yam ehle. I love you so much but for you to find me again, you can't kill a king." He let go, standing up. He took the baby, handing him to me, helping him latch on my breast. He watched with cold eyes as the baby fed. His hands flaming by his sides. The baby finished and burped on my chest. I closed my eyes. Ngidumise flickered off his hands and closed the door, locking it. He grabbed the first midwife snapping her head, following with the rest. They all dropped dead on the floor. He stared at his new born, his hands growing larger flames. The former king banged on the door breaking it down. Ngidumise focused on the baby.

King: "Ngidumise. Step back from the baby." Ngidumise turned to look at him, his hands growing larger flames. His heart hardening to concrete ice as he remembers the last words of his now late wife. You can't kill a king.

PRINCE POV\_

My heart was in pain. I couldn't breath properly but I hid it well. It was well into the night. Zwe had brought in a bed for Thembisa's parents. Her mother slept in it but her father refused to sleep. He sat on the same chair staring at his daughter. We've been in this silence for hours now. I stood up and shifted Amahle's body so that she can be comfortable. I checked her pulse. Still beating. Zwe had postponed her surgery for morning. I sat back down and sighed, trying to get air into my lungs.

Xolani: "What's wrong with you?"

Nkosi: "Nothing sir."

Xolani: "You've been hissing for an hour now."

Nkosi: "Probably just this one tormenting me in her dreams." I brushed Amahle's head.

Xolani: "You can feel her dreams?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Xolani: "That's new." We sat in silence once again. I could feel his stare once again, I obviously can't look back otherwise I'll be tempted to be in his head. "What do you want from my daughter?"

Nkosi: "I'm in love with her."

Xolani: "That sounds familiar, wait, your grandfather said that before he killed his wife." Nkosi: "I am nothing like my grandfather-"

Xolani: "Oh really? Why are we in a hospital then? Why is my child in a coma and you're sitting there sighing ?"

Nkosi: "I did my best to protect her. I will continue to but because of you we had to restrict the protection I give her-"

Xolani: "How do you expect me to trust you if this can happen? This, has happened before Your Highness. Why must I allow it to happen to me a second time? Is that fair? Is it fair that your family wiped mine out and when I've rebuilt my life, myself, it must happen again. When does it stop? Do you think its fair?"

Nkosi: "No, sir."

Xolani: "So am I being unreasonable when I say I don't want you near my daughter? Am I being difficult?"

Nkosi: "No sir."

Xolani: "Then what must happen for you to fully understand where I'm coming from? It's either you just don't care about what keeps happening to me and my family or you want to continue putting my child in danger all because you love her. So again, I have to sacrifice for you. I have to give you my broken soul I've put together all these years. Because the prince is in love. You're not like your grandfather? Right. You're absolutely correct. You're not like him. You Are Him." He got up and walked out.

The migraine I had, got worse. I never have headaches and such but today, here I am. Amahle is bothering me in her sleep, I just know it. It's been a while since Thembisa's father walked out. I know he was safe because as of the address, no one was allowed out the hospital. The guards were at all possible exits and Mthunzi was right outside the room so he was watching him. I've never felt more guilty. This man had every right to be hostile. I may not be my grandfather but I sure as hell was moving like him. I wish I could wake up Amahle but I don't know what she was doing her sleep. Perhaps she was healing Thembisa or guiding her awake. I hated waiting. Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "You should get some sleep."

Nkosi: "I'm fine." He checked her vitals.

Zwe: "I know you're fine but I need you better by morning."

Nkosi: "Things are already tense. I don't think I can sleep."

Zwe: "When she wakes up, she can't be seeing your tired red eyes. You look scary."

Nkosi: "Do you think I'm like Papa?"

Zwe: "Hell no. Not even close. Why?"

Nkosi: "Are you saying that because you're being nice?"

Zwe: "No I'm not. You're nothing like your grandfather Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "Look at what has happened. She's here because of me. A bullet missed her heart, just because I love her."

Zwe: "That doesn't mean you're him. Yes, it seems similar but you're good. You haven't an evil bone in your body. You don't kill-"

Nkosi: "Yet. I don't know if I'll hold back if something happens to her."

Zwe: "What I know is, you won't be burning down innocent people. What happened is horrible but it's the past. What we do in the present is find ways to protect and defend the future."

Nkosi: "He hates me."

Zwe: "Let him. What he can't control is how you and Thembisa feel about each other. Only she can make the decision to stay with you now but maybe it might help your case if you look better than you do now. I'll sit here and keep watch. I set up my office for you and Mthunzi."

## PETU POV\_

The Biyela palace was extraordinary. I was given a guest room that looked like an expensive studio apartment, the way it was so huge and it had an en suite. We'd had dinner earlier without Babu Biyela, as he had gone to welcome the King in his house. When he came back, his wife and him left for bed. I too went to the room I was given, I needed to take a bath. I had also been given a night gown to sleep in. The bathroom looked like a hotel, I ran my bath. There were brand new toiletries on the counter with a cloth. These were placed here by the helpers when they set up my room. I took my bath, wearing the night gown to bed. The lotion and body wash smell so good. I had to put some more on my hands. My bedroom door opened. Mnqobi snuck in. My heart raced immediately. He can't do this here.

Mnqobi: "Hi baby." He smiled, walking to the bed.

Petu: "No Mnqobi. We're in your family home. This is disrespectful." He climbed on the bed.

Mnqobi: "They're all sleeping baby." He kissed my lips. "You smell so good."

Petu: "Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "What baby? We'll be very quiet." His hand reached between my thighs.

Petu: "You know I can't be..." He took off my night gown, my body responded to him. I hate how I can't resist him. His finger rubbed on my clit slowly and slid in between my labia, penetrating me. I gasped in his mouth.

Mnqobi: "keep your mouth on mine." I kissed him, laying back on the bed. He climbed on top of me, taking off his belt, zipping down his pants. I wanted him inside right now. He pulled it out, positioning at my entrance. The door opened. We both froze. The door closed again.

Notha: "Didn't mean to interrupt." Mnqobi couldn't move. I sat up from under him and he stood up, pulling up his pants. I used the duvet to cover up. It was so awkward, I was so embarrassed. Imagine being caught having sex in someone's house. Not just a house, a palace.

Mnqobi: "Fuck." He whispered, unable to look her in the eye.

Notha: "I didn't say stop. I just came to check on you."

Petu: "I'm so sorry."

Notha: "Why are you sorry? You're only sleeping with your man. Is that not so, Mnqobi?"

Mnqobi: "I... Uhm."

Notha: "Okay, so I should go?"

Mnqobi: "No. I'll leave." He walked out quickly. That was very strange.

Notha: "Sorry."

Petu: "No, don't worry about it. Let me just..." I took my night gown and put it on. I looked up at her and she had a grin on her face. I blushed, obviously embarrassed even more.

Notha: "You two are brave." She climbed in bed.

Petu: "We got carried away. Mngqobi is just ..." I sighed.

Notha: "He's good in bed?"

Petu: "Yeah.." I giggled.

Notha: "Do you think you'll still want him when he gets married?"

Petu: "Probably but I'd definitely stay away from him. I need to learn to resist him or I'm relocating."

Notha: "What if he wants to continue seeing you?"

Petu: "I can't disrespect his wife like that. Most importantly, I can't disrespect his family name. Mngqobi is a Biyela. A very important name in our nation. He doesn't deserve to be in sexual scandals tarnishing his family name."

Notha: "Can't be a scandal if his family knows you, or if you're his second wife."

Petu: "I don't want to chase him away Notha. We're still new. I really like him but if I start looking desperate he might drop me."

Notha: "I hear you. Hey, you like wine right?"

Petu: "Nothando!" I laughed.

Notha: "Mama left me a bottle we can share. Wait here." She walked back out the room coming back with a bottle of red wine and glasses. She got in bed next to me and poured us each a glass. I took a sip.

Petu: "This is nice."

Notha: "Check the name." I read the bottle. Nothando's Orchard.

Petu: "This is your wine?"

Notha: "My dad owns a vineyard with the Biyela's. The farm is a little outside Mountain Peak. Maybe in a few weeks, you and I can go check it out. It's beautiful there. Especially mid seasons, sunny during the day and a bit chilly at sunset but God is it a beauty to look at." She smiled.

Petu: "This is so cool, Notha. I'd love to. Have you taken Amy?"

Notha: "Once, to name the wines. But she doesn't drink, so." She sipped her wine. I took another sip.

Petu: "I love this one."

Notha: "You haven't even tasted the other ones." She leaned on the headboard with her side, looking at me.

Petu: "I know what I like. This is it." I finished my glass.

Notha: "Don't go telling the family I got you drunk." I giggled.

Petu: "You know I thought you were cold? You're actually funny."

Notha: "Why would you think I'm cold?"

Petu: "You're never really in the mood to talk to anyone."

Notha: "I only talk to people I like."

Petu: "So you like me?"

Notha: "Yes."

Petu: "That's good then. So how did you and Amy become friends? Besides obviously being royal."

Notha: "Honestly being royal made us friends. My family would visit hers and that way we would be put together in a room. Maybe if we weren't royal we could've still been friends but then again, how because we don't talk to people."

Petu: "Hmm. Right." She poured me another glass.

Notha: "How did you befriend Thembisa?"

Petu: "She is friends with Zimmy. I met Zimmy at a club beginning of this year and we caught a cab home together. From there we texted regularly and went out together. So before school started we had a picnic at the beach."

Notha: "You like picnics?"

Petu: "Yeah, but there's no proper place at Res. Everyone just sits on the grass and ruins it."

Notha: "You weren't in Res last year?"

Petu: "No. I lived with my dad but he's always busy with work. This year he decided to put me in Res. I don't know what he thinks that place is. I think he probably thinks it's like boarding school, he's quite old." She chuckled. "How come you're promised to a prince?"

Notha: "Business deal."

Petu: "And that doesn't bother you?" She drank her wine and smiled.

Notha: "Not anymore." ...

KHAYA'S POV \_

I was with Sibonelo in the boys lounge. He'd stopped drinking, thank goodness but he was not in a good mood still. For once, I decided to shut my mouth and played the Xbox. Ordinarily, I'd just go to bed but I can't leave him here like this. I suppose Zwe will sleep at the hospital because of Thembisa's condition. I too, couldn't focus on this game so I just switched it off.

Khaya: "Sbo, what type of movie do you want to watch?"

Sibo: "I don't think I'll be watching a movie, bug. I've seen enough movie for the day. I might just turn in." I know he wasn't going to share what he saw but I know it has to do with Mehluli. Mmqobi walked in me flopped next to me, sighing.

Khaya: "Wives tucked in?"

Mmqobi: "I fucked up."

Khaya: "Weehhh. What did you do? I hope you didn't suggest a three some you stupid boy." Sibonelo chuckled.

Mmqobi: "No. Are you crazy?"

Khaya: "Then what happened?"

Mmqobi: "I went to Petu to check up on her-"

Khaya: "You didn't. You went there for a session. Tell the truth."

Mmqobi: "Who's telling the story?"

Khaya: "I'm telling the honest version. What happened?"

Mmqobi: "We were kissing, in bed. Nothando walked in." I gasped. Sibonelo laughed. Zwe is gonna kill all of us.

Khaya: "And? What happened?"

Mmqobi: "I had to get up and leave. I feel so guilty."

Sibo: "Why do you feel guilty Mngqobi? You approached Petu, knowing you're in love and betrothed to Nothando. You continued to have sex with her and then also attempted it while she's in the same roof. So at which point exactly, do you feel guilty because I'm confused? You did all of this knowingly. Not one person held a whip to bum." I laughed.

Mngqobi: "I didn't think she'd walk in."

Sibo: "They're in the same house Mngqobi. There's a high chance she'll walk in. Always. What did Nothando say?"

Mngqobi: "That's the strange part. She didn't seem affected or shocked. Just said she didn't say we must stop. She came to check up on Petu." I looked at Sibonelo who looked back at me, smiling.

Sibo: "And what did you do."

Mngqobi: "I'm here aren't I? I had to leave."

Khaya: "You're stupid. You know that? More sour than a lemon. Lemon meringue. Lemon Mngqobi cake is what this is." Sibonelo chuckled.

Sibo: "Life isn't fair. Others have two, some of us have zero."

Khaya: "We'll survive, brother."

Sibo: "You're running from a woman sleeping in your own bed in your house. So don't say a thing." I laughed.

Mngqobi: "You two are trying to get me killed. I can't even think about that type of nonsense."

Khaya: "You haven't?"

Mngqobi: " Look, I like both the girls. I respect them enough not to be an asshole. There's no need."

Sibo: "Ya no, the gods know what they're doing. Could never be me. I'd rather risk my life."

Khaya: "Me too." We laughed.

Sibo: "So you're seeing a future with Petu? As a second wife?"

Mngqobi: "I really like her but I don't want to rush into that decision. What if we grow apart in a few months time?"

Sibo: "Don't live your life on what ifs my young prince. Live fully. It's better to experience it than think about how it would've been for the rest of your life."

Mnqobi: "Also tell Khaya. He's refusing the girl in his bed."

Khaya: "Don't start."

Sibo: "Khaya is being a good friend. No need to fuck up a good friendship for just sex."

Khaya: "Exactly. Thank you Sbo."

Sibo: "Again. Could never be me. If she's in my bed, naked and calling for me. I'm digging right into her soul. In every way she begs for. Angihlanyi phela mina." Mnqobi laughed.

Khaya: "You guys bore me."

Sibo: "You're the boring one Khaya, have I taught you nothing? Anyway, goodnight. It's a long day for me tomorrow. I have to address the royals on the postponement of council."

Mnqobi: "There goes my brother the deputy king."

Khaya: "Ayeye!" We laughed.

Sibo: "Mxim." He walked away, chuckling.

## PRINCE POV\_

I hardly slept. I really did try but found myself standing outside Thembisa's room. Mthunzi had to come fetch me twice. I wasn't comfortable with knowing that my father was in the city and wanted to kill her. Sudden flames grew on my hands.

Nkosi: "For fucks sake!!" I slapped my hands on the floor. Mthunzi opened the tap and I placed my hands under the running water.

Mthunzi: "What are we going to do with this problem of yours now? Seriously Nkosi. Are you still angry?" He closed the tap. I dried my hands.

Nkosi: "I can't not be angr-"

Mthunzi: "Shhh. Hold it." Sparks on my fingers. "You can't be angry. This one sparks immediately when you're angry. That's difficult to hide Nkosi. Let's calm down today." I wish I could calm down. Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "Morning."

Nkosi: "Hi." I put my hands in my pocket.

Mthunzi: "He's flaming again."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi!"

Zwe: "This is not good." He looked through his cupboard taking out bandages and gloves.

Nkosi: "What's that?"

Zwe: "Give me a hand." I gave him my hand. "Anti inflammatory bandage and gloves. They won't burn easily. You're bound to be pissed. Your father might come today." He wrapped my hands one at a time.

Nkosi: "he likes to test me, doesn't he?"

Zwe: "I'm taking Amahle to her operation once we're done here. Maybe move her into another room so he can see her and leave."

Nkosi: "Okay." I looked at my bandaged hands giving them to Mthunzi. He undid it a bit and tied it better. Zwe laughed.

Nkosi: "No offense."

Zwe: "None taken. I'm actually intrigued at how he knows you so well. Let's go." We followed him to Thembisa's room. Her parents were awake, sitting next to her.

Nkosi: "Morning."

Mama: "Your Highness. Good day." She looked at my hands then at her husband. "Uzukhe uzibambe ke namhlanje Taka Thembisa. Uyabona umfana ubhinqe amanqindi." She whispered. Mthunzi struggled keeping in his laugh and opted to walk out. This was a nightmare.

Nkosi: "Mehlamahle." I held her shoulder, she wasn't waking up. "Should I let her be Zwe?"

Zwe: "No. I need her awake so I can check her vitals and give her anaesthetic. Her surgery will take a while and I don't want her to wake up while her head is open."

Mama: "That happens!?"

Zwe: "Yes mama. Before I just put her to sleep by IV, I need to be sure it's safe." I looked at my sister. The only way I can wake her up now. (Mehlamahle, please wake up.) She stretched, looking at me angrily with fierce eyes.

Ama: "What is your issue?"

Nkosi: "You have surgery soon. Wake up."

Ama: "I don't want it."

Zwe: "It won't be long Amahle. I need to remove the bullets so they don't move further into your brain tissue. We don't know the kind of damage that would do."

Ama: "Okay." She looked at my hands.

Nkosi: "Don't." She looked at Thembisa then got out of bed. Zwe brought the wheelchair closer and she sat in it. She continued looking at Thembisa. "I won't leave her side."

Ama: "Father is coming." She held my hand. "He won't dare come near her. If it's ever a time he fears her, it's now. You can't shoot a person 30 times and your last born collects it all. The one bullet that hits her, still misses her heart. He knows he can't kill her so he's still mustering confidence. This will be enough time for her to tell you what she's seen." She sat in the chair. Zwe wheeled her away. I suspect Thembisa's parents were quite confused now.

Nkosi: "I took Thembisa to my ancestral grounds where they welcomed her. The second time she went, she was helping Amahle heal. That's when my father saw her. He believes she is a threat simply because he was raised being told love is a weakness. He doesn't believe that Thembisa is good. His father taught him, a king doesn't need love." I sighed. Both of them kept quiet. "I need love. I need Thembisa. She's the only person that can colour my life so beautifully. She teaches me everyday. About humility. Empathy. Gentleness. Just being a good king. I am ready to lay my life on the floor for her. I'm ready to give all of it up. I love that she's my weakness." Her mother nudged the father. I looked at him, hoping he understands. He was staring at his daughter with tears in his eyes.

Xolani: "When I was running for my life, I was in darkness. I realized then, I was running alone in the dark. When I turned back, all I saw was flames. My ears tuned back to sound, and I suddenly heard screams. My nose unblocked sucking air in and I smelt burning flesh. Innocent people screaming for help to their death. How I got out is still a mystery till today because those flames burnt through that village in minutes. Then I saw him. He got in his car, never turning back. No remorse. I knew then and there, I had to keep running and I did. Till this day, the smell of anything burning makes my heart race. A scream breaks my heart in unimaginable ways. The one thing I asked the gods for as I ran for my life, is ithemba elitsha. They fulfilled the promise a decade later when I held Thembisa in my arms for the first time. What you are asking, is for me to give you my life." He wiped his lone tear. Thembisa's hand moved in his. Her body followed, moving, stretching a little. I watched her eyes finally open.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 54

SASA POV\_

I opened my eyes immediately wanting to shut them close again. Unfortunately they all noticed I'm awake. My parents and Nkosi. All of them. Why do these things happen to me?

Me: "Hello."

Xolani: "My child. You're awake." Why was he crying? My father never cries.

Me: "I'm awake. How long have I been asleep?"

Xolani: "About 19 hours. Do you remember what happened?"

Me: "Not quite. I know I just got to res from school. I was talking to Qhama. Then I heard someone calling my name. Where is he? UQhama?" I asked Nkosi. He looked at his hands.

Nkosi: "He's no more." My heart ached in a painful way.

Me: "Where's Amahle?"

Nkosi: "Surgery now. She's okay." He held my hand. I looked at his noticing the glove.

Me: "Is it bad?"

Nkosi: "What is?"

Me: "The fire."

Nkosi: "No. Not at all." I decided to let this conversation rest for a bit. There was way too much I needed to say.

Me: "You can't blame your father for what he di-"

Nkosi: "He tried to kill you!" I felt the heat from his hand, he quickly took it away. So it was bad. He couldn't control it.

Me: "Tata, please help me sit up." My father helped me up, fixing the pillows behind me. "There's so much that has happened Tata. I'm sorry I kept secrets from you."

Xolani: "The prince told me everything."

Me: "Not everything because I haven't told him everything."

Nkosi: "What do you mean?"

Me: "When we went to the mountain, Amahle and I, we were with your elders. Your grandfather wasn't there. His father before him and at least 2 more generations before him. There's been a disconnect. Your ancestors aren't allowing them in. Since I came back, I've been having these dreams of your grandmother and grandfather. In the dreams I'm living as her. It started from when they ran away to Bakhoyo village. That's why Amahle and I went there."

Xolani: "What's happening in these dreams?"

Me: "I think it was showing me how it got to the point of her death. Nkosi, I mean Ngidumise, he was very much in love with her. She called him Nkosi. Specifically, Nkosi yam enhle. He looked exactly like you, Nkosi. Since they'd run away, the throne obviously looked for them and found them. Once they did, they had to return. King Ngidumise's family was not entirely happy because she was a commoner but they let that slide. The only problem that arose which is what got her killed, is the fact that she's

treasure blood. The king found this out when he took her to the family healer to check if the baby was indeed the next heir. The healer lied to him. He sealed her fate."

Nkosi: "What did the healer say?"

Me: "He told the king Nonkosi had blood stronger than his and she can kill him. This obviously alarmed the king."

Xolani: "What is treasure blood mntanam?"

Me: "Apparently Tata, the village you grew up in has soil that births companions for the throne. That is why Ngidumise fell deeply in love with Nonkosi, she was his soulmate. The one that could tame him. Unfortunately, he grew up evil, he was raised evil. That wasn't erased suddenly because she was in his life but he never harmed a soul when he met her, until of course she died. That is what broke him. He taught your father Nkosi, that love made him weak. He raised him the way he was raised. Sadly, his heartbreak caused him to be very evil. Ngidumise burnt that village because his father told him of the treasure blood. He didn't want it to exist because when they took it from him, it hurt. He was hurting. He saw you Tata. He let you run. You didn't just wake up and run. I don't know why he let you go. Maybe he felt guilty. I really don't know."

Nkosi: "He whispered. That's how your father got up and ran."

Me: "Probably. All in all, the ancestors didn't kill Nonkosi. The great grandfather did. Ngidumise's father. He gave the order to his wife to kill her after she births the heir. This is where the other problem arises. You can't kill a treasure blood. There was already the disconnect but this now invited Mamu Nonkosi's ancestors and they were pissed. So Ngidumise cannot find her in the after life and he's not allowed with his family. If his soul wasn't broken enough while alive, he is damaged where he is. You wouldn't have had abilities Nkosi. They were supposed to end with your dad but before your birth, your grandfather went to the altar and asked for forgiveness. He pleaded for you. That is how you ended up with whispers and now fire. The other one is a bonus. I need to speak to your father."

Nkosi: "No. I don't want him near you-"

Me: "He needs to know his mother wasn't weak. She chose to die to save his life. When she was handed the glass of water by the Queen,

she looked at it and then realized where the child was. He was with his grandfather and Ngidumise would leave him there coming back to her. She knew. What the nation needed was a king, not her. You can't kill a king. So she chose his life instead."

Xolani: "What is the significance of all of this? Why are you dreaming about it? Is there something you have to do?"

Me: "Yes Tata. I need to speak to the king. It's not going to be easy. Nkosi, you have to control your anger toward him."

Nkosi: "I don't know Thembisa. If you have to talk to him, I have to be there with you."

Me: "Okay." I breathed. "I think I'm hungry."

Nkosi: "I'll get you something."

Mama: "Let me come with you Your Highness." They both walked out the room.

Me: "How are you feeling Tata?"

Xolani: "Not any better. I don't trust them Thembisa. I can't. It's taking too much of me."

Me: "Would it help if you forgot about it?"

Xolani: "There's no way I can forgot about it my child."

Me: "If there was, would you be open to it?"

Xolani: "Yes."

Me: "Are you sure Tata?"

Xolani: "My child, let this go. It's never going to happen. It's fine, I can handle it." He held my hand. "I'm going to be there when you speak to the king. If he's going to kill you, I'd rather he starts with me."

Me: "He won't kill me Tata."

Xolani: "You're in hospital Thembisa, with a bullet wound in your chest."

Me: "The only reason this happened is because of miscommunication. I'm glad you're here though." I kissed his hand. "Can you update me on what I missed out on?"

Xolani: "Not much. We left Nele at MamKhumalo. The Prince sent a car for us. If we knew the province would be in lock down, we'd have brought her with."

Me: "Lock down? What does that mean?"

Xolani: "No one is allowed outside. One of the royals addressed the nation yesterday."

Me: "Why?"

Xolani: "To minimise traffic to the hospital. Since everyone will rush here to see what's going on."

Me: "Because a princess was shot. This isn't good."

Xolani: "It worked. There were journalists outside all day."

Me: "I understand that Tata but the citizens will feel bullied if their lives must stop so abruptly. Many people rely on daily sales to make money and provide food for their families. If they're locked inside with no resources, it will cause an uncontrollable riot."

Xolani: "This is something only your prince can fix. I don't know about these things, my child." Just then Nkosi walked in with my mother smiling behind him. I wonder what did she say bawo.

Nkosi: "The kitchen staff was sent home but Mthunzi had this brought in a while ago."

Me: "Thank you bab- Nkosi. Tata tells me the city is in lockdown?" I had to quickly change the subject, I can't believe I slipped up.

Nkosi: "Yes it is."

Me: "Why?"

Nkosi: "Zwe thought it's best that there's no crowding happening here. That way information can't slip easily. Also, we needed to make sure you're safe. Even guards aren't allowed in. Then of course my father decided on the whole city mainly to stop the press from snooping information about Amahle."

Me: "This was announced yesterday?"

Nkosi: "Yes "

Me: "How long will this lock down be for?"

Nkosi: "Until we can move Amahle. I'm thinking a few days."

Me: "What about the street vendors or casual workers who get paid daily? What about those in need of chronic medication or have medical emergencies?"

Nkosi: "I feel like you're about to yell at me."

Me: "I've never yelled at you Nkosi. I think as a way to soften the people for inconveniencing them something must be done. You can't just lock people in their houses without a plan."

Nkosi: "Okay, what can I do?"

Me: "I literally just woke up from a coma." He chuckled. I ate my food. "A week food parcel for affected households for start. It can contain 90% main essential food and 10% non essential like snacks or fruit."

Nkosi: "Okay. That I can do. Mthunzi will organise it."

Me: "Instead of using your palace helpers, find an organisation that can volunteer putting these together and donate to them as a thank you. This will help them in the sense of finding future sponsors because your name will be associated with them."

Nkosi: "I already have one in mind. The domestic violence shelter we opened two years ago. It consists only of women and children."

Me: "That's good. Is there a helpline for medical emergencies?"

Nkosi: "No."

Me: "Please organise that by midday today. We have elders who get stressed by these news updates, it would be horrible if they can't receive medical help because of it too. I'm sure the Biyela's can help in those regards of a helpline."

Nkosi: "Yes, Sibonelo was the one who did the address. He's been great so far. He'll be speaking to council today about postponement. I'm sure he can squeeze this in."

Me: "That's good. So you've just been slacking off since yesterday?"

Nkosi: "Yes." He smiled then quickly straightened his face remembering my parents were here. Honestly I'd forgot them too.

Me: "I need to organise Qhama's funeral."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi has that handled." I sighed.

Me: "I know. He just deserved so much. He was so happy, he told me about his family. It's horrible that his son will grow up without a father all because he was trying to protect me."

Nkosi: "Qhama chose this job knowing the risk. Every guard knows the risk."

Me: "Do the guards have life insurance?"

Nkosi: "Yep. His family won't suffer, that is for sure."

Me: "Thank you. Please go work now." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "Okay, I'll check on you soon. Mthunzi is right outside."

Me: "Take him with you Nkosi." He stood up, not sure whether to kiss me or leave so he waved and walked out. I couldn't help giggling. He's so awkward.

Mama: "Hee!" She clapped her hands. "Thembisa You're busy making decisions for the nation? Thembisa where is your shame?" She laughed.

Me: "I'm not making decisions mama. I'm just helping. Nkosi grew up in a royal palace, the highest ranking one. He doesn't have an idea of what normal civilians or the poorest citizens go through. He needs help understanding them and providing."

Mama: "Thembisa we didn't raise you poor, what are you talking about?" She giggled.

Xolani: "Leave the child, Ntombi. Rest Sasa. You've only been awake less than an hour and you're already working."

Me: "I'm okay Tata. We can talk. What's happening in the village."

Mama: "Let me tell you who Vuyiswa's baby father is." My father rolled his eyes.

Me: "Who mama?"

Mama: "The chief!" I gasped.

Xolani: "The child just woke up and you're telling her gossip? It's not even confirmed."

Mama: "The fact it's not confirmed is alarming enough. At her tender age? The chief is in his 50s taka Thembisa."

Xolani: "What if it's his son? All you know is that you saw Vuyiswa's family coming from the chief's home early in the morning."

Mama: "Why then are they hiding it? It's the chief. I'm telling you."

Xolani: "The chief is married."

Mama: "Yes but remember 7 years ago when he had an affair?"

Xolani: "That was 7 years ago."

Mama: "Exactly. So his marriage is not serious. It's not a factor. It's him." I couldn't stop giggling quietly. My mother was convinced and there's no changing her mind. And she might be right too.

## SIBONELO'S POV

I hate that I hardly slept last night. The little sleep I got in had nightmare after nightmare. It was a long day, and I couldn't dwell too much on my fatigue. It may have been a bad idea to watch that video again before I slept. I had to. What the hell did I see? Oh right, Sikhosana transforming into a vicious animal. I had to forget about this nonsense. I don't need it today. After getting dressed in my navy blue regalia suit I went downstairs for breakfast. My parents were seated with Khaya and Mngqobi.

Sibo: "Morning. Where are the wives?" Mngqobi glared at me with rage.

Queen: "The girls are sleeping in. They must be exhausted from yesterday. Whose wife is Petu? Should I plan a wedding Sibonelo? She's a sweet girl. Don't you think so my king?"

King: "I don't know her my love."

Queen: "You met her yesterday. She's a lovely girl. Sibonelo, when are you planning to send us to her family?"

Sibo: "Mngqobi." He needs to answer for himself. I'm not getting involved. This time, he kept his mouth shut. Khaya was choking on his milk trying to mask his laughing.

Queen: "Sboni? Don't tell me you're playing this girl."

King: "In my house???" I looked at Mngqobi who stuffed his mouth avoiding my eyes. Fine.

Sibo: "Father, are the other royals staying longer or will they leave since council is postponed?"

Queen: "Answer me first." I know she won't let this go and judging from Mngqobi's sudden silence, he won't say a thing.

Sibo: "Not yet, mama. I'm very stressed currently. I can't think of that." She sighed.

Queen: "Okay then. I was hoping for a grandchild soon. Seeing that Zwe is denying me happiness and now you." How did this turn into emotional blackmail?

Sibo: "I'm not denying you happiness mama, I'll give you a grandchild very soon. Don't worry." She smiled. "Tata?"

King: "Where will you get a child Sibonelo?" Thank God my phone rang, conversation drags on forever in this house. You never get to work on time.

Sibo: "Zwe?" I answered.

Zwe: "Hey Sbo. When can you come to the hospital?"

Sibo: "Why what's wrong?"

Zwe: "Nothing is wrong. Just a quick meeting with Nkosi regarding the lock down."

Sibo: "Oh okay. Uhm. I'm meeting the royals at 12 so I can come now."

Zwe: "Perfect. I'm going into surgery now. I might be a while so I won't join you." I swallowed the lump in my throat but it bopped back up.

Sibo: "So it's just going to be me and him?"

Zwe: "No, his advisor. Also bring your brothers with you. We'll talk later okay?"

Sibo: "Okay."

Zwe: "Oh and the girls are awake. Thembisa is out of her coma. Amahle is doing just fine, prepping her for surgery now."

Sibo: "That's great news. I'll let the parents know."

Zwe: "Thanks." He hung up.

King: "Is everything okay?"

Sibo: "Uhm.. Thembisa is out of her coma."

Queen: "That's good news."

King: "And the princess?"

Sibo: "She's doing fine. She's being prepped for surgery."

King: "Good. That's good."

Sibo: "Mnqo, Bug, we need to get going soon." I tried to eat a bit but I couldn't stomach the food so just a coffee will do. I collected my gadgets, the brothers followed me to the car. With the whole lockdown happening, I didn't feel like driving, also I doubt I'd be focused on the road. I sat in the front, a driver came in. The guards followed in their own car. Khaya and Mnqobi were in my backseat. We left for the hospital while I checked my phone, receiving an alert from my network. I set it up yesterday afternoon when I got home. Anything related to Mountain Peak, Shooting, Thembisa, Amahle, Princess, Prince, King was on alert. Any post with those words were being monitored. I checked the alert, it had about 8 likes so far since it was posted 10 minutes ago. It was a video of surveillance. I clicked on it to watch. It was the security camera to the residence parking lot. Yesterday afternoon. My heart started beating irregularly. A car drove in, I saw Thembisa getting out, smiling and talking before she reached back in to take something. Suddenly she stopped and looked toward the gate. The guard ran around the car to her but the first shot hit him at the same time as the second hit Thembisa almost instantly Amahle jumped on her taking all the bullets before falling down on the ground. All of the bullets hit her. I rewinded, with my hands shaking. An uncomfortably large number of those went to her head.

Mnqobi: "Sbo?" My mind clicked. I took the tablet searching for the video and finding the account, copying the IP address to find out who posted it. Whoever it is, has likely saved it and might distribute it. I deactivated their account immediately, calling one of my IT specialists.

Sibo: "Hey, I'm sending you an IP address, I need to know every device in that vicinity, I need to know what has been sent and to whom. Do it NOW."

Him: "Yes boss." I hung up, sending it to him. I had to now log in to the security at the residence but I couldn't because I didn't install it. I would have to hack into it. I took out my laptop and started my system.

Sikhosana probably had a dead lock on security in all his residences but I had to try. The car eventually arrived in hospital. I took my laptop and tablet in, straight up to Zwe's office. Only when I entered I realized he's obviously here.

Sibo: "Your Highness. Mthunzi." I sat in the desk and continued my work. Mngqobi and Khaya sat on the couch. I was a bit closer into their security system. I know it would be easier to just ask him but I was already enjoying my work now. Finally in. I checked the phone. New message. The list was here. I went back to the laptop wiping out the security footage. Two phones went off. I let out a breath of air. Nkosi looked at Mthunzi. Then at me.

Mthunzi: "What the hell did you do?"

Sibo: "Someone has surveillance of the scene. I removed it from the server and took down the account."

Mthunzi: "Who would do something like that?"

Sibo: "I got the IP, I'm going to che-" another alert. I checked my phone. "Oh fuck."

Mthunzi: "What."

Sibo: "The video has been sent to at least 100 contacts."

Nkosi: "Shut it down. Shut down the entire network."

Sibo: "This will cause panic and chaos-"

Nkosi: "NOW!" My heart jumped. Time for national shut down I guess.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 55

PRINCE POV\_

The nation was in complete shut down. It was only until that video was completely removed. I paced the floor while Sibonelo clicked on his computer. My heart was with Thembisa, wondering what she's doing but I couldn't go to her yet, she ordered me to work.

Nkosi: "Well!"

Sibo: "I've sent a virus to all of the devices that received it."

Nkosi: "How will that help?"

Sibo: "When they click on it, their device will format."

Mthunzi: "Won't that get back to us?"

Sibo: "Hardly. It's unlikely they'll link it together. Even if they do, there's not much they can say without having their account permanently suspended, I'd already put alerts yesterday."

Mthunzi: "That's good work Sibonelo."

Nkosi: "Thank you. How long will this take?"

Sibo: "Could be the whole day but I'm hoping 3 hours at most."

Nkosi: "Okay. While we wait for that, we continue with work. Thembisa reckons it will be a good idea to set up a medical helpline for citizens during this lockdown. Those who have actual emergencies can get help from it. Can you do that?"

Sibo: "Yes. I can have it running in an hour. Mngqobi, call Hazel with this brief." His brother made the call.

Nkosi: "The lockdown is likely to last a few days if not a week, Sasa suggested food parcels to civilians as a way to make up for their loss of income." He looked at me but quickly away.

Sibo: "Khaya, what do you think about that?"

Khaya: "It's good. It will also soften them in regards to the lock down. What about small businesses? Are they included?"

Nkosi: "How can they be included?"

Khaya: "in a way that supports their operations. Buying from them to provide for other citizens."

Mngqobi: "but that's longer term Kay."

Khaya: "I get that, but there are businesses that can get this running in a few hours."

Nkosi: "I want the parcels ready by 4pm they'll be delivered by 9pm tonight. Parcel should include 90% main essential food and 10% snack. Perhaps also add a toiletry pack. How much are we looking at?"

Sibo: "For the entire city? 2 million at most." I know he's trying to rob me.

Nkosi: "Mthunzi, please contact the accountant." I sat down. "Your brother tells me you're meeting with royals today to update them about council."

Sibo: "Yes. Is there anything in specific you want me to tell them?" Why couldn't he look me in the eye?

Nkosi: "No. I trust you."

In three hours, I was in full panic. Mostly because I wanted to see Thembisa. I couldn't sit still.

Nkosi: "Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Sibonelo, what's the latest?"

Sibo: "About halfway there. Khaya?"

Khaya: "I've gathered three companies willing to supply some essentials. I'll need trucks to collect and also volunteers."

Mthunzi: "The trucks are available, I'll make the call. You provide location for each collection. I've organized women from a shelter to help with putting together the parcels. Send location for collections. You'll be using the new res to sort the food." Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "Hey."

Mthunzi: "He needs to see her."

Zwe: "Before that. Your father just arrived. Amahle is resting, she's in a separate room, a little further from Thembisa, her surgery went well. The King is with her right now." Precisely why my body is jittery in need of my love.

Mthunzi: "You'll be fine, right?" He looked at my hands. I nodded, walking out. Her parents were still in her room, I can imagine how tired they are.

Nkosi: "Mthunzi can you get a comfortable couch in here? Those chairs can't be comfortable."

Mthunzi: "Okay." I walked in the room while he made the call.

Nkosi: "Good afternoon."

Mama: "Your Highness."

Sasa: "Hey." She looked like she just woke up.

Nkosi: "Khaya is helping with the parcels. Sibonelo has set up a helpline."

Sasa: "Tata says his phone isn't working, even mom's. Is there a problem with network?" I sat down.

Nkosi: "We had to shut down the network."

Xolani: "Why?"

Nkosi: "Uhm, a video was leaked. Of the shooting. It was being shared around and so we had to stop it's spread before removing it from the internet."

Mama: "How will you do that?"

Nkosi: "The Biyela's own the biggest telecom company that handles the network for most part of our country. Sibonelo is the CEO and he is good with technology." I looked at Thembisa, she was staring at my gloves. "My father just arrived, so..."

Sasa: "You don't want to see him?"

Nkosi: "I cannot control the anger I feel when I see him so no, not yet. Are you hungry?"

Sasa: "No." It was so awkward with her parents staring at us. I wasn't quite sure what to say.

Nkosi: "Amahle's surgery was successful. Zwe says she's well. I'll see her when father leaves."

Sasa: "I also want to see her."

Nkosi: "I'll bring her by. Uhm, Mr Ntaka, may I send guards to the village, to look after Nele and those around her?" He looked at me quietly.

"Since there's no signal or network and communication, perhaps having security to keep her safe just in case will be beneficial."

Mama: "That would be very kind, Your Highness. Thank you very much. Taka Thembisa." She nudged him.

Xolani: "Sure. Thank you."

Nkosi: "I'll let Mthunzi know." I got up, leaving the room for a second. It was so tense in there.

Mthunzi: "Hey. Couch is on the way. You look nervous."

Nkosi: "How do you talk in front of your in laws? He scares me." He chuckled.

Mthunzi: "That's his job. You can't be comfortable with his daughter. You'd do the same for your daughter."

Nkosi: "I don't think I want daughters. They're troublesome. Imagine bringing a strange man home." He laughed.

Mthunzi: "Imagine he has orange eyes and different abilities."

Nkosi: "Right, I'm the strange man. I need you to get security for Nele."

Mthunzi: "Already done. Since yesterday."

Nkosi: "Thank you. Did you notice something with Sibonelo?"

Mthunzi: "Yeah. He can't look at you."

Nkosi: "Do you think he's planning something?"

Mthunzi: "No. He would be secretive, he's been quite open so far. Also, I trust Zwe to keep him in check."

Nkosi: "Okay. I haven't whispered and I don't want to. I'm going to trust him for now. After today's meeting with council, I need to speak to him. It wouldn't be bad keeping him in our orbit."

Mthunzi: "True. Especially for royal business, having the Biyela's with you, along with Phakamisa, it will be good for your reign."

Nkosi: "We still have to deal with the Bathonga issue."

Mthunzi: "That will cause a ruckus but she needs to be punished. Again, Zwe may have advice on this. This will be good Nkosi. Your family has pushed away the other royals for years. This can only work to your advantage."

Nkosi: "I hope." Since my grandfather visited me in the river some weeks ago, I can't stop thinking about the war that would be brewing. I'm looking at all angles, so far I only have Zwe's family by my side. Will that be enough?

## SIBONELO POV\_

Working with Mehluli pacing the office was stressful but I endured. I got most devices to format, only a small few were left. Zwe was in the office, being updated by Khaya and Mngqobi. Mehluli had left with his advisor

Zwe: "Sboni. How's things so far?"

Sibo: "Mostly fine. Just waiting for the last few to format and I'm putting the network back up. Bug, you guys need to get going. You heard the prince, those parcels need to be ready by 4."

Khaya: "Right. Let's go Mngqo." They walked out leaving Zwe and I. He sat down opposite me.

Sibo: "What is this Zwelethu? I'm going to need you to explain this to me like I'm 5 years old. How is it possible that someone gets shot more than 25 times and survives. Khaya says Amahle was dead. When he got to scene, her eyes were open as a dead person would be and she had collected those bullets. So why are you lying about her being alive?"

Zwe: "Sbo."

Sibo: "What is going on?"

Zwe: "I can't say -"

Sibo: "I saw a man transform into a beast. My brain can't fathom that. I keep telling myself maybe there's a trick on the cameras for jokes and giggles. Or, or I'm going fucking insane. So I'm going to need you to tell me, what is going on. That family isn't human, is it?"

Zwe: "They are. They are human with abilities. Nkosi as you saw, can change his human form to tiger wolf form."

Sibo: "And Amahle?"

Zwe: "She's immortal." I stared at him.

Sibo: "What the fuck Zwe?"

Zwe: "This isn't our business to speak about. All you need to know is, they won't hurt us."

Sibo: "Are you sure? Because you watched me court this man's girlfriend and poke around her a few weeks back yet you just saw him right now unable to sit still because he needs to be with her. How could you dangle my life like that? He could've killed me!"

Zwe: "He would never have killed you. This I promise. Nkosi isn't a killer."

Sibo: "My good God and his angels!"

Zwe: "This stays between us Sboni. Please. I know you don't like him, let's just help for now."

Sibo: "It's not like I can tell anyone Zwe, they'd put me in a psych ward." I took my tablet, deleting the videos from my devices. "The videos no longer exist."

Zwe: "Thank you brother."

Sibo: "If this is what it takes for them to stay on that throne, they can keep it."

The other royals were waiting at the royal court. I'm not someone that likes being late but today was a different day. As I walked in, I noticed all the male members of the families were here. Usually how royal council is. The queens and princesses have their own which also, is advised by ours. The only family not present is the Sikhosana's. Obviously.

Sibo: "Good afternoon, kings and princes."

King Biyela: "Sibonelo, what is going on? The network is down country wide, there is current panic and sheer chaos brewing. What is the meaning of this?"

Sibo: "We were fixing a technical issue father. The network will be up again by end of business today."

King Biyela: "That's not good enough! What is going on? The Royals have the right to know what is going on now. Is it about the princess?"

Sibo: "Yes sir. I can't reveal information on that as of yet."

King Nakhamula: "This is very careless and bad leadership. This can't go on further. Not only have we been, again, sidelined but we're kept in the dark. We have no way to communicate and with no information." Then why would you want to communicate without information? Where is your sense?

Sibo: "I was asked to speak about the postponement of council. I had a meeting with the prince, he believes given the current situation, it would be best to wait at least two weeks before council commences."

King Nakhamula: "Two weeks!!" They all grumbled and disagreed.

Sibo: "King Nakhamula, please understand the family has almost lost the last princess. It would be kind to give them time to settle and get to the bottom of the matter."

King Mpondo: "Two weeks is unreasonable. If they can't handle the throne, perhaps it's about time we voted for a new King."

Sibo: "You can't do that."

King Nakhamula: "Yes we can. All those in favour to vote for a new King that doesn't neglect his country, raise your hands." I watched in horror as hands went up. What's scary is that only a day ago, I would've raised my hand. Something I wouldn't dare do now. These past hours I've spent in this situation highlighted one alarming fact about the royals. None of these kings can sit on that throne. I counted the hands and made a mental note.

Sibo: "You want to overthrow a family while they're recovering from a difficult time?"

King Nakhamula: "We're doing what is fair. Sikhosana has sat on that throne treating us like peasants since the beginning of time. If there's ever a time to get them off, it's now." I looked at my father, he too looked at me. He hadn't raised his hand, thank God.

Sibo: "Very well. My family and I will not be participating in the voting." More disgruntling.

King Nakhamula: "I beg your pardon?? King Biyela, is what your son saying the final word?" My father looked at me, very unimpressed with me.

King Biyela: "That's the final word from my family King Nakhamula."

King Nakhamula: "Then it would do us a pleasure, if you were to remove yourselves from the court." Great, we're banished. Zwe better have a fucking plan. I'm not about to be a disgraced Prince for his friendship goals.

## PETU POV\_

Mama Biyela had invited us to queen's council. I didn't even know a non royal can attend and I tried telling her that I'm not a royal but she insisted it was fine. She seemed to enjoy styling me and getting me ready. It took almost all morning with both Notha and I. In the afternoon, we went to what was called queen's council in a beautiful vintage looking building. I copied Nothando's movements as she moved seamlessly like a royal. I held my dress with two fingers to climb up the stairs. Inside, the hall was decorated in a french high tea theme. Sunset Pink and gold.

Notha: "This year was Paris in Summer. There's a theme every year." I was enthralled with the entire decor and being in the midst of these people. We made it to our table and sat down. The Sikhosana twins weren't here, I was hoping to see them but since Amahle is in hospital I understand they're probably with her.

Petu: "It's beautiful." She smiled.

Notha: "This dress suits you. You fit in like the perfect puzzle." I giggled.

Petu: "I'm trying." The table was adorned with delicious looking delicacies. "Those look delicious."

Notha: "Trust they are." Mama Biyela sat down.

Queen Biyela: "Ladies, these are my sons wives. I'll be planning weddings not long now." I froze. What did she mean sons wives? Was Sibonelo or Zwe promised to Nothando? Did mama Biyela know about

Mnqobi and I? I was so embarrassed. The other queens nodded in excitement.

"Knowing you Queen B, you plan the best weddings in the nation. Your daughters look so beautiful. This one is Phakamisa, is it so?"

Queen Phakamisa: "Yes, that's my daughter. Hopefully this will strengthen our bond Mrs Biyela. Our families are honoured."

Notha: "Do you want to sit with the princesses?" She whispered in my ear.

Petu: "Isn't that rude?"

Notha: "My queens, please do excuse us, I'd like to introduce Petunia to the other princesses."

Queen Biyela: "Yes my child, go. Sibonelo is so lucky. Hmm." She smiled. We got up from the table walking to the other princesses.

Petu: "So when were you planning to tell me you're promised to Sibonelo?" I giggled. "Nothando!"

Notha: "I'm not promised to Sibonelo. We'll have to talk about this another time." I wonder what she meant. "These are the Mpondo princesses." The three girls looked at us. Nothando didn't like these ones, I could see on her face.

Petu: "Hi, I'm Petu. Notha's friend." One of them looked at me, up and down.

She: "You're not royal, are you?"

Notha: "And you have no brothers to carry your family name, don't you, Kele? A dying breed." I shouldn't be amused but I was. Kele turned to look another way. "That's Zinhle. Your sister in law."

Petu: "I've seen her."

Notha: "Don't be afraid of people here. All they do is hiss. You're the guest of an important family."

Petu: "Okay, it's kind of hard to adjust. It's so different from my world. Do you think Sasa is okay? Since we have no way to communicate or check the news."

Notha: "Yes. I think she's okay. Mama did say Zwe says she's out of her coma. We have to be hopeful."

Petu: "Are you worried about Amy."

Notha: "Terribly. I can't lose Amahle. I have hope in Zwe though." I nodded, still wondering who she's promised to. It can't be Mngqobi otherwise what would I be doing here? And why would she be so calm and welcoming of our relationship? She knows everything about Mngqobi and I. It can't be him. So it had to be Zwe. He's a gentleman, surely he'll treat her well. Zinhle came up to us with another princess.

Zinhle: "Nothando, how's Amahle doing?"

Notha: "Fine."

Zinhle: "Is she still in hospital? My brother shut down the country so there's no information right now." Nothando resisted the urge to roll her eyes.

Notha: "Yes."

Zinhle: "But she's alive? There were rumours that she died."

Notha: "I said she's fine once, I don't know what else you want from me."

Zinhle: "Nothando." She looked at me. "who's this?"

Notha: "My friend."

Zinhle: "You really like commoners hey? Does it make you feel good to be above them? I knew you had an evil streak with you." She giggled. At this point I'd rather be at the queen's table but as I looked over I saw some conflict arising.

Queen Biyela: "There's no way we can be talking about that! Nobantu and Nolwazi need our support right now-"

Another Queen: "When have they ever needed us? Nobantu and Nolwazi don't regard us as friends or even associates. Why must we support them when they didn't bother to support Queen Mufhuwalo when she lost her daughter? They didn't make an appearance at the funeral."

Queen Mufhuwalo: "They sent only a bouquet of flowers. And remember how the Mpondo family's business ventures have been put on hold? They haven't gotten projects from the King for years."

Queen Biyela: "What I'm not going to do is sit here and gossip. That's not why I came."

Queen Mufhuwalo: "Queen Biyela, it would be best to choose a side. And remember that they won't acknowledge you now and never have."

Queen Biyela: "Girls, let's go. Come." Notha, Zinhle and I followed her out. What the hell was happening now?

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 56

KHAYA'S POV \_

The ladies from the shelter had done a great job with the parcels. Mngqobi's phone went off. He answered. The guards had come inside. Something was wrong. Did the king find out about me? Oh fuck no.

Mngqobi: "Yes. Okay." He hung up. "We have to go."

Khaya: "What about the parcels?"

Mngqobi: "Sibonelo's assistant is on his way, he'll take over from here. Let's go Khaya." We walked out the building surrounded by the guards. This was making me quite uncomfortable. My phone rang as I got in the car.

Khaya: "Yes?"

Zimmy: "Khaya. What's going on? My phone wasn't working for hours, there's a lockdown, I'm terrified. What's going on?"

Khaya: "A lot is happening. I'll speak to you soon, okay? Stay in the apartment for now. We'll talk." I hung up. I had a more pressing issue now. "Mngqobi, what's going on? Is the king looking for me?"

Mngqobi: "No. That's been sorted already. Sbo says the other royals have banished us from court."

Khaya: "What!? Why?"

Mnqobi: "No clue. And while we're outside, we can't be too safe so he wants us home. He's there as well." Just when you thought it couldn't get worse. "Who were you speaking to?"

Khaya: "Zimmy. I think she might have to go to res for a bit. Just so she's not alone. She's scared."

Mnqobi: "Yeah because if we bring another girl to the house, dad is gonna wild. I don't think he's in a good mood currently because of this ban. I wonder what the hell happened." We arrived at home, seems like everyone was home. We walked in to the lounge. King Biyela, Zwe and Sbo were waiting.

Khaya: "Hello Tata." I sat down.

Biyela: "Hello son."

Mnqobi: "What's going on?" The King looked at Sibonelo.

Sibo: "What was I supposed to do Tata? Blame Zwe."

Zwe: "I was in hospital. How is this my fault?"

Sibo: "I'm not about to be the family villain again. Tata, you should understand where I'm coming from at least?"

Biyela: "I don't even know what's going on."

Zwe: "Sibonelo, what happened at council?"

Sibo: "The other royals want Sikhosana off the throne. They reckon now is the best time to vote them out. I spoke for the family, saying we won't be participating in voting. They asked us to leave."

Biyela: "I understand where you're coming from. Honestly this is hardly the time to remove them from the throne but the other royals did make valid points."

Sibo: "This should've been something that we all sat to discuss with Mehluli. He already started with including us in his royal visits. We have more say than we did last year. This could've been solved but nooo, people want war first." Mehluli? Since when was he his biggest fan? Just last week, he was his nemesis. I was glad I wasn't the only one warming to him though.

Biyela: "So what do we do now?"

Zwe: "Nkosi said he wants a meeting later today after council so perhaps we'll talk about it then. All of us have to be there."

Biyela: "And what happens if he is exactly like his father? What then?"

Zwe: "He isn't, tata. Trust me." The door opened again and the ladies came in. The queen looked upset. The princesses behind her looked fine but Petu was alarmed.

Queen: "Can you imagine!!"

King: "What is it now?"

Queen: "The queens were talking about Nobantu and Nolwazi. Apparently, they don't feel the need to offer their support to them. They want me to choose a side. It's either them or the Sikhosana's. Imagine gossiping about women whose daughter is in ICU. Are they not embarrassed!?"

King: "Seems like our whole family has been kicked out of council."

Queen: "What do you mean?"

Mnqobi: "Sboni got us banished from court." Zwe chuckled. I held in my laugh.

Queen: "How does that happen!"

King: "You know your son with his smart mouth. We have a meeting with Sikhosana today. Hopefully there'll be a solution to all this madness."

Queen: "You think your friend will get us out of this Mziwabo? Yoh, we're going to suffer." She sighed. "At least I have the girls to keep me company. We have to go shopping. Look how pretty they are in their dresses?"

Mnqobi: "I need a therapist." He whispered.

Zwe: "They look beautiful mama."

Queen: "Hopefully Sibonelo will do good on his promise so that my days are filled with joy."

Sibo: "What promise now?"

King: "Hehe. I did ask."

Khaya: "You promised uMama a grandchild."

Sibo: "Eh? I've got work to do. Mngqobi can help."

Mngqobi: "Bhut Sbo please."

Sibo: "It's Bhut Sbo when you're pleading?" He laughed. "We'll see. When can we leave Zwe?"

Zwe: "You can follow me in an hour. I need to check on my patients."

King: "Zwe you've been up for more than 24 hours now. This isn't healthy."

Zwe: "This is what I was trained to do Tata but I will sleep tonight. At least both girls are fine now. Bobo, have you found whoever leaked the video."

Sibo: "Yes. Should I deal with her?"

King: "Heavens sake Sibonelo. There's women here." He hissed.

Queen: "Alright girls, time for cake and tea. Let the men work."

Zwe: "Ma, can they also be ready in an hour? I want to take them to see their friends. Sibonelo will bring them home after we finish our meeting."

Queen: "Alright." They walked out the lounge.

Sibo: "Well?"

Zwe: "Who is it?"

Sibo: "Some girl who's living at res. I suspect she has access to the surveillance."

Khaya: "Yeah. Mehluli's residences hire the students that live in them, train them and have them fix things in the building. So it's likely that it's one of the students."

Sibo: "How many people do you reckon have this access?"

Khaya: "I don't think more than two per year. Since we're meeting him then he can shed light on that."

Zwe: "Fine. I'll see you all in an hour." He left. Sibonelo turned on his tablet.

King: "What are you doing."

Sibo: "Hacking the res server. I need the schedule of every worker inside it." He had on his determined face. This task probably won't take him

more than half an hour. Sibonelo could hack in his sleep. It's almost scary that he owns a telecoms company.

King: "After that, tap into the royals phones. I want to hear what they're saying. Do you still have the system that records them?"

Sibo: "Yes. Mngqobi bring my second laptop. I can do both." Beware who you give access to. They can use it to kill you.

Narrated\*\*

Mngqobi walked up to Sibonelo's bedroom, taking the laptop. On his way out, he found Nothando waiting in the passage.

Mngqobi: "Hey love. What's wrong?"

Notha: "We need to talk."

Mngqobi: "Am I in trouble?"

Notha: "You will be if you don't get back in that room." They stepped into Sibonelo's room, closing the door.

Mngqobi: "I'm sorry Nothando. I got carried away last night. I shouldn't hav-"

Notha: "I don't care about that. What are your intentions with Petu?"

Mngqobi: "We don't have intentions. We're having fun."

Notha: "falling in love with you is not fun. When are you planning to tell her about us?"

Mngqobi: "Petu and I haven't even been together that long."

Notha: "So? She must wait 3 years and watch me walk down the aisle to you before you tell her? Look here, I'm not marrying an asshole. Tell Petu or I will."

Mngqobi: "She's going to dump me."

Notha: "You better hope to hell she doesn't."

Mngqobi: "Why are you threatening me?"

Notha: "This isn't yet a threat Mngqobi Biyela. Grand gesture the hell out of your body. I will not be disgraced with street whores during our

marriage. Neither will I accept stuck up princesses. Make a decision and make it now. Tell Petu and prepare her for our marriage. Or you are never going to be with another woman until the day you die. Now That's a threat." She walked out.

Mnqobi: "What the hell?" He walked out back to the lounge, handing Sibonelo the laptop.

King: "You okay Mnqobi? You look pale."

Mnqobi: "I'm fine tata. Khaya, can I talk to you?"

Khaya: "Sure." He got up following the prince to the other lounge.

Mnqobi: "How do I tell Petu? Nothando is threatening me."

Khaya: "Threatening? She no longer wants you to be with Petu?"

Mnqobi: "That's the confusing part. She wants me to be with Petu, and I quote, prepare her for our marriage. Or else I'll never be with another woman until I die. That's, that's scary. She's gonna cut off my penis."

Khaya laughed out loud falling to the ground. He ran out of breath.

Khaya: "I'm so sorry." He continued laughing. "It's been a stressful few days, I needed that." He breathed. "Whoo. That was good. Okay."

Mnqobi: "Khaya, this is serious."

Khaya: "Right okay. Penisman. Tell Petu. She knows you're a Prince. She knows you're promised. Tell her gently the person you're promised to is her now best friend. Also, tell her how you feel."

Mnqobi: "She's going to leave me Khaya."

Khaya: "Wait... You're actually upset? Jesus Mnqo. I wish there was a different way brother but there isn't. You've always told me honesty makes you honourable. And that saying from the movie we both love and watch every month, Manners Maketh Man. Remember? You have to tell her bro. Today, ideally. Your mother is already getting attached."

Mnqobi: "You're right."

PETU POV\_

I was in my room, in the Biyela palace. Since we would visit the girls in hospital, I changed my clothes. Mama Biyela got a few dresses delivered for me. She owns a few boutiques in the city. I wore my new navy and white dress. It had thick straps over my shoulders and a straight neckline, holding my boobs and then being loose at my waist to my knees. My door opened, Mngqobi walking in.

Petu: "Baby."

Mngqobi: "Hey you." He walked over to me, pulling me close. "You look gorgeous. I love this dress on you."

Petu: "Thank you." I blushed.

Mngqobi: "I want to talk to you about something but you're looking so pretty." He kissed my cheeks and lips.

Petu: "Baby, we can't do this again. What if your mum walks in this time."

Mngqobi: "She's busy." He held me close, kissing my neck. "You smell so nice."

Petu: "Thank you. What do you want to talk about?"

Mngqobi: "Us. I want you to be mine."

Petu: "I am yours Mngqobi." I giggled. His kisses on my neck were ticklish.

Mngqobi: "Forever?" I looked at him.

Petu: "What does that mean?"

Mngqobi: "It sounds selfish but I don't want you to leave me. I love being with you. Besides the sex. I enjoy our cuddling, our movie dates. I love hearing you talk." I kissed his lips.

Petu: "I'm yours." He kissed me back, hold me against the wall. Slowly my body was giving in. The dress went up. His hand was in between my thighs, I got wet instantly feeling his finger rub on me. I took off his shirt, holding his body. His dick was already hard. He quickly undid his belt and zip, pulling out his organ then led me to the bed.

Mngqobi: "I want to make love to you." He took off my dress and my underwear, I lay on the bed watching him take off his pants and climbing on top of me. He knelt in between my legs, looking at my body and

sucking on the print of his thumb. He placed it on my clit, softly rubbing it. His other hand held his dick, massaging it. I was dripping wet, and squirming in his touch. "look at me." I looked up him, his eyes drunk with lust. He came down to kiss my lips, slowly. I opened wider, ready to receive him. His thumb was still teasing me, he stopped then teased my entry with a finger.

Petu: "Baby please." I whispered on his mouth. He looked at me, kissing me again. I felt it penetrate me, making me dizzy. He moaned on my mouth. I kissed him, holding him close. He worked his lower body only, in and out. "Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "Oohhh." He groaned , kissing my lips. His pace was slow and gentle, my clit throbbing at the soft touch.

Petu: "baby..." He moaned in my ear, squeezing me tight while stroking.

Mnqobi: "I love you." He breathed. "fuck I love you.." his body was shaking. I kissed his lips, holding his head in my hands. I was so close to climax but I needed him to not make a noise. He went faster, balling the sheet in his fist. A wave of pleasure tumbling down my whole body, tightening and throbbing vigorously.

Mnqobi: "OHHHH." He groaned, shaking to a release deep inside me. "shit." He whispered. I was still recovering from my orgasm, still throbbing.

Petu: "Do you think they heard us?"

Mnqobi: "Probably. It's your fault, why would you cum on me like that?" He kissed my lips. "I should probably go out first and check the coast. I think they're downstairs though." The embarrassment started to creep in.

Petu: "I'm scared of your parents Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "Hawu Baby. Not my parents." He chuckled. "You're right though, dad is not in the mood today. He's scary." He slowly pulled out, shaking. I got up going to the bathroom to pee. I wasn't worried because I had my tests and also my contraceptive. I wiped with the intimate wipes and washed my hands after flushing. Mnqobi walked in the bathroom half dressed. He stood behind me, looking at me in the mirror. His hands held my body, kissing my shoulder.

Mnqobi: "I'm sleeping here tonight."

Petu: "You're crazy Mngqobi. You want your mother to come drag you out." He laughed.

Mngqobi: "Should I get a morning after?"

Petu: "No need. I get an injection every three months."

Mngqobi: "Why."

Petu: "It's the responsible thing to do. It's been a year now."

Mngqobi: "As long as it's only mine now." He kissed my neck. "Let's get dressed my love. The family is waiting for us surely."

Petu: "Stop kissing me then Prince Biyela."

Mngqobi: "You're gonna make me barricade that door with furniture. I don't want to do anything else but hold you right now." His hands caressed my breast and stomach while he kissed my neck.

Petu: "You know you take only minute to get back up baby. Let's stop now." He finally pulled away smiling. I looked down at his pants. He was already hard. At this point, we might not leave. "No Mngqobi!" He laughed. "Let's go. Yoh." ...

## PRINCE POV\_

The couch was delivered, I'd given the Ntaka family space for a few hours and distracted myself with facilitating the delivery of parcels. I was tracking the trucks to each location.

Nkosi: "Do you think the food parcels will be enough?"

Mthunzi: "Yes. They're mostly for those that need them. Mountain Peak is half made up of upper class."

Nkosi: "Won't they protest?"

Mthunzi: "Unlikely but we could show support to them in a different way."

Nkosi: "Right. We can figure that out during the meeting with the Biyela's. The Solinga boy did bring up some good ideas. He might have a plan." Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "Hey. The brothers are on their way, they want to talk to you about some something important. They'll bring the girls to come see Thembisa and Amahle." What girls now?

Nkosi: "Okay."

Zwe: "Also, Your father wants to speak to you." Heat swept through my body so I thought of Thembisa.

Nkosi: "Fine."

Zwe: "Will you be fine?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Where is he?"

Zwe: "Hospital boardroom on second floor. Come with me." I followed him with Mthunzi to the second floor. I could feel my hands starting to spark but I kept my thoughts on her smile. She would want me calm. I walked in the room alone. He too was alone. His guards outside.

Nkosi: "Father."

Sikhosana: "My son." Thembisa. Thembisa. That's all. He's not worth it. "This is a critical time for our family. Hey? We shouldn't be fighting like this."

Nkosi: "I wouldn't be fighting you if you had simply left her alone."

Sikhosana: "How do you expect me to sit by and watch you be weakened by some woman." I banged on the table, feeling heat in my eyes. He jumped back.

Nkosi: "Call me weak one more time."

Sikhosana: "How is that possible..."

Nkosi: "Listen to what's going to happen now. You're going to leave Thembisa the hell alone. I'm not going to have this conversation with you in verbal terms again. It's only her choice to want to speak to you, and you will listen then back off. Are we clear?"

Sikhosana: "Fine. I will back off. Can we be okay now?"

Nkosi: "We'll be okay when I can trust you."

Sikhosana: "I'm fine with that." The flames subsided again. "When did you learn a new ability?"

Nkosi: "I didn't learn this. It just happened."

Sikhosana: "Your grandfather had the exact same. For a second I thought I was looking at him. I would never intentionally hurt you Mehluli. I only want you to be a powerful king."

Nkosi: "I've always been a powerful king father. I don't need a crown for that."

Sikhosana: "Indeed. Your sister is doing well. Good work by locking down the hospital."

Nkosi: "That's Zwe's doing. The Biyela's have done everything to hold our dignity currently. The shut down was to prevent a video of Amahle getting shot from going viral. They removed and formatted it's existence."

Sikhosana: "So we owe them?"

Nkosi: "No but it would do us a world of good to have them on our side-"

Sikhosana: "They'll hold it ransom over our heads!"

Nkosi: "I'm not getting rid of them and neither are you. We'll deal with that if it happens, for now we keep them by our side."

Sikhosana: "Fine." He folded his arms, frustrated.

Nkosi: "Thembisa wants to speak to you."

Sikhosana: "For what?"

Nkosi: "She'll tell you." He sighed.

Sikhosana: "When?"

Nkosi: "Tomorrow and please don't try it. I will not hold back." He stared at me.

Sikhosana: "Mehluli, is this what you want? You would rather kill your own father for a woman you barely know?"

Nkosi: "You would rather kill a woman I love just to have control over me?"

Sikhosana: "I'm not trying to control you, I'm trying to guide you!"

Nkosi: "You can do that in business and not in my love life. I choose her. That's it. If it comes down to it, yes. It would be better for you to accept this and work with it instead of fight because you will not win. I've let you dictate me way too long." He stared at me for a long while..

Sikhosana: "Fine. If you want to choose a common wife then it's best you marry her soon for her own protection. It's enough the other families will look at us funny but hey, you're in love. To hell with the throne. Nx."  
He walked out.

I went to Thembisa's room. She was standing next to her bed. The pleasure my heart felt that she was standing on her own made me smile.

Nkosi: "Good afternoon."

Mama: "Good afternoon Prince Nkosinhle." That was new.

Sasa: "Hello."

Nkosi: "Zwe says the girls are coming to see you. My father also just left. Do you want to see Amahle? I can bring her."

Sasa: "I'd love to see her." She looked at her parents. "Tata can I please see her?" He looked at me. I could feel the pain in his eyes.

Xolani: "Yes you can go mntanam. You need to exercise your legs also."

Sasa: "Thank you tata." I checked the cupboard, finding a warm hospital gown and slippers. She put those on.

Nkosi: "Amahle is in room 8. There's still no guards or anyone allowed in. I have an alert everytime my father comes in, so I'll know if he comes back or his guards." I said to her father. He nodded. I walked out with Thembisa. She held my hand outside in the passage.

Nkosi: "Hi baby."

Sasa: "Hey. I missed you." I stopped walking and kissed her lips.

Nkosi: "I missed you more. I even bought you a house." She giggled.

Sasa: "How do you buy me a house when I've broken up with you Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "So that I can court you with it." I held her in my arms.

Sasa: "I prefer my villa, thank you." I laughed.

Nkosi: "All yours baby. All of me is yours. Come, let's go before your father comes out."

Sasa: "You can't possibly be scared of him."

Nkosi: "Are you serious? Do you see how he looks at me? That's a man who doesn't fear me. He'll show me God." She laughed out loud.

Sasa: "You? That's adorable." We walked down the passage, turning into another. "Can you handle the fire now?"

Nkosi: "Nope. It just turns up. I have to be near water."

Sasa: "You can't turn it off?"

Nkosi: "There's no way to."

Sasa: "Yes there is. Come." She stopped walking and took off my glove, undoing my bandage. This is one fearless woman. "Snap your finger." I snapped it and the flames ignited. "There... Flex your hands." I did as she said and the flames grew bigger. "Draw a fist." I held a fist and they decreased in size but still not shutting off. "Flick your hand off like there's a fly on it." I chuckled, doing just that. It switched off.

Nkosi: "That's incredible. How did you know that?"

Sasa: "Your grandfather. When he was frustrated he liked playing with it." She giggled pulling me to Amahle's room. We stopped in our tracks. Sibonelo stood outside the room. Shocked and confused. I didn't even realize he was standing there. He looked on the floor, walking away.

Sibo: "Your Highness." He nodded, walking down the passage.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 57

SIBONELO POV\_

We arrived at the hospital. My father went to Zwe's office and I took the girls to Amahle's room that I was told by Zwe. Amahle was indeed alive with a bandage wrapped around her head. I stood in the far corner and stared at her, confused as hell. How can a human be immortal? That's not a thing, is it? Well, here she is. Talking and smiling with her friends. Those orange eyes suddenly stared at me.

Ama: "Thank you."

Sibo: "I only brought them here, didn't even drive. Good to see you alive though."

Ama: "Is it?" She can't know that I know, surely? Did Zwe tell her? Probably.

Sibo: "Yeah. You put the country to a standstill." I smiled.

Ama: "Again, thank you." Nope, it's getting weird. Not with those eyes staring at me.

Sibo: "Let me go check Zwe and get ready for our meeting. Boys, I'm giving you 15 minutes then you must come up so that we start."

Khaya: "Okay." I walked out the room, quietly taking out my phone.

"There... Flex your hands." I looked up, seeing Thembisa standing with Mehluli. I stared at his hand that had fire coming out of it. "Draw a fist." He drew in a fist and I watched in shock as the flames grew smaller. "Flick your hand off like there's a fly on it." He chuckled as if they were playing a game and it switched off. I stood there, unable to move. Do I go back in the room or what? This man has flames coming out his hands. FIRE. On top of transforming his body, he can conjure fire and she's teaching him?! What in God's heaven and earth is happening. They both looked at me. Shit. Now what? I had to keep moving swiftly.

Sibo: "Your Highness." I walked right past it pretending to be blind.

I walked into Zwe's office, closing the door. What. The. Hell. Did I just see? Is that why he's so attached to that girl? She teaches him how to control his powers? She KNOWS??

Zwe: "Hey?" I looked at him. My father sat on the couch looking at me.

Sibo: "Uhm. I'm feeling little light headed. Perhaps I should, go home."

King: "Absolutely not. This is your meeting Sibonelo." Hell. What have I gotten myself into? Now that he knows that I know, what will he do to me?

Sibo: "Do you have a whiskey?"

Zwe: "This is a hospital." Oh my God, how would I get through this. "What is it?" He held my shoulder.

Sibo: "Fire."

Zwe: "Shit." He tried to walk out, I held him back.

Sibo: "It's fine." I went to sit down.

King: "What's going on?"

Zwe: "Nothing tata. Sibonelo is just nervous about telling the prince what is going on."

King: "Don't worry son. We're here. You chose to do the right thing. We fully support you."

Sibo: "Thank you tata." The door opened, Mehluli walked in. I walked to the other side where my father was and sat next to him. His advisor followed behind him with Khaya and Mnqobi. I was not comfortable with them being that close to him.

Zwe: "Right. I think we should start immediately." Mehluli sat on the other couch opposite us, staring at me. Why? Why is he looking at me?

Mthunzi: "First of all, the prince and the throne would like to thank you for your support during this time. Thank you stepping in and protecting us. We're extending our unwavering loyalty to your family. I hope from this point onwards, we can build a future and work together amicably."

King: "That's good to hear, my Lord. I would like to know if the King also has the same reservations?"

Nkosi: "I spoke to my father and he understands that your family is now standing with us and with that, means we will work together. He accepts."

King: "I'm happy to hear that because, my Prince, we have a problem. As you know, today we had to update the royals about council postponement. The other royals were not happy. Sbo?" I sat up.

Sibo: "The other families want you off the throne, Your Highness. They believe it will be better to vote you out now that you're distracted. Their reasonings are, the throne sidelines them and I quote, treats them like peasants." Of course I had to tell him everything.

Nkosi: "Peasants?" He chuckled. Something about that laugh didn't sound friendly. "They haven't experienced peasantry. Who are the families?"

Sibo: "Nakhamula, Mufhuwalo, Mpondo, Bathonga. Phakamisa raised his hand as well but I believe we can persuade him. I was the only one along with my father at council today, we didn't raise our hands. We made it clear, we won't participate. They banished us from council."

Nkosi: "Interesting." He looked at his bare hand, smiling. "Mthunzi?"

Mthunzi: "Why do you believe you can persuade Phakamisa?"

Sibo: "We have their daughter. She's promised to Mngqobi. She's currently in our palace."

Mthunzi: "If they can vote out King Sikhosana, the new King could void the agreement."

Mngqobi: "She won't let go of me. She may not care about the business transaction or alliance but she's planned her life aligned with mine. If they break this agreement, she'll be sent off to another prince. Who else would be eligible? Nakhamula? She'd vomit until she dies." That's my boy. I had to stop myself from laughing. Mngqobi turned into a me for a minute. The room was quiet for a while. Mehluli looked different to his angry self. Almost as if he was expecting these news and also, why did he look happy?

Nkosi: "Nakhamula doesn't learn, does he?" This was his second strike and I doubt it would slide. The first time they let him go, it kind of confused me but I didn't mind it. Everyone deserves second chances.

King: "What should we do my prince."

Nkosi: "Let's wait for them to make a move. Thank you for letting me know." He gave his hand to Mthunzi. Immediately he started to wrap his hand in the bandage. Now I know what those bandages are for. "Who do you think will be chosen as king?"

King: "I suspect Nakhamula. He's always wanted to be."

Nkosi: "Doesn't have the money. Who else?"

Zwe: "Mufhuwalo. He has diamonds."

Nkosi: "Phakamisa and you are the only ones that have enough money for a take over. Even if the other three combined all their assets, they wouldn't make up half of it." He looked at his newly bandaged hand.

Sibo: "You think they might align?"

Nkosi: "I think they might try to rope you in to be the king. If the offer arises, who will take it?" He stared at me.

Sibo: "We don't want the throne."

Nkosi: "I'm not asking if you want it." Right, who will take it. I looked at my father.

King: "My Prince, we'd rather you are the king."

Nkosi: "I understand that King Biyela but now we're on the cusp of a war that I'm trying to avoid."

Zwe: "Let's rather prepare for war, Nkosi. You're the rightful heir. If that means, the others fall away then..."

King: "Let's not be hasty Zwe. Sbo, what are you planning?"

Sibo: "I'll have to draw up a war plan. It will take me a day or two."

Nkosi: "Good. Now, the citizens. The deliveries are currently taking place. Mthunzi raised concerns that perhaps the upper class may have problems regarding us only providing for the lower class and leaving them out. What can we do to combat that?" I was seeing this man differently. Apart from the powers he possessed. He was very involved in the background. He gave credit to anyone who gave him an idea. He was not a man who wanted to eat alone. Had I judged him wrong all these years?

SASA POV\_

I was so happy to be with my friends but my heart was still aching. It was one thing living in the past but I inherited all those emotions from it. At least I had Nkosi with me again. Hopefully my dad is opening up to the idea of me marrying Nkosi. I pray to the heavens he agrees. But now, the aching I have when I touch my flat belly. The connection I had to that pregnancy is strong and very unhealthy. Especially because the supposed person is my father in law, who doesn't like me. I was in the bed with Amahle, I lay on my back. She was sitting up by my legs.

Petu: "Does it still hurt?" I realized my hand was on my stomach again.

Me: "A little. Can you believe I almost died? Thank you." I sat to kiss Amahle's cheek.

Ama: "Yoh I would've never heard the end of it. Nkosi would hurt the whole nation." I giggled.

Notha: "We're glad you're alive Sasa. Petu has alot to tell you." Petu blushed.

Petu: "let's focus girls."

Me: "No, please tell me. I need some hot news. I'm currently in soup with my parents and Nkosi keeps coming to the room to talk to me. Amahle why is your brother like that?" She giggled.

Ama: "He didn't leave your side until Zwe dragged him out. You know your husband Thembisa. When it comes to you, everything must stand still. Look at the country?"

Me: "No ma'am. That's all you. The minute they mentioned Last Princess of the Throne, everyone went wild."

Petu: "That's so cute." We laughed.

Ama: "Petu, tell us your hot news please." Notha smiled next to her.

Petu: "I have nothing to tell." She giggled.

Notha: "Ugh, fine. I'll talk. So after the shooting, Mngqobi and Sibonelo were at the gate when I came out, we got in the car driving to res for Petu. Sibonelo then told me Amahle had been shot with Thembisa. When we got to res, Petu's man went to fetch her from the crowd." We all giggled.

Me: "Then what happened!!!"

Petu: "We came to hospital and stayed here for a while. Eventually Zwe told us to go home. Since the city is in lockdown, we all had to go to the palace." She blushed.

Me: "You're living in a palace!?"

Petu: "Yes." She giggled.

Me: "I would be screaming if this wound didn't hurt imagine me screaming my friend. Haibo. And Mr man?"

Notha: "I caught them trying to have sex yesterday-"

Petu: "Nothando!"

Me: "Petu! You're brave! In a palace?" We laughed.

Petu: "Okay but I have something important to tell you guys."

Notha: "Well?"

Petu: "Mnqobi said he loves me." We all kept quiet. I looked at Amahle. She played with her sleeve, unbothered as usual. Nothando was smiling slightly.

Me: "Petu, that's huge."

Petu: "And confusing."

Notha: "Did you say it back?"

Petu: "No. I think it may have been a mistake also. I'm so confused."

Notha: "Why do you think it was a mistake?"

Petu: "We were making love." She looked at Amahle. "You always know Amy. Do you think he's being true?"

Ama: "Maybe." She looked at Nothando. I knew that look. It was time she knew. Oh God, this would hurt.

Me: "Babe. I don't know what's going through Mnqobi's head. But all the people in this room, love you and only want what's best for you. Okay? Everything always works out. Always."

Notha: "It will work out. If he says he loves you, then he probably does." The room door opened. My father walked in. He smiled. Did he think I ran off with Nkosi? That would be funny.

Me: "Hello Tata."

Xolani: "Hello my child. I only came to check if you're fine."

Me: "Come meet my friends. This is Amahle. You didn't see her properly. She is Nkosi's little sister. She's studying BCom Accounting."

Xolani: "The last princess of the throne. It's lovely to meet you, princess."

Ama: "You too, sir."

Me: "This is Petunia, she does agricultural sciences. She grew up here in Mountain Peak. Her father has a successful business and her sister is married to a businessman."

Petu: "It's a pleasure to meet you tata."

Xolani: "You too my child."

Me: "This is Nothando. She is from Golden Crown. Her father is King Phakamisa. She's studying financial management."

Xolani: "I'm pleased to meet you princess. My children are going to be very educated young ladies aren't they? It's science, money and law. That's beautiful. Keep it up girls. It was lovely meeting you all."

Ama: "You too tata."

Xolani: "Sasa, where is the... Prince."

Me: "He's in a meeting Tata, do you need anything?"

Xolani: "I want to speak to him. When he is done, may he please come see me?"

Me: "Okay tata."

Xolani: "Goodbye girls."

Girls: "goodbye tata." He walked out. My sweet father.

PRINCE POV\_

I wasn't surprised that the royals wanted to take the throne. I honestly couldn't care less. There was nothing that this throne has specifically done for me except give me a powerful name and there's only so much you can do with that. My hard work gave me all that I have. Strip me off the title and I'll still be successful. This could be my chance to finally live a normal life with the woman that I love. I don't know how long I'll wait to get her pregnant but I think it'll need to be a few years because I want her to myself for a while. Babies are alot. And I'm not in the mood to raise me. I know I'm difficult. Imagine my mini. That's gonna need alot of preparation. Most importantly, my wife must attend to me so I can love her freely and wildly like the beating in my heart. Our house needs furniture too. I know she loves the villa but when she sees that house, I'll steal her heart. That's for sure.

Mthunzi: "Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "Hm?" He stared at me. "Right. I don't want to involve my father just yet because he will act irrationally. However, it'll only be a matter of time he finds out. So before I speak to him, I need a plan."

King: "That may be a good idea."

Sibo: "I'll have one ready, tomorrow afternoon Your Highness. We can meet by end of business."

Nkosi: "If I didn't mention before, your alliance means a great deal to me. I will not forget it. Thank you."

King: "You're most welcome. Let's get going." They got up, leaving after goodbyes.

Mthunzi: "Why are you day dreaming in the middle of a very important meeting?" I know he told me before but I acted like the Nkosinhle I am.

Nkosi: "I need to furnish the house." I watched him exhale slowly.

Mthunzi: "I'm not doing this with you today."

Nkosi: "The house is bare."

Mthunzi: "You had two weeks. You chose to sulk through them now you want to stress me. Thembisa will help you furnish the house." Zwe walked back in.

Zwe: "Why don't you want to be King?"

Nkosi: "I'm over it Zwe. I've been isolated my entire life. I don't know what's it's like to not be a king. I'm glad someone wants it because honest to God, I'm looking forward to being normal."

Zwe: "You have never been normal Nkosinhle!! You were born for this. This is your destiny. You can't just step aside and go play. What about the rest of us?"

Nkosi: "Zwelethu, the first time I drank a coke, I was 30 years old. I hadn't driven a car in four years yet I own 7. I haven't been to the beach, I haven't been to the cinema to watch movies. I don't know what's its like to walk into a mall and buy clothes. I didn't understand genres of music until I met Thembisa. I didn't even know what it felt like to be loved until I met her. I can't even have a meal with her in a public restaurant. All these things may seem insignificant to you but it's different for me. I'm experiencing life for the first time since I've been alive."

Zwe: "So what will you do then Nkosinhle? Quit?" I couldn't help feeling like I'm losing this friendship a second time.

Nkosi: "I need to live Zwe." He walked out. "Am I being unreasonable?"

Mthunzi: "Yes. You can't just give up the throne to blood thirsty royals. This will destroy the nation."

Nkosi: "That's not who I'm giving the throne to."

Mthunzi: "Nkosi, let's first think about this. I know you want a normal life, I understand. We can give you that, without giving up the throne."

Nkosi: "I've made up my mind. I don't want to be King." ...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 58

PRINCE POV\_

I walked to Amahle's room. I needed to check on them. I knocked on the door, walking in. It was only Amahle and Thembisa in the room. Amahle was sleeping.

Sasa: "Hi love." She whispered, getting out of bed.

Nkosi: "Hey."

Sasa: "Are you okay? You look upset."

Nkosi: "I'm fine. Just a difficult meeting."

Sasa: "Do you want to talk about it?"

Nkosi: "Not yet love. I spoke to my dad. He agreed to meeting you and talking. Tomorrow. Is that okay?"

Sasa: "Yes that's fine. Mine also wants to speak to you."

Nkosi: "Alright, let's go. Mthunzi will stay here with Amahle." We walked out.

Sasa: "Hello Bhut Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Hello Thembisa, how are you?"

Sasa: "I'm well thank you and yourself?"

Mthunzi: "I'm good."

Sasa: "I would like to know when is Qhama's funeral? I want to attend." I looked at her.

Nkosi: "Why?"

Sasa: "Qhama died trying to protect me. The least I can do is pay my respects at his funeral. When is it?"

Mthunzi: "Uhm. It's on Saturday but there's a lock down, so it might not be a good idea to attend."

Sasa: "Nkosi will let the funeral commence in his honour. He was a soldier. He died for me. His life should be celebrated. Right?" She looked up at me.

Nkosi: "Right." I guess I'm going to a funeral.

Mthunzi: "Alright. I'll make the arrangements." He walked in the room. We walked down the passage.

Sasa: "I know you don't want to go to the funeral. You can get me 20 bodyguards, I don't mind. I just have to be there and speak to his parents and the mother of his child. Qhama was a hero and they need to know that."

Nkosi: "Okay baby." I held her hand as we walked slowly down the passage.

Sasa: "Would you whisper to my dad if he wanted to forget the past?"

Nkosi: "No."

Sasa: "You didn't even hesitate. Baby, he's hurting."

Nkosi: "No Thembisa. I'm never going to use my abilities on you or your family, that would be cruel. Your dad is starting to warm up to me, I'm not going to manipulate that. I know you want what's best for him my love, but no."

Sasa: "Fine. What about Sibonelo?"

Nkosi: "I have to talk to his brother. He's kind of mad at me as well."

Sasa: "Why?"

Nkosi: "The other royals want the throne."

Sasa: "So? It's not theirs. There's nothing you can do."

Nkosi: "Do you think my grandfather was happy when he had to accept the crown?"

Sasa: "No. He was happy he had the woman he loved by his side. Anything else didn't matter."

Nkosi: "So the throne didn't make him happy?" She stopped walking and stared at me.

Sasa: "Don't tell me you don't want to accept the crown."

Nkosi: "Babe."

Sasa: "No Nkosi. This is your destiny."

Nkosi: "So says Zwe. I just don't think it is. Is it really my destiny to be King or to be good?"

Sasa: "Have you been smoking?"

Nkosi: "I don't smoke, why?" I looked at my hands for smoke. She chuckled holding my hands.

Sasa: "You're meant to be King. A good one. The throne belongs to you."

Nkosi: "The throne belongs to my family. On what merit? Abilities? That's not fair."

Sasa: "Who else would be a better candidate Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "Zwelethu Biyela or his dad."

Sasa: "That was a rhetorical question Nkosi. You can't give away your birth right."

Nkosi: "I don't want it. I have what I want. You." She looked at me with sadness in her eyes. "You'd love me even if I wasn't king, right?"

Sasa: "I would. I'll always love you. In this life and the next."

Nkosi: "So what's wrong?"

Sasa: "Nothing my love. Let's not keep uTata waiting." She walked away. What was that now? I was sure me not being King doesn't matter

to her so what was the problem? I know that she loves me. I followed her to the room.

Nkosi: "Good evening."

Mama: "Hello again, my prince. Are you well?"

Nkosi: "Yes ma. I'm fine." I looked at Thembisa who still looked very upset.

Xolani: "Your Highness." I looked at him. "My wife has expressed that she wants to rest. So I'll be taking her to the guesthouse. Since there's a lockdown what modes of transportation are available?"

Nkosi: "Oh you shouldn't worry about that sir. I have a car ready for you. Also, I think you'll be much more comfortable in my villa. Guesthouses won't offer privacy. The villa is up the mountain and no one is allowed there."

Mama: "We'll take it. I've never slept on a mountain before." She giggled.

Nkosi: "You'll love it ma." I looked at Thembisa again, who was still ignoring me. She sat on her bed, looking at her hands. Zwe walked in. He too was upset at me, I know it.

Zwe: "Good evening family. I just came to check on our young lady." He looked at me. "Can I pass through?" I stepped aside and he walked to her side.

Sasa: "Hello Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "Just call me Zwe." He smiled, checking her vitals. "The scan I did earlier, showed you in perfect health. You're healing pretty well."

Xolani: "When can you discharge her?"

Zwe: "Tomorrow morning for sure."

Nkosi: "The parents would like to go rest, can you make an exception for tonight Zwe?" He looked at me, icily.

Zwe: "Sure. But I'll have to come check on you tomorrow morning. Where will you be staying, lady? I'm not allowed inside a hotel."

Xolani: "and why is that?"

Zwe: "Royals aren't allowed in hotels, sir." It's fine, throw me under the bus.

Xolani: "Is that so?"

Zwe: "Where will you be staying sir?"

Xolani: "The prince offered his villa."

Zwe: "Oh. Perfect security measure. No one is allowed up the mountain, you'll be safe there." He finished up with his checks. "Perfect. You'll be back in school in no time." That statement squeezed my heart uncomfortably. I don't think I can handle her being in public so soon.

Sasa: "Thank you Zwe."

Zwe: "You're welcome. Just remember to keep this wound clean and dry. I'll bring your pain meds and antibiotics shortly. Try not to move too much from this point, I don't want swelling in this area."

Sasa: "And bathing?"

Zwe: "Keep the wound dry. I'll give you waterproof bandages to dress it in."

Sasa: "Okay."

Nkosi: "I'll get the guards and car ready." I walked out the room unable to take the tension anymore. My neck ached from stress. I needed Amahle now. No one else understands what I'm going through.

SASA POV\_

The drive to the villa was quiet. I was in the car with both my parents. The streets were empty, whistling wind. We drove up and parked. I hope the staff don't recognize me or I don't know how I'll explain it to my parents. We were led inside. I knew the villa had multiple rooms but I didn't think there was a family suite. It had a King bed and a double bed. There was also a dining table for four, a nice couch and TV. The sliding door opened to the deck, that also had a swimming pool and lounge chairs and a braai area.

Mama: "Yoh. I feel like a QUEEN. Look at this place, Taka Thembisa. It's 5 stars, ne Sasa?"

Me: "Yes mama. It's a 5 star private villa."

Mama: "Yoh, ooThembisa are living in heaven while we suffer on earth. Look at the mountains. Imagine?"

Xolani: "Sasa, come rest my child."

Me: "Don't you first want to eat Tata? There's also a restaurant."

Mama: "Yes!! Then I can come back and watch the mountains."

Xolani: "I thought you said you are tired?"

Mama: "I'll be tired in my grave. Sasa, please take a picture of me. Use your Father's phone and send it."

Xolani: "Ntombenhle, the child just came from hospital. This place will still be here in the morning. It's dark now."

Mama: "Fine let's go eat. I wish I packed better clothes." My mother thinks she's on vacation. We walked out to the restaurant area. Nkosi was already here, speaking on his phone. This man looks damn sexy even when he's just standing there, talking on the phone. We sat down at a table.

Mama: "Where are the other people?"

Me: "There's no other people mama. This place is only for Nkosi's guests and himself."

Mama: "So he doesn't live in the palace?" Why put me on the spot like this?

Me: "He does. He built this place for his privacy. His ancestral grounds are up in the mountain."

Xolani: "The ones you went to?"

Me: "Yes tata." I said in shame. Nkosi finally finished with his call.

Nkosi: "The kitchen has prepared a 3 course meal, sir. I'll have someone collect Thembisa's clothes for tomorrow morning, they'll be here by the time she wakes up."

Xolani: "What about the clothes that are already here?" I drank my water, avoiding this conversation. "She'd obviously been here a few times." He looked at Nkosi.

Nkosi: "Uhm. I had to move them after we separated, sir." Where did he take my clothes? "I'd like to wish you all a good night. I'll be seeing you

in the morning. Please feel free to use all the amenities on sight. The room service is available 24 hours. Everything else is from 7 in the morning."

Mama: "Aren't you joining us for dinner my prince?"

Nkosi: "I'd love to mama but I'll have to politely decline this evening. It's important that you have space alone as a family."

Mama: "You are so very kind."

Nkosi: "Have a good evening." He walked out, I looked out after him.

Mama: "Thembisa be quick, we want to eat." I got up, walking out to Nkosi. He stood outside on the edge of the cliff.

Me: "Hey."

Nkosi: "Hey."

Me: "I'm not mad at you. I'm just worried Nkosi. I know even from the first time I met you, I asked if you wanted this and you said it was your birth right. I know you're not happy my love. I'm only just worried. What if your ancestors, don't take kindly to this?"

Nkosi: "That would be very cruel of them to force someone into a destiny they don't want. I don't know Thembisa. Since I came to this realization, I have felt free. Anxious, stressed but mostly free. I am looking forward to doing stuff. I can focus on a career. Having a family and just rolling on grass having picnics with my wife and kids. Maybe a pet dog. I don't think I like dogs. I'm more of a cat person." I chuckled.

Me: "Okay, of course you're a cat person. Look, we can do this, love. Kings have off days too."

Nkosi: "That's the problem Thembisa. I don't want an off day. I just want a normal life." He sighed. "I have to go." I nodded, walking inside again. My mother has ordered juice for us all. I sat down, drinking mine. This whole situation was going to reflect badly on me. If Nkosi doesn't want to be King anymore, it will be my fault. He can't choose me over his destiny and he doesn't want to reason. We had our dinner with my mother quite literally forcing me to take pictures of her. After dinner, we went back to the bedroom. I needed to rest. I'll bath in the morning. I got in my bed. Mama was taking a bath, singing loudly and happily.

Xolani: "Sasa." He sat on my bed.

Me: "Yes dad?"

Xolani: "Why are you fighting with the prince?"

Me: "I'm not fighting with him tata."

Xolani: "Then what is happening? Since you came back from your friends you've been upset."

Me: "He doesn't want to be a king anymore. He wants someone else to take the throne. He wants a normal life."

Xolani: "That's why you're upset?"

Me: "I want him to have a normal life Tata but this Isn't good. He can't abandon his destiny like that. I tried telling him he can have a normal life as king but he won't hear it. He just doesn't want the title at all."

Xolani: "If he's not king then what's going to happen?"

Me: "I don't know tata. He wants his friend to be the king but I doubt Zwe wants it either. So maybe his father. Either way, what if things go wrong. I'll be blamed."

Xolani: "No one will blame you for anything Thembisa."

Me: "Tata, Nkosi was ready to be King before he met me. Now he's abandoning it altogether because there's me."

Xolani: "My child, you can't force him to do something he doesn't want to do."

Me: "I'm just scared Tata. I'm worried that his ancestors protest." I sigh.

Xolani: "Things have a way of working out. I said before I don't know about these things. But I trust you will have a plan by morning. For now, sleep. You've had a busy day."

Me: "okay tata. Goodnight."

Xolani: "Goodnight Sasa." I drank my pills and closed my eyes to sleep..

SIBONELO POV\_

It's been a stressful day and I was honestly at my wits end. I needed my space but with the way my mother is staring at me, I know she'll force my thoughts out of me.

Queen: "Mziwabo. What did you do to my child?"

King: "Which one? I didn't do anything."

Queen: "Why is he staring at nothing then?"

King: "Sibonelo please answer your mother."

Queen: "Im asking you, he left here fine. Two hours with you and he's crying."

Sibo: "Haibo? I'm not crying."

Queen: "Then what's wrong?" See? I knew she would trick me into talking.

Sibo: "I just have a lot of work I'm thinking about ma. Honestly." Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "Good evening." He kissed his mother on the cheek.

Queen: "Hello my son." Tata had his cheek out too.

Zwe: "You're old."

King: "I still need affection." He kissed him too.

Zwe: "You as well?"

Sibo: "Please leave me alone." I had to get out of here before I'm tackled to the ground. I got up, collecting my devices and chargers.

Queen: "This is why I didnt want you to have your own house."

King: "He's a grown man. Right Sboni? We'll see you at breakfast?"

Sibo: "Yes tata, I'll be home for breakfast." I walked out. Zwe walked right behind me to my car.

Zwe: "Sbo."

Sibo: "How many super powers does he have?"

Zwe: "Im not sure. The fire is new-"

Sibo: "New?" I chuckled. "So there's more? Besides, tiger man and fire hands. He has others? Okay. And you say this is a human being? Listen to yourself clearly when you answer me."

Zwe: "He didn't ask to be born like that Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Well, I'll be fucking damned. If I knew there was a section in heaven where you could choose yourself some extra arms then I'd definitely have chosen some. You're unbelievable." I opened my car door, putting my stuff inside.

Zwe: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "When I said to you, he spoke in my head. Was I telling the truth? Please be honest. Was he in my head?"

Zwe: "Yes." I gasped, not expecting that answer. "Please don't be mad at me?"

Sibo: "MAD?? I AM FURIOUS AT YOU!!!" I got in my car driving out, my whole body was shaking trying to remember the shit I was thinking during that reed dance. Oh dear God. I called him insane and threatened to take his girl. That's how he warned me. Fuck. Now I must apologize? For what? Would he hold a grudge? Probably. The man can turn into a tiger. Fucking hell. I parked in the underground parking in Khaya's building. I don't want to be in my house. I know my brothers will follow me there.

Sibo: "No man. I must be losing my mind. Fire? For what? Why would you need fire hands?" I got out the car with my things. "That's why he looks so intimidating, he knows he packing. Imagine." I climbed in the lift, riding up to the apartment. I unlocked and walked in, closing the door behind.

Sibo: "I need a fucking drink." As I entered, I found a half naked woman in the kitchen. Who the fuck is this now?

Zimmy: "Prince Sibonelo." Brain, work. Khaya.

Sibo: "You're Khaya's girlfriend right?"

Zimmy: "I'm not his girlfriend. Just a friend."

Sibo: "Oh. Aren't you supposed to be in res? What are you doing here."

Zimmy: "There's a lock down outside."

Sibo: "Right. I thought there were was no one here." I went to the couch and sat down, setting up my laptops, putting on headphones. "What's your name again?"

Zimmy: "You don't remember my name?"

Sibo: "I'm not in the mood for this. Please. It's been a difficult day."

Zimmy: "My name is Zimmy."

Sibo: "Zimmy, please try not to make a noise."

Zimmy: "Okay." I logged into my operating system, tapping into an active phone. I set up my recorder at the same time. It was King Nakhamula's phone. Zimmy put a bottle of Hennessy on the table with a glass. At least she's useful.

Sibo: "Thank you." A voice came on my headset.

Nakhamula: "This time, we have to be strategic. We can't kill him. We have to be smart about this. The information we compiled is enough for him to step down." Another voice that sounded like Mandla, his first born came on.

Mandla: "Baba, what if he refuses? You know how Sikhosana is. Also, that man has the biggest army in the nation. What if he declares war? We cannot afford to go into war."

Nakhamula: "Once we combine our forces with Bathonga, Mpondo and Mufhuwalo, we'll be just as strong as him. If only we can persuade Biyela to join us, we'd be damn powerful."

Mandla: "But you banned them from council. Besides that fool Sibonelo already chose Sikhosana."

Nakhamula: "Sibonelo hates Sikhosana as much as we do. We only need to show him the right side."

Mandla: "Won't it just be better to convince his father?"

Nakhamula: "I'll focus on the father. I'll invite him tomorrow. You talk to your friend. Mandla, do whatever it takes to butter him up. We need Biyela's money."

Mandla: "Fine. We'll talk in the morning."

Nakhamula: "Good." Then silence. I changed to Mufhuwalo but heard sex sounds.

Sibo: "Okay, that's rude." I switched to Bathonga. Nothing. Mpondo wasn't active so his phone was probably off. I turned to the second laptop making notes then sending my father a message to prepare to receive an invitation from Nakhamula. I poured myself a drink, taking off the headphones. Jimmy sat on the single couch, watching tv cuddling a mug.

Sibo: "Aren't you bored here by yourself?" I sipped. "I'm talking to you Jimmy." She looked at me.

Jimmy: "Oh, sorry. Thought you were busy on your laptop."

Sibo: "Well?"

Jimmy: "I'm enjoying the space. My roommate is a bitch."

Sibo: "Hm." I started with my retaliation tactics for war. Mehluli did say he wanted them to make the first move. I started from least effective to drastic. My phone beeped a message. What does Zwelethu want from me? If the rebels make the first move which I suspect would be media attention. We can issue lawsuits. This will make us look guilty, sure but they'll bleed money quickly. Deployment of their combined army, our retaliation would be a cut in machinery supply. Sikhosana already owns one weaponry company. He can also influence the other company to hold all weapons for him. I sent a message to Mthunzi. No money, no weapons. That leaves the citizens. This one will be difficult. My phone rang. Jimmy got up, and left for the bedroom, closing the door.

Sibo: "Biyela." I answered.

Zwe: "You're not in your house. Where are you?"

Sibo: "I'm fine where I am. I just need to focus Zwelethu."

Zwe: "Okay but where?"

Sibo: "I'm not telling you. Why can't I have space?"

Zwe: "Fine. I'll see you in the morning." I hung up. With no money or weapons, they'll most probably look to other nations for investors for a war. I laughed. This will be so good. I compiled an email to three neighboring nations. Their alliance with Sikhosana will destroy these clowns but I needed to make it stick. I called Mngqobi, checking the passage. The tv was on in the bedroom, but I still lowered my voice. You can never be too safe.

Mnqobi: "Brother."

Sibo: "Do you still have that Arabic prince in your friend circle?"

Mnqobi: "There's three of them, yes."

Sibo: "Perfect. Secure an alliance with them by tomorrow midday."

Mnqobi: "Yoh Sboni."

Sibo: "I've taught you this Mnqobi. I'll guide you through it. I want to crush these idiots before they even breath a good morning. Nobody calls me a fool."

Mnqobi: "Fine. I'll get on it right now."

Sibo: "Good."

Mnqobi: "That all?"

Sibo: "No but we're playing chess. I'm waiting for their move. We'll talk in the morning." I hung up. It's been a minute since I've planned for a war. It's only ever been for two other nations and they didn't lose. Destroying comes far too easy for me.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 59

PETU POV\_

After my bath, I got into bed with my phone. Mnqobi had borrowed me his charger so I can stay online and communicate with my family. My sister and her kids were still fine. My dad was okay too. After their calls, I played around on socials just checking general news things. People were talking about suspended accounts after posting about the shooting. Why don't they listen? It was clearly said if you spread lies, you'll be severely punished. They should be lucky a suspended account is all they are getting. My bedroom door opened. Mnqobi.

Mnqobi: "My butterfly. I don't even want to get close to you, I know you smell like a goddess, I'll never get out of bed." I giggled.

Petu: "Then why are you here?" Nothando walked in. She closed the door behind her.

Mnqobi: "Uhm. I have some work Sibó asked me to do. It will take probably the whole night. It's about our current dilemma."

Petu: "Okay."

Mnqobi: "So I'll see you in the morning."

Petu: "Goodnight baby." Nothando was standing at the door, with her arms folded staring at him.

Mnqobi: "Uhm." He cleared his throat. "Nothando."

Notha: "Now."

Mnqobi: "You cannot be serious. I am working and heavily stressed already-"

Notha: "Sounds like a personal problem."

Mnqobi: "We're at the beginning of a war Nothando."

Notha: "I don't care." He looked at me. What was going on here?

Mnqobi: "Okay. Tomorrow morning. Butterfly, can we please talk in the morning? I have something important I need to tell you."

Petu: "Why can't you tell me now?"

Mnqobi: "Because it's important and I will need to be able to show you how I feel about you. Right now, is a bad time."

Notha: "The Prince I'm promised to, Petu, is Mnqobi." I stared at her then him.

Petu: "Which Mnqobi?"

Notha: "Biyela. This one." I looked at him. He looked embarrassed.

Petu: "Mnqobi?"

Mnqobi: "I was going to tell yo-"

Petu: "But what? You wanted to use me instead?"

Mnqobi: "No. I didn't use you-"

Petu: "Then what!? What did you do? I asked you Mngqobi on our first date and you had a chance to speak up but you lied instead!"

Mngqobi: "I'm sorry." My heart broke. I can't believe I've been sleeping with my friends boyfriend and future husband.

Petu: "Then you kept lying because I did ask you again about your relationship with Nothando but you lied." The tears rolled down my cheeks without my permission. This was no time to cry but my heart was shattered. I must have even lied to myself at a certain point thinking he was all mine and forgetting the very fact that this person was a royal prince. Who the hell did I think I was? I had to laugh through my tears to calm down.

Mngqobi: "Baby please understand I only wanted a chance to be with you. Yes I was an asshole, I should've been honest but I wasn't. I was driven by lust at the time. All of that has changed, Petunia please."

Petu: "I'm in your family home. Sleeping with you while your wife is in her room. Do you not have any grain of respect for me Mngqobi Biyela? All you saw was a whore-"

Mngqobi: "Don't you dare say that. You're not that. You never have be-"

Petu: "Please get out Mngqobi."

Mngqobi: "Baby-"

Petu: "Your baby is waiting at the door. Get out." He walked out.

Notha: "I'm sorry-"

Petu: "What's your excuse Nothando because even you, I spoke to you the night I went on a date with him and you kept encouraging me."

Notha: "You love him."

Petu: "That's not the point! You should've told me that's your husband!!" I sobbed. "Please get out. Just leave!!"

Notha: "I'm sorry Petu-"

Petu: "Out Nothando." She walked out, shutting the door behind her. My heart felt so heavy. I hated crying so much. I've never felt so dirty. They just sat there and let me give my body and soul to him knowing they'll end up together in the future leaving me in a bucket of my own tears. When they talk about how ruthless royals are, they're not joking because

what kind of hell is this? She just sat there smiling while I spoke about his strokes? No that's witchcraft to a certain degree. She was mocking me clearly. Both of them were cruel. I was only their joke and nothing else.

KHAYA POV\_

Thursday morning. I went downstairs dressed in my black suit. Not much of a choice today. I sat at the table. No one was here yet but the table was decked with breakfast.

Queen: "My angel. Good morning." She came from the kitchen carrying a tray.

Khaya: "Morning mama. You were baking?"

Queen: "Yes. I made cupcakes. It's Sboni's favorite."

Khaya: "They look delicious."

Queen: "I also have something for you." She went back to the kitchen. So she was stressed. I know when she fusses, she's probably stressed. She came back to me. "Open your mouth darling." She popped a chocolate in my mouth, it melted in seconds with a liquidy sweet center. It touched a weak spot in my soul.

Khaya: "Hm.."

Queen: "Here's another one." I got one more in my mouth.

King: "Why are you feeding the child chocolate in the morning?"

Queen: "I'm not feeding him chocolate."

King: "I watched you put a chocolate truffle in his mouth, it's hardly 7 o'clock. Khaya open your mouth." I shook my head.

Queen: "Exactly. I also made you your favorite breakfast." Mngqobi walked in. He looked dead. "Sweetheart? What's wrong?"

Mngqobi: "Nothing mama. Long night."

Queen: "I know what you need." She went back to the kitchen.

King: "I wonder what the problem is." He sighed.

Khaya: "Since Queens council is cancelled, she may be feeling a bit lonely tata."

King: "Right! I forgot that the other queens are her friends. Oh my love." He got up, going to the kitchen. Zwe walked in, sitting down as well.

Zwe: "Why are you eating chocolate in the morning Khaya?" I wiped the chocolate from the corner of my mouth.

Khaya: "Mama gave it to me." I looked at Mngqobi who was staring at his plate.

Zwe: "Did you get any sleep Mngqo?"

Mngqobi: "About two hours. I was working." He sighed. Nothando sat down quietly greeting us. Something happened. Mngqobi usually has lovey eyes when she's around, today he's just blank. Zwe noticed too but kept quiet. The parents came back to sit down. Mama handed Mngqobi some pancakes.

Mngqobi: "Thank you mama."

Queen: "Hello baby, how are you this morning?"

Notha: "I'm well mama, how are you?"

Queen: "I'm good." Petu came to the table carrying her bag. "No darling. What's going on now?"

Petu: "Good morning ma, tata. I hope you're well this morning. I'm so grateful that you welcomed me so warmly in your home but I've decided to go back to my father's house since there's the lockdown. I really enjoyed being here."

Queen: "No my flower. You can't leave. Sibonelo isn't cheating. This I promise you. I know him sometimes he's neurotic but he needs space to clear his head. He'll be back." Petu looked so sad. She was trying not to cry. Mngqobi really fucked up here.

Petu: "It's not about Prince Sibonelo, mama. I promise. I'm only just missing my father."

Queen: "Oh okay. Will you at least wait for him to drive you home? He'll be here any minute."

Petu: "No it's okay ma. I've called my father. He's on his way."

Queen: "Alright then. At least have some breakfast." She sighed. This was a mess. Now half the family was upset. I ate my breakfast quietly. Sibonelo arrived still dressed in yesterday. Making things worse but it wasn't his fault shame.

Sibo: "Family." He sat down. The parents kept quiet only staring at him.

Khaya: "Hi bhut Sboni." Mngqobi and Zwe mumbled a hello.

Queen: "Oh my God." She burst into tears and left for the bedroom.

King: "You see what you've done?"

Sibo: "All I did was walk in?"

King: "You made promises to your mother and raised her hopes sky high and then shattered her dreams when she's already going through enough."

Sibo: "By asking for Space??" He got up following his mother, Mngqobi went after him. A phone rang.

Petu: "My apologies, that would be my father. Again, Thank you King Biyela for opening your home to me."

King: "You're welcome."

Zwe: "I'll take you to the main gate of the estate." He got up walking her out.

King: "What a bad start to an already difficult day. Nothando, please look after your mother. You know Zinhle is probably still sleeping and will wake up with a phone stuck to her face for hours. It's a wonder she hasn't gone blind."

Notha: "I'll look after her tata."

King: "Thank you my child."

Sibonelo couldn't leave until mama had fallen asleep. It didn't take long but when it comes to her, he'll drop everything. She was his soft spot. For about 8 years he was her last born prince and she doted on him then came Mngqobi and afterwards Zinhle. However that bond never broke. He was obviously livid when he left her room. Mngqobi had chosen this time to run away with Zwe. Now I'm left with the dragon? Eh. Okay I guess. After getting changed to clean clothes, he got in his car and I in

the passenger. The car sped off toward the hospital. You can irritate Sibonelo all you like but don't make mama cry. I just hope we can sort this out before Mehluli arrives because I don't want him to think we have problems. His are bigger, for sure but we can only deal with one family at a time. We arrived at the hospital, walking in, and straight to Zwe's office. Mngqobi and Zwe were there, he was getting yelled at uMngqobi. Oh hell.

Zwe: "Honestly Mngqobi!! What the hell? It's one thing sleeping with your wife's best friend and another doing it in our family home but to then let your mother be attached and-"

Sibo: "Myeke ngimshaye." He pulled up his sleeves.

Zwe: "Awume Sibonelo nawe!!"

Sibo: "He sat there and didn't even bother to be fucking honest!! His mother is in tears and all he can think of is I must keep his secret. Ngizomshaya mina, khuluma ke wena."

Mngqobi: "Bhut Sbo -"

Sibo: "Don't you fucking piss me off any more than you have today Mngqobi Biyela." I can't even say anything. I didn't want any smoke from a Zulu speaking Sibonelo. He will legit beat you up.

Mngqobi: "I'm sorry boobhuti. I did not mean for this to go this far. Please forgive me."

Sibo: "You're telling your mother the truth TODAY do you understand me?"

Mngqobi: "Yes Bhut Sbo."

Sibo: "Nx." He took out his ringing phone. "What!?" He answered. "I'm in a meeting with my family Mandla... I don't know, we'll see." He hung up and stared at Mngqobi. He still wanted to beat him up. "How do you fuck up two relationships in one day Mngqobi? No man, stick to managing the company because you're a shit boyfriend. Shit. Shit. Shit. Nxa."

Zwe: "This seems personal."

Sibo: "I'm not talking to you Zwe."

Zwe: "Hawu? We're about to have a meeting, shouldn't we sort out our differences?"

Sibo: "Not while my emotions are still this high. No. The two of you have pissed me off enough for the week." He sat down, opening his laptop. I'm not about to poke this man today. Nope.

## PRINCE POV\_

Another night of no sleep. I'd spent my night at the hospital with Amahle but she had slept right through the night. I left in the morning to get ready for the day. Mthunzi had gone to res to meet Linda who had packed some clothes for Thembisa. He's probably on his way now. I put on a different outfit today. My battle armour. It was all black, secured with bullet proof and sword shield material. I wore the military boots and secured my weapon on my side. Mthunzi walked in, dressed identical. He laughed.

Mthunzi: "Morning soldier."

Nkosi: "Hello." He gave me the bag.

Mthunzi: "Are you comfortable?"

Nkosi: "Yes, it's a perfect fit."

Mthunzi: "You can put the weapon aside. There's no threat yet. You're still going to Sasa, you don't want to scare her."

Nkosi: "Okay. Is the car ready eMthinomkhulu?"

Mthunzi: "Yes, just waiting for your permission."

Nkosi: "I'll let you know as soon as I arrive at the villa."

Mthunzi: "Are you okay?"

Nkosi: "No. Thembisa wants me to be King."

Mthunzi: "I see. Have you explained to her, why you don't want it?"

Nkosi: "Yes. She's worried."

Mthunzi: "That's valid."

Nkosi: "It is."

Mthunzi: "So what will you do?" I sighed.

Nkosi: "I'll have to suck it up I guess. I can't lose her. I'll be in the hospital soon. Please be with Amahle."

Mthunzi: "Will do. And Nkosi, you have all of our support. We love you, we will stand by you. No matter what. King or not."

Nkosi: "Thank you Mthunzi." He walked out. I too walked to my car where my guards were, they drove me to the villa. I can imagine this is how my grandfather felt. I also imagine this is probably one of the tests I had coming. Amahle can stress me sometimes. Why is she sleeping happily as if I don't have problems? Hopefully she'll be awake when I get to the hospital. The car drove into the villa, parking in it's spot, my guards cars parking behind me. Look at this drama. All this, for one person. I walked into the building.

Nkosi: "Please remain at the door. I'm with family." They waited at the entrances. I had the bag in my hand but God himself will have to drag me to her family room. I walked in the restaurant, waiting. Heaven's sake. I forgot the gun. Quickly, I undid the holster belt, letting loose the machine. She walked in, almost immediately staring at it. I placed it on a chair.

Nkosi: "Morning my love." I kissed her lips. She stepped away. Parents. Where was my brain today? "Good morning Mr and Mrs Ntaka. My apologies."

Mama: "Morning my Prince."

Sasa: "I've never seen you dressed like this? What is it for? Are you going to council?"

Nkosi: "No. This is a battle suit. It's made for war."

Sasa: "Why are you wearing a war suit?" Panic in her voice.

Nkosi: "It has occurred as of last night's meeting, we may or may not go into war."

Xolani: "I beg your pardon?"

Nkosi: "The other royals want to remove my father from the throne." I looked at Thembisa. "I have to defend it."

Sasa: "Isn't a war a bit drastic?"

Nkosi: "We're only preparing ahead. Sir, since this development, it's likely that the lock down be extended. If it is okay with you, I want bring Zanele here, for safety."

Xolani: "If that's the case, we might as well all go home."

Nkosi: "That's the problem sir. They might start eMthinomkhulu if they attack. I've already sent some of my army there to defend the village but I'd rather your family is safely here away from the chaos."

Xolani: "I have a business there. I have livestock."

Nkosi: "I can place someone there for that purpose by midday."

Sasa: "Wait... Nkosinhle, you're serious. The nation might go into WAR?"

Nkosi: "I don't mean to scare you but it's a 50% possibility. Sir?"

Xolani: "Bring me my child."

Nkosi: "She'll arrive by 12. Please notify her guardian that a royal guard will be fetching her. She must only hand her over when he shows his badge. The colours are Purple, Black and Gold. Mthunzi will be online, checking all interaction. She'll be safe." I picked up my gun. "I have another meeting today. The Biyela's are helpful, we have their alliance only currently. It's powerful so I'm hoping this doesn't lead to drastic measures. Please don't worry."

Sasa: "Please be safe Nkosi." I smiled.

Nkosi: "I'll be fine. I'll be back during the day. Please try not to worry. There's guards all around the perimeter of this mountain. You're safe here."

Sasa: "Thank you." I could only drink in her beautiful face from this safe distance but I was grateful for it. She was still nervous about the impending war which isn't any better than her disappointed look when I told her I don't want to be a king. She was worth it. If I did it for anyone, it would be her...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 60

## PRINCE POV\_

I walked into the hospital starting in Amahle's room. She was finally awake. Mthunzi sat in his chair while she lay on the bed under blankets.

Nkosi: "Morning."

Ama: "Hello."

Nkosi: "You slept through the night I wanted to talk to you."

Ama: "I slept through the night on purpose. You don't need me now, do you?"

Nkosi: "I could've just gone home to sleep, you should've told me."

Ama: "Your choice to stay was yours alone. I didn't tell you not to sleep. Are you ready for your meeting?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Sibonelo says he started with the plans. He'll be showing us phase 1 later today. Mthunzi, you spoke to the other weapon companies?"

Mthunzi: "Yes. They've all complied and signed agreements. I've emailed them to you." I looked at Amahle.

Ama: "Not that meeting. Your father is meeting your wife."

Nkosi: "I've warned him enough. The ball is in his court."

Ama: "Have you planned where they would meet?"

Nkosi: "No."

Ama: "ask Zwe."

Nkosi: "He's not talking to me."

Ama: "Ask him still."

Nkosi: "Im not a big fan of rejection Amahle."

Ama: "You deserve it this time." We both looked at the door. Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "Morning."

Ama: "Hello Zwe."

Zwe: "Let's check on these wounds angel." He opened the bandage on her back. "Hmm."

Ama: "What?"

Zwe: "Your wounds have closed. They're self healing."

Ama: "That's what happens when one is immortal fortunately."

Zwe: "That's incredible. You're very blessed."

Ama: "I don't think so. I die for a living. It hurts. So far, gun shot death is not my favorite." He placed his stethoscope on her back.

Zwe: "Do you want to describe it for me? Since of course I've never died." She giggled. What was that now? Amahle never giggles.

Ama: "It was different sensations honestly. On my back it felt like something very hot was burning into me and when it was inside started shattering my nerves and muscle. Everything tearing apart at the seams at the same time. Shocking me internally until the point of numbness. The ones in my head was as if someone was hitting a wooden pole over and over again. I could feel the heat burn through my skull and touch my brain tissue. I think I died from shock actually. Very uncomfortable."

Zwe: "As a doctor, you just described my nightmare. I can only imagine that type of pain."

Ama: "It got numb after a minute. Even the sound muted, it had to be the gods that knitted me to her until the end."

Zwe: "We thank them. And you. You did amazing and you're getting discharged today."

Ama: "Thank you."

Zwe: "It was an honour." I folded my arms staring at him.

Ama: "Nkosi has something to ask you." He looked at me.

Zwe: "Yes Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "Are you done?"

Zwe: "Depends." I stared at him. "I also have eyes Nkosinhle, I can look at you too." Mthunzi chuckled.

Nkosi: "My father is supposed to meet Thembisa today. I don't want him at the villa. Is there a place you can suggest that will be safe for her?"

Zwe: "Yes. If you want to drop your attitude you can use my house."

Nkosi: "I have an attitude, Zwelethu? A whole future King has an attitude to you?" He tried to hide his smile.

Zwe: "My apologies then. You can come to my house. Just let me know when."

Nkosi: "Thank you."

Zwe: "You're welcome."

Mthunzi: "Let me take the angel up to the mountain."

Nkosi: "If she's an angel what do you call me?"

Mthunzi: "The future King." They laughed.

SASA POV\_

Honestly my mother was living her best life. After a hearty breakfast, she had a massage at the spa. I spent most of my morning taking a nap after drinking my pills. My wound hurt specifically today. My father stayed next to me, reading a newspaper. When I woke up some hours later, we took a walk in the garden. My mother was sitting on a bench by the flowers, eating fruit. I sprinted to her with a dangerous speed, paining my wound even more.

Me: "Mama." I breathed in pain.

Mama: "Haibo Thembisa! Why are you running?"

Me: "Don't touch the flowers. Don't...ow." I sat down.

Xolani: "Sasa, you haven't healed properly, you shouldn't scare us like that."

Me: "The flower is deadly to humans mama. The blue one. Please don't touch it."

Mama: "Oh mntanam you stretched yourself only to tell me that? I'm a royal guest I'm not about to touch anything. They said I have a butler who must do things for me. Sit here, he'll bring some water. Xolani why do you have a sour face on?"

Xolani: "You're busy enjoying yourself, your child is in pain."

Mama: "Okay Xolani, if I was not enjoying myself would Thembisa not be in pain? Would my misery cure her pains? You're unreasonable. Sasa has medication and you. I had my labour pains with her and endured. It's your turn now, be a father. Yoh. Singafa."

Xolani: "Do you want to go to the room my child?"

Me: "No tata. Let's sit here for a bit. I really love this garden." Also I didn't have enough oxygen to make it back to the suite.

Xolani: "Okay, I'll get some water." He walked into the building.

Mama: "Thembisa."

Me: "Yes mama."

Mama: "I hope you're treating this man well. Do you see the good life you're about to live? In life, you must find yourself a man that has the means to love you. A beautiful roof, a garden filled with trees that bear fruit. Servants, Thembisa. Grass greener than Gods front yard. That is a man Thembisa. Be respectful to him. Make sure you give him plenty children. Look at this place. It needs children." This is not a conversation I was expecting from my mother but I can't say I'm surprised.

Me: "Okay mama."

Mama: "Don't worry about your father. Focus on your prince." I chuckled. My father came back with water and sat down. "Thembisa, you say he built this place?" I drank some water.

Me: "He designed it. He's an architect."

Mama: "Personally I'm convinced he peeped in God's window and copied from there. Look at this Taka Thembisa?"

Xolani: "How are you feeling Thembisa?"

Mama: "Thembisa isn't going to feel any better than she did 3 minutes ago. Answer me. Isn't this place heavenly?" I giggled.

Xolani: "It's nice."

Mama: "Xolani is not your name shame. Sometimes you must be soft when things happen so that you can enjoy them."

Nele: "SASA?!!" I looked at the door. She came running to me.

Xolani: "Careful Zanele." He caught her just in time. "Careful my angel, she's still in pain." I smiled.

Me: "Hey you." She hugged me softly.

Nele: "Oh my God, this place!!"

Mama: "You see people that appreciate nice things Xolani?"

Xolani: "Mntanam, how was your trip?"

Nele: "Yoh tata. I was so excited!!"

Mama: "How can you be excited, riding with strangers?"

Nele: "Haike mama. You told me to go with him when he shows his badge."

Xolani: "Don't entertain your mother. How was the village? Did you check the animals?"

Nele: "Yes tata. There's two guys there, they were feeding the goats when I left. Yoh, there's trucks driving up and down the streets and soldiers now. Even the road to town had a road block. What's happening?"

Mama: "That prince was serious."

Xolani: "This is very bad. How is the community responding?"

Nele: "They're scared Tata but it said in the news this morning that the Prince will be speaking in the evening."

Xolani: "Okay. At least. Ntombenhle please don't go telling your friends what is happening before the prince announces for everyone."

Mama: "Haibo Xolani, do I look like a big mouth? I'm a royal guest, I don't go talking about our business to villagers." I spat out my water laughing with Zanele.

Xolani: "Maka Thembisa where will you go after all this has settled?"

Mama: "The village obviously but now I'm still living life. Nele what's that thing of yours you like to say, what happens at Viga stays in Viga."

Nele: "Vegas mama. It's Vegas." I couldn't stop laughing despite my pain.

Xolani: "Take it easy Thembisa."

Me: "I'm really trying Tata."

Mama: "Nele. Please don't touch the blue flowers, they're poison."

Nele: "Yoh. And I love flowers so much. Look at how beautiful it is. I'm not going to touch any. Who's that?" I looked up. Zwe came out, walking towards. "Oh my...god."

Me: "Zanele." I hissed. Did she want our father to spank her?

Zwe: "Good day family."

Xolani: "Doctor."

Mama: "hello Doctor."

Me: "Hi Zwe."

Zwe: "i hope you're all settling well."

Mama: "Very well, doctor."

Zwe: "I'm glad to hear it. I came to check up on you Sasa, can we go inside for a second?"

Me: "Sure."

Nele: "Let me help you my sis-"

Me: "No baby girl. You sit right here with mommy and daddy." I stood up, chuckling. This child. I followed Zwe inside the building to our suite.

Zwe: "How was your first night out of hospital?"

Me: "A little scary but I understand I'm safe here. Just the anxiety sometimes. This is the place I first met him."

Zwe: "King Sikhosana?"

Me: "Yep." I took off my shirt.

Zwe: "Why are you bleeding now?"

Me: "That's why it hurts. I ran a bit."

Zwe: "I thought I told you no major movements Thembisa."

Me: "I was trying to warn my mother not to touch uMkhambi."

Zwe: "Still." He cleaned my wound. Are you nervous about today?"

Me: "Yeah."

Zwe: "It'll go well. Nkosi will be there with you."

Me: "Is he coming here?"

Zwe: "Who? Nkosi?"

Me: "No. The King."

Zwe: "No. You'll meet him at my house. He's not allowed here and he won't be trying to irritate Nkosinhle anytime soon."

Me: "Oh."

Zwe: "Don't worry. You'll be safe."

Me: "Okay." He dressed the wound with a clean bandage.

Zwe: "Have you spoken to your friends today?"

Me: "No. How is Amahle?"

Zwe: "She's fine. She'll be staying here as well. What about Nothando and Petu."

Me: "I haven't switched on my phone. I suppose someone collected my bags after the shooting and took them to Linda because my phone was in the bag Nkosi brought with my clothes."

Zwe: "You can give your phone to Sibonelo, he'll run a security sweep for you. He can figure out if your phone was switched on, unlocked or even used after your shooting."

Me: "Hmmm."

Zwe: "I know you're not his fan but he won't be weird. I promise."

Me: "He told you?"

Zwe: "What?"

Me: "Never mind."

Zwe: "Tell me." He smiled.

Me: "Nothing."

Zwe: "Fine then. You're good to go. Please, no sudden movements. No heavy lifting. Be a queen from this point forward." I chuckled, following him out the door. Nkosi was waiting at reception. I hugged him.

Nkosi: "My love. You're bleeding."

Me: "How do you know that Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "I can smell your blood." He stepped back.

Me: "You're not a vampire. So what's the issue." He looked at Zwe.

Zwe: "What's wrong Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I can't smell her blood, I shouldn't."

Me: "Why Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "I won't be able to control my anger near him. If he even makes a slight movement, I will tear him to pieces."

Zwe: "Surely it's not that bad.." Nkosi shook his head. "Oh fuck. Okay. Then you can't go in with her obviously."

Nkosi: "No. Not happening."

Me: "I'll be oka-" he showed me his hands. "Oh no."

Zwe: "You'll have to postpone then."

Me: "No. I want to move on with my life. I need to do it today. Will guards help?" Nkosi started pacing the floor, shaking his head. I held his arm waving off his flames. He's not about to burn me adding to my injuries. "Baby, please. Look at me." He stopped and looked at me with fire in his eyes. My heart shivered. That is scary. "How is Amahle? Can I go in with her?" He blinked and the flames disappeared.

Nkosi: "Okay. But I'll be right outside."

Me: "Thank you." I breathed.

The drive to Zwe's house was probably the most frightening ride I ever took. My father was next to me in the car holding my hand. Nkosi was in the car behind us with Amahle.

Xolani: "Are you sure about this Thembisa?"

Me: "Yes tata." We drove into the estate. I've never been this side of the city, it looked gorgeous. The houses were huge and the yards were spacious. It's been said, this community alone was about 100 million possibly more and only two families owned it. Isn't that just mad? We arrived at a beautiful house modern double story house. It looked so dreamy, straight out of a magazine. I sighed out loud. Nervous again.

Watching houses had distracted me all of 3 minutes. We got out the car noticing the line of security and string of blacked out SUV cars down the street. This person was serious.

Xolani: "All these guards are for him?"

Me: "I think so." Nkosi walked up to us with Amahle.

Nkosi: "Any sign of dishonesty, sudden movement, or raise in his voice. Just drop a vase. He'll know me."

Ama: "Relax. Come Thembisa." We walked into the quiet, pristinely cleaned house. Amahle led us to the lounge. The King stood by the window, staring at the back yard. "Father."

King: "Mehl'amahle." She sat down on a couch. My father stood next to me, squeezing my hand. The King slowly turned to look at me. "Commoners bow when they address me."

Me: "Not the ones you try to kill."

King: "Clearly I'm being tested." He looked back outside. "Say what you came for so I can salvage the rest of my afternoon to something I can try to enjoy."

Me: "That sounds lonely."

Xolani: "Thembisa!" He hissed.

King: "I have given you my priceless time. Something you're throwing back in my face. That boyfriend of yours won't be in here a second after you drop dead. Don't make me ask you again." I dropped my father's hand walking toward him.

Me: "I don't think anything I say to you will get through but I do want to start with this. Ever since coming back from the mountain, I've been dreaming your mother. Nobomi Nonkosi Sikhosana."

King: "And?"

Me: "Just like I, she too was a commoner. One that His Majesty King Ngidumise fell in love with. It was believed that childbirth killed her. That was a lie."

King: "How dare you? How dare you come to me and LIE about my family? About my legacy? Do you understand that people like you get beheaded?"

Ama: "Father." She warned.

King: "Oh let him come in, I don't fucking care!! Listen to this rubbish!? I must sit here and listen to this? No, all of you disrespect me clearly."

Me: "You have no reason to believe me and I understand. You may hate what I tell you but please listen and process it in your own time. King Bhekizizwe didn't believe that Nonkosi was carrying the heir. He believed that she had bewitched his son. He had her tested at her naming ritual. The healer's name was Melaphi. He was a short man that kept long finger nails and wore many beads. He had blade scars on both sides of his face. He cut her palm and her blood touched him. Melaphi confirmed right then that Nonkosi was indeed carrying the future Sikhosana king but with that confirmation told King Bhekizizwe, Nonkosi's true origin. She was from the village called eMcebo. It was called the treasure village. It was said that the village birthed companions of the throne. Unfortunately Melaphi also told the King that Nonkosi had blood stronger than his and she could kill him. This was a blatant lie. Your mother would've never hurt a soul. Her blood is no way stronger but it was worth that of a king. It was at that moment, he decided to have her killed."

King: "How dare you?"

Me: "Right after she gave birth. She asked for water, which the queen gave to her. She didn't die because she was weak after carrying you. She chose to spare your life in exchange for hers. When she was given that water, you were with your grandfather and would've suffocated by his hand. The last words she spoke before she died, was You can't kill a king. Your life was more important to this nation, to her." He stared at me with the coldness of those orange eyes swirling around like liquid trapped in a bottle. He was beyond angry. "The first time I met you, the sun was shining bright as the gods led me to you. Our paths crossed for the first time, I was mesmerized by your beauty, my heart skips everytime i turn over and see you. You accepted my form as brutal and true then tamed me to only be for you. My soul belongs to you." His eyes softened gradually. "Every night he used to sing this song at 7pm without fail. He loved her until the day he died." He looked at the floor then back out the window but I knew he was listening. "If you have questions, I'd be happy to help. The ancestors are currently angry at the lineage. King Ngidumise, his father King Bhekizizwe, his father before him and the one before that haven't been accepted in the ancestral realm. There's been a

disconnect and you have to mend it before the day you leave this earth or you will be in the same position. The one right thing that His Majesty, King Ngidumise did do even in his pain, he whispered when he burnt down eMcebo. Willing my father to escape a deadly fire without a scratch. Why he did that is something only known by him but you and I know he never made mistakes. It is not by mistake, Nkosinhle fell in love with someone who wasn't supposed to even exist. But here I am. Even after you tried to kill me." I walked out.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 61

SASA POV\_

I had finally left Zwe's house after the meeting with the King. My heart was still beating fast,praying he doesn't follow me or finish me off. My father held my hand.

Xolani: "You did well."

Me: "Thank you Tata."

Xolani: "But Thembisa, you will have to start respecting the King. He may not be your favourite person, especially after what he did but I raised you to be well mannered and respectful of elders."

Me: "I will Tata. I'm sorry."

Xolani: "I hoped for a small minute you'd wake up from that coma with no memory of this prince so that he can leave you alone and you can also leave him. However, I quickly erased that idea in my head. I respect your choices my child, I only ever want what's best for you. I've seen how your eyes light up when you see him. I can see that you love him very much." I looked at my hands on lap, blushing. "He doesn't deserve you but then again, no one does. But you're a queen Thembisa. You deserve the world that he will give you. You deserve his type of protection and his love. You deserve a king. I just want you to always remember to be yourself. As you love him, don't forget yourself as well. In that way, your

marriage will be equal and fair to you both. I still have my doubts about him but that is for me to work through." I hugged him.

Me: "Thank you Tata. That means so much to me."

Xolani: "And you mean even more to me. Thembisa I'm not saying start poking me to give in to the things you want." I giggled, cuddling in his chest.

Me: "I won't Tata. I love you."

Xolani: "I love you too." We drove into eNtabeni and walked in. Amahle arrived just after me. Mama and Zanele were in the restaurant sampling food. Can they even do that? "What is this Ntombenhle?"

Mama: "The chef asked if we can help him with some new dishes. So we're tasting."

Xolani: "Zanele?"

Nele: "Mama asked the chef to make us samples to taste." I laughed. I've never even seen the chef of this place.

Xolani: "Ntombenhle. Please stop this. Why do you like to embarrass me?"

Mama: "Xolani, how am I embarrassing you? The Prince said we can use all things inside here. I'm always cooking for you at home, nam I would like to be cooked for at least."

Xolani: "Thembisa, do you want to rest?"

Me: "Yes Tata. Let me introduce Amahle first. Mama, this is my friend Amahle. She's Nkosi's sister. Amy, this is my mom and my little sister Zanele."

Ama: "Hello."

Mama: "You are the last princess of the throne. It's very nice to meet you, princess."

Nele: "Hello!"

Me: "Amy, Zwe said you're staying here with us."

Amy: "Yes. I need to be closer to him so he doesn't have to travel to the palace everyday to check on me."

Me: "Should I help you to your room?"

Ama: "Sure."

Me: "Nele, come let's help Amahle to her room. We'll be back Tata."  
Zanele walked with us. We reached Amahle's suite and walked in. It was closest to Nkosi's and almost identical to his but hers had darker colours.  
"How are you feeling?"

Ama: "So much better actually. I think the pain has subsided quite alot.  
I'll be okay by morning."

Me: "That's great. I have a question." I lay on her bed, she lay on the other side of the bed, Zanele sat at the edge of the bed facing us.

Ama: "Shoot."

Me: "So... I was expecting to meet your moms."

Ama: "Dad probably told them to stay at home. I also assume they didn't ask because they know I can't you know what so I'll be fine anyway."

Me: "Ohh. I was nervous about meeting him officially but also about meeting them."

Ama: "My moms are fine generally. Not entirely affectionate but they're there. Birth mom is more feeling though."

Me: "Do you think it's because she's birth mom?"

Ama: "Yes but also she's a kind woman in general. Second mom is... as royals are."

Me: "Even to her children?"

Ama: "Oh yeah. She doesn't have favourites. Nkosi and I are the same to her as the twins but I think she likes Nkosi more."

Me: "Because he's an heir."

Ama: "Yes."

Nele: "How are your sisters?"

Ama: "Mean. I don't like them."

Nele: "Ouch. Why?"

Ama: "They're just like that."

Nele: "I can't be mean to Sasa. Even though sometimes she annoys me, I can't not like her. Especially when she blocked me from my future husband." Amahle chuckled.

Me: "And who's your future husband Zanele?"

Nele: "The doctor guy." She blushed. We laughed.

Me: "Zanele that man is too old for you. An entire 16 years age difference."

Nele: "But he's so dreamy."

Me: "No my kiddo, you must dream about Aphiwe who's the same age."

Nele: "No thanks. I want to marry into royalty." I laughed.

Me: "We'll focus on finding you a royal prince when you are above 18. For now, school work Sisi."

Ama: "You do not want to marry a prince, trust me." Me: "Haibo Amahle. I'm quite literally getting ready for that." She chuckled.

Ama: "Yours is an exception. And maybe Zwe. All the others are very sketchy. Sibonelo has his ego problems. Mngqobi is indecisive, he wants to be with two women, yet he can't tell either one of them. Don't get me started on the Nakhamula boys, intelligence is at zero, they're not good looking, they're not funny. The only thing they have going for them is the fact that they're royal. Not even the best royals. Bottom of the pack. Then there's the Phakamisa Prince, Nothando's brother. He's cool but he's likely to be like Sibonelo because His family is quite loaded, they're top 3 in financial royal scales. Mpondo doesn't have boys unless you're into girls." Zanele laughed.

Nele: "How old is the Phakamisa Prince?"

Ama: "He's 16."

Me: "Perfect age for you Zanele. What's his name Amy?"

Ama: "Lungelo."

Nele: "Prince Lungelo. Argh. His name sounds so sexy." I shook my head, giggling.

Me: "Maybe it's because you don't know Sibonelo's ego. If Lungelo is going that direction, trust me you won't want him near you." Amy chuckled. "Hey, have you spoken to Petu?"

Ama: "No. I spoke to Nothando though. She told Petu."

Me: "How is she?"

Ama: "Not good apparently. She went home."

Me: "Hayi Amahle. Please call her, I can't use my phone yet." She took out her phone dialing Petu's number.

Petu: "Hello." She answered.

Ama: "Hey." She put the phone on loud speaker.

Me: "How are you babe?" She sighed.

Petu: "Can you guess who the prince promised to my friend is." I looked at Amahle, unable to answer. "Wait... Did you know?" I can't lie to my friend but I wasn't a good person for keeping this secret.

Me: "Yes, friend."

Petu: "Wow."

Me: "Petu, it wasn't my place to tell you. I can't speak on royal arrangements until they're announced publicly also, it was not my place."

Petu: "You're making excuses Thembisa. I'm your best friend. The same person you told about your relationship with His Highness, and I kept it a secret for you. I helped you. And that is bigger than a royal arranged marriage. Why wouldn't it be your place? Was it my place when I contacted His Lord, Mthunzi, organising the switch of cars and hiding you from Sibonelo? I went all out and would've done much more for you." My heart broke. She was absolutely right. I'd failed her.

Me: "I'm sorry Petu. I made a bad call. I should've said something." I got up from bed, walking out the deck leaving Amahle with Zanele.

Petu: "It's okay. It has passed now. Maybe it was something I had to go through. It's about time I focused on school. This life is suited to you guys better."

Me: "Petu don't say stuff like that."

Petu: "Like what Thembisa? I fooled myself thinking a guy like Mngqobi would fall for me. I fooled myself into thinking he actually loved me."

Me: "You didn't fool yourself Petu. He told you this."

Petu: "Yeah but people lie Thembisa. All this time, I'm going out with him, Notha is helping me with outfits, she's interested in our involvement. I even told her how he is in bed because she's my best friend. I poured my heart to her. She saw how I felt about him but kept quiet. I can't help but think she'd probably be laughing behind my back when she goes to her room. The stupid girl who was being used for sex. And once he's done, he will walk his dream down that aisle and live happily ever after. I can't help think about how I was actually his whore for his sexual needs and she's the pure untouched flower he wants to be seen with by his side." She sobbed. I wiped my tears.

Me: "I'm so sorry Petu."

Petu: "I was a royal fool Thembisa. Do you know there is a fool ne? Like a regular fool. Anyone can be that. It's inevitable. Then, there's a royal fool. That takes a special type of person. A royal fool is only for entertainment, performing and being obedient to royals and when they're done laughing at the actions, they turn around and focus on themselves, leaving you there exhausted and degraded. That's how I feel."

Me: "Petu, you're not a fool. You're in love. Sometimes, because of that love, we do things we wouldn't ordinarily do. You showed him your love, and gave him all of you. For him not to appreciate that says more about him than it does about you. You're a good woman."

Petu: "It doesn't fill the emptiness in my heart right now but thank you Thembisa." She chuckled through her tears. "I've never felt so humiliated. All the time I'm in that palace, his parents think I'm Sibonelo's girlfriend. Did he correct them? No. I really was a dirty secret Thembisa. I have to go. I want to forget about this right now."

Me: "Petu, I'm sorry about this. You do not deserve this at all. I'm sorry about my silence as well. Please forgive me my friend?"

Petu: "I forgive you. I know you wouldn't intentionally hurt me. It's okay."

Me: "Okay, I'll check on you later okay?"

Petu: "Thank you for calling. Bye." She hung up. My heart felt so heavy. I walked in the room, Zanele was playing music on her phone.

Nele: "How about that one?"

Ama: "It's too soft."

Nele: "You said the other one was too violent." She giggled. "So you really don't listen to music? What do you do?"

Ama: "I read books. I love reading sometimes watching series."

Nele: "Okay. Okay, we're getting somewhere. What type of series do you like maybe from knowing that we can find a music genre for you."

Amahle looked at me. I gave her phone back.

Me: "Thank you."

Nele: "Mntase, are you crying? What's wrong?"

Me: "Nothing. I'm fine. I just need some air." I walked out the suite, almost bumping into Nkosi at the door. I closed it. "Hey love. Thought you were in a meeting."

Nkosi: "Why are you crying?"

Me: "No reason." He took my hand, leading me to his suite. He closed the door behind us.

Nkosi: "No one cries for no reason. What happened?" He sat me on his lap, hugging me. I lay my head on his shoulder.

Me: "I just feel so guilty. I thought it wasn't my place, but who's place was it? Him? Sure, absolutely but as her best friend it's also my place. She fought for me kuZimmy and kept you a secret for me till today still. Of course she's right, it was my place to tell her. I'm just as wrong as Nothando."

Nkosi: "Who is Nothando? I don't understand anything you've just said, my love."

Me: "Petu, my best friend, had a crush on Mngqobi."

Nkosi: "Biyela?"

Me: "Yes. She didn't say anything to him. Only Amahle and I knew. She showed me who he was at school, and he came to introduce himself. All good. So everytime he bumped into her somewhere he would say hi. Eventually, he sent her a message, during the holidays. They went to have dinner and that's how their thing started. It then escalated to I love yous. Now I knew Nothando was promised to Mngqobi but I didn't tell Petu because I just thought I can't be talking about royal things that have nothing to do with me. Anyway, life went on. Nothando told Petu, I think yesterday or today. Petu is really upset."

Nkosi: "Why is she upset?"

Me: "She's in love with him. Besides her being in love with him, this is her best friend's future husband. The same friend she's gotten so close to, talked everything about Mngqobi to, even lived in Mngqobi's home with for the past few days. She feels like they played her. As friends, we handled it horribly. I feel so bad Nkosi."

Nkosi: "So... Mngqobi was sleeping with his wife's best friend."

Me: "Yes."

Nkosi: "Why?"

Me: "Oh kodwa nawe sthandwa sam sometimes. I don't know why. Men do strange things. He knew Nothando and Petu were in the same circle."

Nkosi: "I think you jumped from Mngqobi to men very quickly baby." I giggled.

Me: "I thought you had a meeting."

Nkosi: "I do. I have three. I have to start with Mthunzi with our work things, after that I go tell my father what's going on then it's the Biyela's for the war retaliation plan ."

Me: "Okay. I miss you." I kissed his lips.

Nkosi: "I miss you too."

Me: "Oh. And my father is watching you like a hawk. You were right. He is warming up."

Nkosi: "I told you I'm a delight."

Me: "Oh please." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "I have to go my love. You hate it when I slack off work."

Me: "I really do. We'll talk later baby." I got up from his arms. He walked me out holding my hand. "I love you." He stepped closer to me, hold my cheek.

Nkosi: "I live for you. You're my reason. I love you too Thembisa." He kissed my lips slowly then pulled away. "Go inside my love." I walked in Amahle's suite and he walked away once the door closed. For the first time, I didn't feel the immediate urge to feel for my stomach. In fact, I haven't felt the urge since we came back from meeting the king.

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

I had time before our next meeting so I obviously took Mngqobi home. He must have thought I forgot. We walked in the house. Mom and dad were in the lounge watching a show.

Queen: "You see that dress? I knew she would make a masterpiece, that girl is talented Mziwabo."

King: "It's made from plastic."

Queen: "I know you're not sitting here uninvested. The assignment was use Recycled Materials That's why she used plastic."

King: "Wouldn't it have made a better statement if she used cardboard? Plastic is the harmful material. Why glamourize it?"

Queen: "This is why I don't watch my shows with you. You use too much logic."

King: "But baby, you're the one that argued the assignment and her use of plastics. I see the dress is pretty, but wouldn't you make a bigger impact if it's safe?"

Queen: "Fashion is not safe Mziwabo, it's daring. You're ruining my mood."

Sibo: "Parents."

Queen: "Hi sweeties. Where's Khaya?"

Sibo: "Helping Zwe at the hospital. Mngqobi needs to speak to you." He looked at me with cartoon eyes. Does he think that will work? "Sit." I sat down, he sat next to me.

Queen: "What's wrong, my little warrior?" I held in my chuckle because little warrior was not little but he was definitely warring.

Mngqobi: "Uhm. I'm sorry mama for everything."

Queen: "What are you talking about?"

Mngqobi: "I'm sorry I deceived you. I should've been honest from the start. I'm sorry Tata, for disrespecting your home."

King: "Talk."

Mnqobi: "A couple of weeks ago. I met Petu. We went out on a date and uhm... One thing led to another."

King: "What would be the one thing and what is the other Mnqobi Biyela?"

Mnqobi: "We had sex, Tata."

Queen: "Oh No..."

King: "Isn't this girl, your wife's friend?"

Mnqobi: "Yes sir."

King: "And you're sleeping with her? You're sleeping with your wife's friend? The same wife you begged and pleaded me to get for you? The same one you wrote an agreement solely for? Just so she can be yours and yours alone?" Nothando stood at the door. She looked disappointed too.

Mnqobi: "I'm sorry Baba."

King: "Why bring her to my house!?"

Mnqobi: "Things developed Baba."

King: "I hope to God that thing doesn't have arms and legs Mnqobi Biyela because I will knock you out."

Mnqobi: "No Baba, she's not pregnant."

King: "Do you have any idea what you've done!!!"

Mnqobi: "Yebo Baba. Ngiyaxolisa-"

King: "Uxolisa kubani?? Am I your wife!? We're in the beginning of what looks like a ready war and you want to fuck up our only arrangement because you cannot keep your penis in your pants!!? Dear God." He got up, walking out.

Queen: "Mnqobi I'm so disappointed in you, my son. This is not how we raised you. You see your father, the values he instilled in you are the same as his actions. He doesn't go out there to cheat on me. Never has in the past 32 years we've been married. You haven't even signed a paper yet you're showing the world what your penis looks like? No Mnqobi. I would've understood if you weren't promised but you literally

have your wife right here. The one YOU chose. What is this now? To bring your mistress home? No, this is disrespectful my baby. No."

Mnqobi: "I'm really sorry mama." His voice trembled. "It will never happen again." He stood up, looking at Nothando. "I'm sorry Nothando. I didn't mean to disgrace you." I stood up.

Sibo: "We have a meeting to get to. Let's go." I held his arm walking out the house. He was about to break and as much as he fucked up, I can't watch that happen. I started the car, driving out. "We all fuck up. It's how we grow. The only way to grow up is realising your mistakes, acknowledging them and rectifying it. What you did in there is two steps and that's good. So that means no more lies Mnqobi. You're different from us because you chose to be a husband. No one forced you. I begged you to reconsider, I bribed you relentlessly until you told on me. So you chose this path. Now you have to endure it. Be a good husband. If you're fucking up now before you sign that marriage certificate, what assures everyone you won't be fucking around as a married man? It ends now. You hear?"

Mnqobi: "Yes Sbo." I looked over at him wiping his tears. Don't tell me this stupid boy fell in love.

Sibo: "Mnqobi do you love this girl? uPetu loyo?"

Mnqobi: "Yes."

Sibo: "Yho. You are such a chaotic child. Ngenzeni ukuze ngifanelwe yilokhu, Nkulunkulu?" I drove into the parking lot of the hospital and parked. "Please wipe your tears." I opened the arm compartment and gave him a tissue. I rested on my seat staring at the wall ahead.

Mnqobi: "Thank you."

Sibo: "Mawuqedile ungazise ukhalelani. Honestly." He chuckled. "Can you perform in this meeting?"

Mnqobi: "Yes."

Sibo: "Good. Men don't cry during the day Mnqobi. You're supposed to cry after midnight like a witch. Men don't cry for no reason so They must release those toxins at strange hours so that we can perform better during the day. I taught you this." He laughed.

Mnqobi: "You're something else."

Sibo: "Asambe ke. We have a very important meeting. I'm trying to win a war before it has begun, wena ubusy uyakhala la. This is why I stay away from women's lady bits. Next thing, you're crying before meetings because abasakfuni." He laughed. I got out the car.

Mnqobi: "Sbo please stop." We walked in the hospital.

Sibo: "I must stop now? Wena did you stop when you were falling in love? Niks because Sbo is here, he'll fix it. Ey, I wonder uzothini when I'm no longer here."

Mnqobi: "You'll always be here."

Sibo: "Mxim. Wipe your eyes Mnqobi, you know your brother. Now I must explain to Zwe and get yelled at for your things?"

Mnqobi: "I did Sbo. My eyes are dry."

Sibo: "Good." ...

## PRINCE POV\_

I sat with my father in his Stellars home. Apparently, King Biyela built it for him.

Nkosi: "Nice house."

King: "It's little."

Nkosi: "It has 10 bedrooms." He rolled his eyes.

King: "Drink?"

Nkosi: "Yes." He poured me a double and another for himself. The only person he pours a drink for is me. I've never seen him lift a finger for anyone else. I drank my shot in one go at the same time as he.

King: "Where did you find her?" He leaned back in his chair and stared at the floor.

Nkosi: "Met her in a club. Her first time there. She looked different from the usual club girls. Interesting. Friendly. Extremely gorgeous."

King: "That's it?"

Nkosi: "Yes. I just felt drawn to her."

King: "How do you feel about her knowing things about your ancestors?"

Nkosi: "They trusted her with those things."

King: "I knew nothing about my mother. My father refused to speak about her. For a very long time, I didn't know there was such a thing as mother's. My grandmother, the queen, she died when I was in diapers. Grandfather married again but his wives kept dying for some reason. I remember one time we went hunting. It was My father, his father and I with some guards. We hunted just fine. Had a good time even. Well, grandfather and I. My father was never interested in talking. He hated it. He hated being spoken to. I grew up knowing that. In our hunting trip, a wild dog came about. The biggest I've even seen. The guards tried to protect the former king, my grandfather, but my father snapped their necks then stood back. The dog, killed grandfather instantly and went off. You know what my father said? The first words he said to me?"

Nkosi: "No."

King: "He said, 'your mothers last words before she died while you were in her arms were, You can't kill a king.'" He was deep in his thoughts reminiscing this memory. "Then he said, 'but that doesn't mean He can't be killed.' then he walked away. No one, not a single person in the world was there besides him and I. So I know, no one knew her last words." He poured another drink. "I can excuse everything else to guesses and the internet. But The song, the time, the last words. Only I know that." He drank. "What did you come to talk about." And that was it.

Nkosi: "The Royals want you off the throne. Seeing that you're distracted after Amahle's shooting, they figure it's the best time to dethrone you. They banished the Biyela's from council because they stood by us. Sibonelo has drawn up a retaliation plan in case they start a war."

King: "What did you just say?"

Nkosi: "I'm going to need you to calm do-"

King: "They want to take MY throne from me? The one that was created only for my lineage? Clearly I've been slacking Mehluli because these people have forgotten who the hell I am."

Nkosi: "And I agree. However, we need to do this amicably -"

King: "I'm done with amicable. I told you the first time, we needed to teach Nakhamula a lesson and what did you do? You gave him a

second chance. That was a weak decision Mehluli. Look now? Had they felt our wrath the first time, they wouldn't even fantasize about doing this ever again. My son, this is a time for you to now exercise your power. Show them who's King. Do you understand me? Show them Mehluli, I've got your back." My father was right in this instance. The only reason they felt comfortable doing this again was because no punishment was given the first time.

Nkosi: "Agreed." I got up, walking out.

I arrived at the hospital, walking up to Zwe's office. They all were waiting for me. I sat down, with Mthunzi next to me.

Nkosi: "Am I late?"

Zwe: "No. Let's begin. Sbo?" I stared at Mngqobi. How could you sleep with your wife's best friend? Does that make sense?

Sibo: "I have this recording from last night. This is a conversation between Nakhamula and Mandla." He played the recording while typing on his laptop. I listened to the conversation clearly, quite disappointed that these are the people I must fight. I almost felt bad for them. How do you plan to dethrone a powerful family, without a thorough plan?

Nkosi: "So his strategy is getting your allyship? That's it?"

Sibo: "Stupid right? Anyway, I took the liberty of placing a few army tanks at your palace in case they invade it. Both your father and you are in the city, which leaves your grounds open. I don't put my full trust on royal guards but an army is loyal."

Nkosi: "Good thinking. What about the entrances to the city?"

Sibo: "Blocked by soldiers, checking each vehicle. You have to address the citizens tonight. Update them about the princess."

Nkosi: "I planned on doing that but we'd still have the lock down problem, I don't want my citizens out in the firing line and I don't want these ones to know we're preparing for them."

Sibo: "We might not need to explain." He furiously typed on his laptop.

Nkosi: "What's happening?"

Sibo: "Something is coming into the city. I'm getting a signal. Mngqobi?!"  
Mngqobi held his other laptop, typing.

Mngqobi: "It's an aircraft. A few. I can't recognise them-"

Sibo: "Got em." I stood up and looked at the roof.

Mthunzi: "What is it?" A loud explosion went off, following by another.

Sibo: "Shut down." An indescribable heat swept over my body.

Mngqobi: "Shutting. And Done." A loud crash followed by 4 more hit the city.

Sibo: "They're down. We're officially in war." Mthunzi handed my gun, talking in his phone.

Mthunzi: "Where did they attack? No we're in the east. Okay." He looked at me. "They attacked the west wing of the hospital. Should I send our aircrafts?"

Nkosi: "No."

Zwe: "Nkosinhle!"

Nkosi: "If aircrafts are shooting at each other on top of a city, they'll fall onto citizens homes!! Wait!!"

Mngqobi: "More coming." All of them stared at me. A sudden whip crackled through the sky.

Nkosi: "That'll but us time."

Sibo: "I beg your pardon, Your Highness but rain???"

Nkosi: "No." I looked out the window. They all looked up in the sky. The aircraft's moved closer but a whirlwind swept through them clinging them upside down in the air. The pilots flew out but got swept into the same whirlwind, as it circled in one spot as a hurricane would. It all suddenly stopped. All aircrafts smashed into one ball of an explosion and swept off into the sky.

Nkosi: "A sky flood. My father will mop the clouds with them." ...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

## Chapter 62

### SIBONELO'S POV \_

I stared out the window in pure astonishment at the grey skies turning black. A whirlwind swirled all the aircrafts and those approaching into a spinning air wheel before smashing them together and whisking it off in the sky. A sky flood. I. HAVE. NEVER. Seen a sky flood. I didn't even know it can happen. Sudden heavy rains poured in the sky with ice. The official show was over. I'm scared I underestimated this family's arrogance because it's justified now. I stared at Zwe. He looked just as perplexed. Mngqobi and Khaya looked mortified. Oh, thank God I'm not the only one because I was beginning to think I'm crazy. I couldn't even look at Mehluli in the eye let alone ask. Was I allowed to ask?

Nkosi: "Fantastic. Now we can get back to work." WORK? You won't explain that??

Zwe: "Uhm.. okay. Where were we? Khaya." He hissed. Khaya had both hands over his mouth. He dropped them and looked at the floor, shaking.

Mthunzi: "I'll check the damage in the west wing." He walked out. Uhh?? So no one will say anything?

Mngqobi: "Clean up. We need to clean up. There's currently five crashed air crafts in the city. We need to figure where they are. Hopefully no one has been...uhm. Hurt."

Sibo: "Good thinking. I still have them linked on my computer from the shut down."

Nkosi: "Quickly. If anyone inside any of them is still alive, I owe them." You owe them what? I wanted to ask but I didn't need to know the answer. Oh, I'm definitely not sleeping today. I took my phone calling my father.

Sibo: "Checking on the parents as well."

Nkosi: "Is there a tank with them?"

Sibo: "Yes, my prince." My father answered.

King: "Oh thank God. Sibonelo, is everyone okay? The hospital was bombed." I could hear my mother crying in the background.

Sibo: "Everyone is fine Tata. Is mama okay?"

King: "Darling, they're fine. All the boys are fine."

Queen: "Where's Mngqobi!!" I gave him the phone.

Mngqobi: "Yes mama I'm fine. No, we weren't hit. Only the west wing was hit. We're all in Zwe's office. Yes. Yes mama. Okay." He gave Zwe the phone. Another phone rang.

Nkosi: "Love." He answered calmly, sitting down. This was the scariest person I knew. "Yes I'm inside the hospital. No, I'm fine. Everyone is safe. I would never lie baby. Zwe, is there anyone in the west wing?"

Zwe: "No, that side was closed since Tuesday."

Nkosi: "No one is hurt, baby. Please don't cry. I can't come home right now." He walked out the office. Khaya hung up my phone, handing it to me.

Zwe: "How did everyone find out so quick that my hospital was bombed?"

Sibo: "The media was tipped off surely. The one who released the story first is my bet. Do you think they saw the sky flood?"

Zwe: "I doubt it. Everyone was focused on the hospital."

Khaya: "W-what was that Bhut Zwe? The Prince knew. He knew it would happen and I can let that go but have you ever heard of a sky flood because I haven't!!" He whispered. "I was not expecting to see aircrafts clung in the air by wind and their own debri!"

Zwe: "Khaya calm down."

Khaya: "I'm getting a panic attack." I sat him down on the couch. Zwe gave him a pill and water.

Sibo: "Drink up bug. Close your eyes and breath." He leaned back on the couch with his eyes closed. I looked at Zwe with a shocked please explain look. He only shrugged. I looked at Mngqobi, he sat next to his twin, elbows on knees looking at the floor. I had to start working quick because it's clear these ones were done. I sat in front of my screens,

hacking into the aircrafts, they were not the latest but fairly equipped. Inside each had a camera. Two pilots in each.

Sibo: "There's two pilots in each aircraft, one camera in each."

Zwe: "Are they dead?"

Sibo: "Yes.." I checked all cameras. "Wait... One is moving. Aircraft 2."

Nkosi: "What's the location?" My heart jumped. When did he walk in?

Sibo: "Third highway, U11, about 7 minutes from here."

Nkosi: "I'll fetch him."

Zwe: "What if he's dead by the time you get there?"

Nkosi: "It'll do him a good deal not to be." But he'll be dead? Or he'd bring him back to life? My insides shivered. No.

Zwe: "Let's go." I stared at my brother in shock. They walked out together. I connected my second laptop, and tapped into Nakhamula's phone. He was using it currently calling Bathonga.

Nakhamula: "What the hell happened!!"

Bathonga: "I should be asking you that!!"

Nakhamula: "Hey! You organised those aircrafts."

Bathonga: "Am I a weatherman Nakhamula?? Can you hear the storm outside?"

Nakhamula: "Something is wrong here Bathonga. Something's wrong!! The weather was fine. It was sunny!! No chance of rain. Suddenly there's a storm when planes come into the city?"

Bathonga: "What are you suggesting? They're using uMuthi?"

Nakhamula: "It's not a suggestion Bathonga damn it!! Are you blind? This is dark magic!!" I quickly plugged my headset and listened alone. The boys didn't need to hear this. They were already freaked out as anyone would be. Here are two grown men, scared over the phone to one another for example.

Bathonga: "Then what do we do?"

Nakhamula: "We bide our time. This time, they must've been expecting us. They'll think we're cowering away."

Bathonga: "Nakhamula, are you sure we can do this? Do you have a plan? My daughter's life is in danger from that family, I need you to be sure we can defeat them."

Nakhamula: "Don't worry. I have a plan." The phone cut off. I stayed on his line, still listening to him. Mandla: "What the hell was that?"

Nakhamula: "Pure witchcraft is what it was. Sikhosana is holding on to that throne with witch power."

Mandla: "What makes you think you'll defeat him Baba?"

Nakhamula: "I know only but the strongest witch in the southern hemisphere, my boy. One that will rejoice in king's blood."

Mandla: "So, you'll trap Sikhosana?"

Nakhamula: "All in good time. Let him let his guard down." ....

The door opened, and Zwe walked in first looking at the ground. We all stared at him. Mehluli followed, carrying someone on his shoulder like a sack of baby potatoes. He dropped him on the floor, squatting down to him and just stared. The pilot jolted awake, and scrambled away. Zwe kicked him back toward Mehluli.

Nkosi: "Hello." Mthunzi walked in closing the door.

Pilot: "Your Highness."

Nkosi: "Oh no, we're way past that now. If you can come into my city to destroy it and kill my citizens, have the guts to call me by name. Say Sikhosana." He stood up. I needed to get my little brothers out. They can't see what's about to happen here. No. I stood up.

Sibo: "Boys-"

Nkosi: "No one walks out that door, Mthunzi." My heart stopped. Mthunzi leaned on the door, with his arms folded on his chest. "I've since decided if I'm going to be King, I should probably have my own council. One that can advise me accordingly. Like for example, what we do to enemies of the throne."

Pilot: "Please forgive me, my Prince."

Nkosi: "I'd rather not. Any suggestions, fellow princes?" I looked at these two, warning them with my eyes to shut up. Zwe must attend to his friend.

Zwe: "Who sent you?"

Pilot: "We only got an order to drop explosives. My target was the hospital."

Zwe: "Did you see what you did to my hardwork? My hospital?"

Pilot: "I'm sorr-"

Zwe: "Which nation are you from?" No response.

Nkosi: "Please don't that." The pilot's eyes darting to his arm. Mehluli grabbed both arms apart. "Mthunzi, Zwe." Each held an arm, and stepped on a leg. "Careful of the button on his sleeve, if he presses it, it sends an injection that kills him instantly. So you'd rather die than tell me your nation?"

Pilot: "Please.. I can't.."

Nkosi: "No worries." He stared at him and kept quiet. Oh no... He was in his head. I could see from the pilots face, he was stuck and unable to do a thing. He started screaming with his lungs on high volume. Khaya and Mngqobi stood behind me. It was the most chilling sound I'd ever heard. The scream was continuous, blading my ears and spirit. Finally he suddenly stopped and fell limp. Was he dead? Oh I hope so. I've seen a person die but this is not... It just isn't right. Mehluli stood up.

Nkosi "He's from Tansa nation. A little north. He was only given the instruction of a war by his general yesterday. There's 11 of the aircrafts deployed here. We've destroyed them all currently and with that, no other nation will want to come near us."

Zwe: "He knows nothing about who gave his general this call?"

Nkosi: "No he doesn't unfortunately."

Sibo: "I..I know." He looked at me with those menacing cold orange eyes.

Nkosi: "Who?"

Sibo: "It's Bathonga. He organised the aircrafts, he was on call with Nakhamula a few minutes ago."

Nkosi: "That's disappointing." He looked at the pilot and again, the pilot man jolted awake and immediately started screaming. "Shhhh. It's enough. You're counted as dead by your nation. It's time to return to your scene. Mthunzi?" Mthunzi pulled himself up and went to grab the pilot.

Mthunzi: "Isosha lifela empini, Mr pilot. Let's go." He dragged him out.

Nkosi: "What else did Nakhamula say?" I looked at the floor, who will say it? Not me. I'm not trying to wake up screaming.

Sibo: "Uhm, I'd rather just.." I disconnected the headset and played the recording. The room was uncomfortably silent.

Nkosi: "Dark Magic? That's suspicious. I'm the one who's using dark magic when Samukelisiwe tried to feed me love potion on Tuesday?"

Zwe: "What now?"

Nkosi: "That's the danger from my family he's talking about. Her punishment was put on hold because it was beginning of council."

Zwe: "Yoh."

Nkosi: "We'll just have to wait on the witch then."

Zwe: "This doesn't worry you?"

Nkosi: "I don't worry about other people. I only worry about myself. We can continue with work now. Sibonelo, what's next on the plan?"

Sibo: "Uhm, we can't address the nation today. We can postpone that for tomorrow."

Nkosi: "Why?"

Sibo: "The hospital where the last princess was in just this morning has been bombed. The citizens will probably have concerns and with that, we can give them an update that she was discharged before it happened. Let them know, the attack was unexpected and thus still being investigated. I've checked where the other aircrafts fell. The one you found was on a road, another in a field, one in the harbour, and two at the hotel."

Nkosi: "My hotel?"

Sibo: "Yes, Your Highness."

Nkosi: "Alright. Let's call for clean up of the aircrafts so long."

Zwe: "Uhm.. where do we ..."

Nkosi: "See if you can't use the aircrafts for recycling and parts. Drop the bodies in the ocean. Update me on the royals activities, I'm going to see my father." He walked out. I stared at Zwe.

Zwe: "Mnqobi, call for the crate truck." ...

## PRINCE POV\_

I walked into my father's house. He sat in the lounge, smoking a cigar.

Nkosi: "Evening father."

King: "Son."

Nkosi: "Thanks."

King: "Can't thank me for doing my job, Mehluli."

Nkosi: "No, thanks for not tearing them to shreds all over the city. You're very capable of that." He laughed. "I found one pilot still alive. I whispered to him. He's from Tansa nation. His general got a call from their king."

King: "One of these idiots contacted Tansa nation?"

Nkosi: "And they didn't hesitate. Very bold, fighting a war they know nothing about."

King: "Indeed but we'll focus on them later."

Nkosi: "The person who contacted them is Bathonga."

King: "Of course it is. His wife is from that nation."

Nkosi: "He's your friend."

King: "I don't have friends."

Nkosi: "You're relaxing in a lounge chair, in a house built specifically for you. King Biyela is not your friend?"

King: "Why are you so obsessed with this house?"

Nkosi: "We're losing focus. Nakhamula mentioned that we may be using dark magic. They saw the storm." He laughed.

King: "Dark Magic is for kids." In which world? Then again, if you're born with super natural abilities, that's all you know.

Nkosi: "Not quite but that's neither here nor there. He's talking about bringing in the strongest witch in the southern hemisphere. One that wants king's blood." He puffed out his cigar smoke in a huge cloud.

King: "Wish him the best of luck."

Nkosi: "You're not worried?"

King: "I don't worry about anyone but my children and myself." Oh right, he taught me that. "The other royals running around scared right about now. We're the superior bloods, Sikhosana. There's nothing a witch can do. You can predict pattern, Amahle dreams up problems that annoy me. It'll be a day colder than right now before I let go of our throne."

Nkosi: "Okay. I'll address the nation tomorrow. I need to fix up the city."

King: "What happened?"

Nkosi: "Sibonelo hacked into the aircrafts system and shut it down remotely so they crashed all over."

King: "That's messy."

Nkosi: "It helped. Now we know our enemies."

King: "Keep me updated." I stood up, walking out.

SASA POV\_

I was beside myself with worry. My parents had come in the building, yelling for us immediately as the storm started. I walked out the room and they were looking at the TV in the reception area. The hospital had been bombed. That's where Nkosinhle was. My heart was in my throat. I quickly rushed to the bedroom to take Amahle's phone, dialing his number. My parents had followed. His phone rang only a few times before he answered.

Nkosi: "Love."

Me: "Nkosi, are you in the hospital?"

Nkosi: "Yes I'm inside the hospital."

Me: "Are you hurt?"

Nkosi: "No, I'm fine. Everyone is safe."

Me: "Nkosi, please don't lie to me, there was a bombing."

Nkosi: "I would never lie baby. Zwe, is there anyone in the west wing?"

Zwe: "No, that side was closed since Tuesday."

Nkosi: "No one is hurt, baby."

Me: "Okay." I wiped my ready tears.

Nkosi: "Please don't cry."

Me: "Please come home."

Nkosi: "I can't come home right now."

Me: "Why Nkosi? They're throwing bombs at you."

Nkosi: "Love, the threat is gone. No one is throwing anything at me. Amahle would have seen it."

Me: "Okay. When will you come home?"

Nkosi: "Probably tomorrow morning. I'm still in a meeting."

Me: "After a bombing? Nkosinhle, don't upset me."

Nkosi: "I'll be home tonight."

Me: "Okay. No more explosions are coming?"

Nkosi: "None. I promise you. eNtabeni is built for protection, nothing will touch you."

Me: "Okay. I'll see you soon."

Nkosi: "I love you." He hung up. I breathed in relief.

Xolani: "What happened?"

Me: "I didn't even ask Tata, I think the other royals may have bombed the hospital."

Mama: "Hayi Thembisa!!!"

Me: "Everyone is fine. No one got hurt, Thank God. The wing that got hit was empty."

Xolani: "So the war has started."

Me: "I'm afraid so."

Mama: "Won't these people come here?" She stressed.

Ama: "No. These are sacred Sikhosana grounds. No aircraft can even fly above it. It's the safest place."

Mama: "What about the Prince? Is he coming? It's dangerous out there."

Me: "Only later, mama." I sat down and breathed. We sat quietly for a while. The storm outside was horrendous. Not only was it blistering cold but the wind was insane. Ice rocks poured down as well. This was obviously King Sikhosana's work. Nkosi did mention when he told me about his family, his father's ability is weather. I guess it would discourage any air craft from coming close.

Nele: "Did anyone hear more than one explosion?"

Me: "Yes. After the big one. I thought it was an echo. Do you think more places were hit?" I dialed his number again. My father stopped me.

Xolani: "Let him work."

Me: "Maybe we should check the news."

Xolani: "Thembisa, calm down mntanam."

Me: "There's a war outside Tata."

Xolani: "Yes but right now, everyone is still safe. Let the prince work. We'll hear an update later when he comes back." Mama switched on the TV.

Mama: "Nele, come press this thing. Show the news." Zanele pressed and found the news. There couldn't be a live reporting because of the storm, there was only one slightly blurry picture of the damaged hospital.

Ama: "Hell." She whispered.

Me: "Zwe must be so distraught."

Ama: "Very. That hospital is his life." The news reporter kept repeating that a war may be starting regarding royals, specifically The King. They

had a lot of theories but neither was touching on why this must have happened or what the war may be about.

Me: "Why are they dancing around it?" I asked Amahle.

Ama: "Creating panic. If a private hospital owned by a powerful royal can be bombed, clearly the citizens are more at risk of being casualties should this continue. Once that doubt settles in, chaos will ensue."

Me: "On top of that they've been locked in for days. No address or updates. They're already manic in their homes, sick with concern." I stared at the news.

Reporter: "Do you think the shooting, was a warning for this impending war?"

Reporter 2: "Then that means, the royal family saw this coming and instead of preparing the citizens, they locked us in and protected themselves."

Ama: "Yes. The other royals are turning the citizens against us." ...

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Chapter 63

SASA POV\_

I couldn't sit still but I had to keep my eyes glued to the TV and the news. So many calls were coming in. For the first time ever, civilians could call in and speak live on air, like radio. That never happens on tv news. Their agenda was so clear and it's safe to say. The civilians were panicked and pissed.

Me: "It's only a matter of time they break out of their homes and protest." I looked at Amy.

Ama: "Possibly, a day at most."

Me: "Should he address them? Tonight?"

Ama: "It will make it worse. Let them rage out a bit."

Me: "Amahle, that's dangerous!! If citizens break out of their homes, they will be shot dead by the army for contravening the king's law. They will die and no one will account. Are we trying to turn this country into a dictatorship?"

Mama: "Yoh ooThembisa. What do these big words mean? Why will people die?"

Ama: "Thembisa, if Nkosi addresses the nation now, he'll be feeding into the narrative these people are building. The citizens are already upset, there's nothing that can be done."

Me: "Yes, there is."

Xolani: "Thembisa."

Me: "No tata. We're at the brink of Nkosi's coronation, the last thing we want is his reign tainted with the blood of his own people." He handed me back the phone. I dialed his number.

Nkosi: "My love, I'll be home soon. I promise."

Me: "Okay. I just need you to make a promise to me."

Nkosi: "Anything for you." I swallowed, knowing I'm asking for the impossible.

Me: "Please don't shoot the civilians. The army cannot retaliate."

Nkosi: "I'm not sure what you mean, love. There's no reason for me to shoot anyone."

Me: "Nkosi, the media is dragging the entire royal empire through dirt, specifically your family. Civilians are frustrated and upset. It's only a matter of time a memorandum goes out and they break out of their homes to riot. If the army shoots them, this will be the nail in the coffin. You'll be known as the king that kills his people for no valid reason. That is not who you are. Please tell your army, to put their weapons down." The line went quiet but I could hear him breathing.

Nkosi: "I can't do that Thembisa."

Me: "Nkosi-"

Nkosi: "My love, love of my life. I would do anything for you. Absolutely anything. I just can't do this. If the citizens protest for not getting

information from me while I'm trying to protect them, they will protest for quite literally anything they want because they know I have a soft spot for them and I'll give in."

Me: "Nkosihle, you can't do this."

Nkosi: "I'm sorry, my love. This is the part that I hate too. I love you, I have to go." He hung up.

Mama: "What did he say." I sat down, my heart slowing.

Me: "He can't do it. It will weaken the throne."

Mama: "YOH." We sat in silence for a bit as I tried to think.

Me: "I'm not feeling too well. I need to lie down."

Xolani: "Let's go to bed. For now, we'll be in our room. Princess, please take your things. You'll share a bed with Thembisa. Zanele and her mother will take ours, I'll be on the couch. You can't be here alone. Come." He took Amahle's bag, mama switched off the TV and we left for our suite. It was spotless clean as expected. I sat on my bed, trying to breathe.

Me: "What's happening to me?" I whispered to Amahle.

Ama: "Your blood pressure is rising and may be swelling your wound. You need to rest." She gave me my pills, I drank them and lay down.

Me: "Don't tell him this Amahle. Only if I get worse."

Ama: "I can't lie to Nkosi, Thembisa. You forgot his tricks?"

Me: "I don't want him to feel I'm manipulating him to get my way."

Ama: "I know that. He knows that. Don't worry about anything right now."

Mama: "I was told that I can order dinner to come to the room. So I did." I let a giggle slip. She was living and I was happy for her honestly and truly.

Xolani: "Ntombenhle."

Mama: "Hayi Xolani. Now we must not eat because there's a war outside? I wanted us to be safe and most importantly not hungry." My chest was wheezing with pain while I tried to stop laughing.

Xolani: "No one is thinking about food. Thembisa is not well."

Mama: "Maybe that's why she's not well. Don't worry wena mntanam, vegetables are coming. Xolani, you can't live on medication only as a person. You must eat and also the people looking after you must eat. How will we look after Thembisa if we're hungry?"

Xolani: "Let's try not to make too much noise. The storm is enough."

Nele: "And it's so cold."

Mama: "We're on top of a mountain Zanele."

Ama: "There's thermostat somewhere." She looked by the door. "Here." She clicked on the alarm looking key pad and air conditioners opened, letting in warm air.

Mama: "What is that now?"

Ama: "It's an air conditioner. It controls the temperature, you can make it cold on hot days or warm on cold days like today."

Mama: "Xolani we need that one in our house. You said we can choose one thing." My father sighed.

Xolani: "We have a heater."

Mama: "We don't have a colder." I choked and coughed, laughing.

Xolani: "Do you see what you did? I asked for silence. Thembisa needs rest."

Mama: "Thembisa is fine. We can get this thing in our house. Please Xolani, winter is almost here and you know the village is cold. I can feel it in my knees."

Xolani: "Okay Ntombenhle."

Mama: "Thank you. Yoh, can you imagine Thembisa? Mamkhumalo will be so jealous when she sees my house has a heater plugged in the wall. Watch."

Xolani: "You want air conditioner to impress your friends?"

Mama: "No Xolani, I don't impress people. I want them to envy me. They must look at me with small disgust and a fake smile because they want to come sit in my house."

Ama: "I absolutely understand that."

Mama: "See, even the princess agrees."

Xolani: "Fine. But you can't pull my arm for anything else. Air conditioner is the end."

Mama: "Thank you." She looked at me.

Xolani: "Don't even try to swindle Thembisa into speaking to the prince for anything, Ntombenhle."

Mama: "I can't even look at my child Xolani?" I giggled. Someone knocked on the door. Dad opened and the trays of food were rolled. Exactly how long will this war be?

## PRINCE POV\_

Zwe and I assessed the damage of the west wing. It was bad, entirely destroyed. He sighed.

Zwe: "I'll have to rebuild this entire side."

Nkosi: "How long do you think it will take?"

Zwe: "Probably a month or two. I think."

Nkosi: "I meant the war. I know how to build things." He looked at me and broke into a smile.

Zwe: "I didn't miss you even a little bit. You're just special." He laughed. Glad I can make you smile but I'm serious. "With this witch business, I don't know. Since he's biding his time, I suspect it could be months."

Nkosi: "My coronation is in 5 months."

Zwe: "Yeah, so probably before. Nkosi, you know this warrants a punishment, right? Nakhamula and them threatening the throne."

Nkosi: "The only punishment for treason is a beheading. We haven't done those since my grandfather was alive. I wouldn't even want to partake in that."

Zwe: "So what will you do? We can't keep the citizens locked in forever. Probably no longer than a week even."

Nkosi: "I'm going to need to think about that. I don't know what spiritual implications may occur if I spill another royals blood."

Zwe: "Hm... That's true." I thought deeply to what Thembisa had asked of me. The last thing I wanted was for people to die. Two people died at the harbour today from the aircraft crash. It fell into the loading deck they were on. I have to keep reminding myself it could've been much worse. These aircrafts had bombs in them that took out one wing of an entire hospital. The damage they could've done is horrifying.

Nkosi: "Let's get up stairs. I need the last briefing so we can all go home to our families for the night." We went back to Zwe's office. Everyone was still awake and alert. Good. "Good evening." I sat down.

Sibo: "Evening your Highness."

Nkosi: "Have all the air crafts been cleaned up?" I looked at Mngqobi.

Mngqobi: "No sir. Only three so far. It got dark very quickly and the storm isn't helping."

Nkosi: "Okay. So how many of my citizens are dead?"

Sibo: "Only two so far. The ones in the harbour."

Nkosi: "What's happening on the news."

Sibo: "It's a shit show honestly."

Nkosi: "My shit show?"

Sibo: "Uhm.." he swallowed. "I didn't mean like that but kind of. Yes."

Nkosi: "Thank you for your honesty. What's next?"

Sibo: "I've scheduled your press conference for 11 in the morning. Khaya here, helped with the speech you'll be giving. Here it is, if you have any questions or concerns." I scanned through the speech.

Nkosi: "Thembisa thinks they might protest. The citizens."

Sibo: "I can understand her concern. That's likely to happen, considering the news currently."

Nkosi: "What do we do?" He looked at Zwe then back at me.

Sibo: "The army will force them back in. No one wants to die Your Highness. And if they do, it's a small fraction of people. It's enough to teach a lesson."

Nkosi: "I don't want anymore blood spill on my land."

Zwe: "That's inevitable Nkosi." Whether I like it or not, I'm losing my battle of being the good king. Am I any different from my grandfather if I let the army shoot at my people? Or, will I be the weak king that lets everyone get their way? That can't happen.

Nkosi: "Move the address for 8am, I need to calm them. We meet back here at 7:15. It's time we go home now. Goodnight gentleman." I stood up with Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "My Prince. The roads are flooded so we'll be here in the city."

Nkosi: "No I'm going up to my woman."

Mthunzi: "That road is undrivable at this stage."

Nkosi: "I don't lie to my wife Mthunzi. She asked me home, and I agreed. I'm going up that mountain."

Mthunzi: "Nkosi, the cars will slip. There's no way to get up there."

Nkosi: "Get the helicopter then."

Mthunzi: "There's a storm."

Nkosi: "It's just a little wind and rain."

Mthunzi: "And ice, Nkosi."

Sibo: "You can use my car. I have high performance mud terrain tyres on my Country RX. It can drive up a mud filled flood easily with a bit of skill." I looked at him.

Nkosi: "Are you sure?"

Sibo: "Yes. Zwe designed it. Unfortunately, your guards will need another few. Mngqobi, can you make a call for an order of 4 of these. Make sure they're the exact same."

Mngqobi: "We only have two with mud terrain tyres left. The others are all terrain tyres."

Nkosi: "That's fine, isn't it? If it's all terrain then it will work." I don't really care about cars as long as it moves, I'm fine.

Mngqobi: "Actually not, Your Highness. See the all terrain tyres are for most circumstances however mud floods aren't usual therefore they perform poorly in them. The spaces between the tyre threads are much smaller, which make it easier to grip on sand, road, bitumen, gravel and

sometimes rocks. With mud terrain tyres, they have a large chunky thread pattern, wider spaced lugs that can chuck out mud debris as the tyre spins. So it won't get stuck." This is the person who slept with his wife's best friend? All this knowledge to do a stupid thing like that.

Nkosi: "Then I'll take half my guards up the mountain for the evening. They'll use the two you have. Can I leave now?"

Zwe: "Absolutely, let's get moving. Mnqobi, Khaya. The guards will take you straight home, tell your parents we're on our way."

Khaya: "Okay."

Mnqobi: "I first need to start at Bi-motive. I think there's no one there."

Nkosi: "Don't go in without your guards, Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "Yes Your Highness." I walked out with Mthunzi and Sibonelo. We made it to the parking lot. I stared at the sleek, modern bakkie with big bulky wheels. It was huge, alright. Four seats and a large loading back.

Nkosi: "You like this colour?"

Sibo: "Yes. I made it."

Zwe: "The Nello grey." He climbed in the driver seat, Sibonelo got in the passenger. I sat with Mthunzi in the back. "Music anyone?"

Nkosi: "Please don't." He chuckled, driving out.

Zwe: "How is it that you still don't like music?"

Mthunzi: "Oh he definitely likes music but he only listens to it with his wife."

Nkosi: "You've never shown me any music Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Of course I have. You always ask me to switch it off because you need to think."

Nkosi: "And I do. Like right now. I don't need to think when I'm with Thembisa."

Zwe: "When can we start with the preparations Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "Preparations to do what? I thought we concluded all business for the evening."

Zwe: "For your wedding." I smiled looking out the window.

Nkosi: "I don't know."

Zwe: "Are you smiling? Sibonelo look at Nkosi for good luck, he's smiling." He chuckled.

Sibo: "Haibo Zwe."

Zwe: "He's smitten.."

Nkosi: "I'm not smitten."

Zwe: "In love then. One of these days, we're gonna have a beer so you can tell me where I can find a wife for myself."

Mthunzi: "That makes you giggle before 8 in the morning and cooks for your entire guard army."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi!!"

Zwe: "What!?"

Sibo: "That's a win."

Nkosi: "Okay. It's the end of this conversation. May we please focus on the road. Zwelethu's driving is suspicious enough. How do you talk and drive?"

Zwe: "The only reason we're on the road is because your wife called you home so obviously we have to discuss this." They laughed.

Nkosi: "I'm not telling you anything ever again." I looked out the window, smiling. I probably won't sleep next to her tonight but I will at least see her face. Maybe get a kiss if I'm lucky. I'll probably sleep better knowing she's safe and near.

Sibo: "Easy... Press down the accelerator Zwe."

Zwe: "You know I taught you how to drive right?"

Sibo: "Yes but this is my car. I know how she rolls."

Nkosi: "I'd prefer not to roll, this road is quite steep and I don't like mud on my clothes."

Mthunzi: "You are truly a king. So if this car gets stuck here, we'll have to carry you up?"

Nkosi: "Obviously. These are my favorite boots." They laughed. We arrived up at the parking on the cliff. The rains were still heavy. Mthunzi got out with an umbrella, opening my door. We all walked into the entrance. It was quiet but brightly lit as usual. Amahle walked out the passage and stood in front of me.

Nkosi: "What is it?"

Ama: "She's okay. Just in pain. Her blood pressure rose a bit earlier. She's currently sleeping." The blood in veins turned.

Nkosi: "I need to see her."

Zwe: "Good thing I brought my medical bag."

Sibo: "I'll get it from the car." Zwe and I followed Amahle to the family suite. Her parents were still awake.

Nkosi: "Good evening family."

Mama: "Good evening my prince."

Xolani: "Your Highness." I walked closer to her bed, kneeling next to it. My hand rest lightly on her wound, so I could feel the beating of her heart. It was slow. Sibonelo came in with the bag.

Zwe: "Your Highness." I moved out of his way, and he checked her using the stethoscope.

Nkosi: "Why is her heart beating so slow?"

Zwe: "Thembisa." He lightly shook her. "Thembisa." His voice more firm. Why is she not waking up? Zwe moved faster with his equipment.

Xolani: "What's happening?"

Zwe: "Thembisa?" He felt her pulse, then checked her wound. It was still fine. "This isn't good. Her heart isn't pumping enough oxygen to her body." No...please not again. Amahle got in bed next to her.

Xolani: "And what does that mean?"

Zwe: "I'm guessing it may be inferior-wall myocardial infarction, it's usually a side effect after a gun shot wound but I can't be sure now. Her pulse is still very stable."

Xolani: "There's a storm outside, Can we make it to the hospital?!"

Ama: "We won't have to." She looked at Zwe. He stared back at her, heavily conflicted.

Zwe: "We won't have to." ...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 64

PETU POV\_

I've been stuck in the house bored all day and now hearing the hospital got bombed. The lockdown was still on so I couldn't go anywhere. I was so worried and there hasn't been any reports on how bad the damage was. I know Thembisa and Amahle were discharged but that was it. How were the Biyela's doing? That hospital was owned by Zwe so they're probably affected. I wanted to call and check on them but I decided not to. I can wait on the news just like everyone else. I've been avoiding Mnqobi's texts all day, I didn't want to seem desperate by asking about his family business.

Petu: "Tata, do you think we can visit Sizani and the kids?"

Father: "No. Do you know how much trouble we would be in, Petunia? I already risked it by going to fetch you from that place. Now we stay put, we don't want any attention on us." I still found it strange that my father was able to come pick me up in Stellars. The distance was quite long. We lived in the newer part of eMoyeni, newly built houses. Stellars was in the east and no one went there because the owners of that entire estate were a white man and a royal family So how did he? He already shut me down when I asked which made me more suspicious but then again, father works for a company that services royal cars so maybe he got a pass. I was so bored here. My phone buzzed again another message from Mnqobi. <What can I do to make things right Petunia? I know I hurt you, I'm sorry. Please forgive me.> It's been the same tune all day. I didn't believe him. If truly, he loved me he would've been honest. I knew he was promised and slept with him knowing that he isn't mine but when the time comes, I'll step away and he'll marry while I

move on with my life. I knew it would hurt because I really liked him but now, It's different because he won't be marrying some strange lady I care nothing about. He'd be marrying my friend. Who'd probably ask me to be there for her wedding day and participate, how can I do that? How can I continue the friendship knowing, I've been doing stuff to her husband? With her knowledge. She probably thinks I'm loose. I can't. No. I refuse to be a part of it. I got up from the lounge, going to my bathroom. Since it was only us two in the house left, my father had his own bathroom and I too had my own. I ran my bath while selecting a playlist. After adding stress reducing vanilla bath salts and a few drops of eucalyptus essential oil, I lit some candles as Thembisa would. God, I missed her so much. I needed to collect my towel then maybe I could text Amahle, so I can call them. I walked out the bathroom, hearing my father in his bedroom. Maybe his girlfriend was here.

Father: "I didn't tell anyone. I didn't even know. Do you really think I'd mess this up? This is my opportunity to get out of this township and leave a legacy for my children." I stopped and listened closely without making a sound. "All of these royals are the same. As ordinary civilians, the only thing we can do is take opportunity as it arises. We're going ahead with the plan. They gave out food packages to shut us up. We're only in their debt. What we need in this nation is a democracy not one family enriching themselves for centuries." What was my father doing? Who was he speaking to on the phone? "Exactly. We need a place that will make a statement. Since the hospital was already bombed, that already has coverage. We as the citizens can march to that new residence, if the army kills us, it will be on their projects. Our blood and cries will seep into those grounds and tear them down. 8am. Don't be late." I went back into the bathroom quietly. My heart was hammering in my chest. What the hell was my father doing? I locked the door quietly, picking up my phone.

SIBONELO POV\_

It's been a long stressful day. Or probably, week at this point. I sat in the bar eNtabeni while Zwe was in the family room, reviving Thembisa. It was horrible what happened to her. Imagine almost dying and now slipping into a coma days later. That girl was strong.

Mthunzi: "Hey."

Sibo: "Hi." He poured himself a drink and one for me. "Thanks." I downed the shot, quickly regretting it as it trickled its way down my throat. "That's strong."

Mthunzi: "30 year old, Mfula Omhlophe. Collectors item."

Sibo: "Are you serious? Why would you just pour me that? That's worth at least 50 grand a bottle."

Mthunzi: "Nkosi has two cases of it. He doesn't mind. Plus you need a drink." He poured another one.

Sibo: "I can't."

Mthunzi: "Yes, you can. It's already open now. Plus, Zwe will most likely drive home." He sat down. I stared at the glass, smelling the aroma of the alcohol. This is one of the best. I sipped a bit and placed it down.

Sibo: "It's rich."

Mthunzi: "Yes it is." He drank his. "What's on your mind?"

Sibo: "Nothing. Just worried about mum. Wondering if Mngqobi and Khaya are safely on their way home."

Mthunzi: "They are. My guard is following them." He showed me a map on his phone with two dots moving in the same direction.

Sibo: "Thank you."

Mthunzi: "You're Nkosi's council now, I have to keep you safe."

Sibo: "That's still surreal for me. Never saw Nkosi as that type of guy."

Mthunzi: "He's very different from anyone you've ever known."

Sibo: "Oh I know. I saw it with my own two eyes." I chuckled.

Mthunzi: "What was that like for you?" I froze, realizing I'd let it slip.

Sibo: "It's life, I guess."

Mthunzi: "Seeing a person with abilities is life?" He poured another in each glass.

Sibo: "Look, I'm not going to go out there and tell people. I don't gossip."

Mthunzi: "I know you don't but you still won't express how you're feeling."

Sibo: "I don't do those type of things, Mthunzi. I don't need to talk about stuff. I'm absolutely fine. So what if he turns into an animal sometimes. It's weird, yes. But it's life."

Mthunzi: "Sometimes?" He laughed. "You do realize that he's more of a tiger than he is human? His personality, his demeanor, all of him resonates more with the tiger than the man." I stared at him, shocked out of my bones. "He just chooses to be decent and human. Zwe knows mostly because he taught him how to be when they were still kids. When he left, I took over. He spent alot of time in the wild. It's his favorite place where he can be himself." I couldn't even speak, I had no questions. Just pure shock.

Sibo: "And the fire?"

Mthunzi: "It's new. As time goes, you'll learn to understand him, not fear him but respect him. He's not a bad person. He never wants to hurt people. Except of course, now, there's Thembisa. He would kill for Thembisa without a second thought. So, don't be afraid of Nkosi. It makes him uncomfortable, as if there's something wrong with him. There isn't. He's just born different." I nodded. I can understand that.

Sibo: "Okay. That's cool. So will he read my thoughts and stuff?"

Mthunzi: "Not until he has to, which is unlikely because I feel like you're here to stay."

Sibo: "Things got so different so quickly. I never thought I'd be working for him."

Mthunzi: "With him. We're way past that now. As you heard him say, you're his new council."

Sibo: "And you? What is your job?"

Mthunzi: "To drink and tell him what to do." We laughed. "Mostly security measures around him, business management and advice."

Sibo: "That's a pretty big job." My phone rang. "Mnqo?"

Mnqobi: "We're home brother. Did you send a car to follow us? There's a black truck that's been driving behind us for a minute." I looked at Mthunzi, grinning.

Sibo: "Yes. Your king wanted you home safely. Tell the parents we'll be home soon. Zwe is dealing with an emergency."

Mnqobi: "Alright then." I hung up.

## SASA POV\_

I walked around what looked like a village. In a distance under the tree, I could see a few people sitting there. Where was I? I looked around, seeing just rondavel houses, rich land and produce. I walked up to the small circle of people.

Me: "Good evening, bakhulu. Ninjani?" (Elders. How are you?) They all looked at me silently. "I'm quite lost. Not sure how I got here. May I please ask where I am?" I was yet again, greeted with silence. I know they can talk because they were talking just before I got to them. This was so frustrating. "Okay, I'm sorry for disturbing your meeting, my elders. I'll be on my way." I walked away.

"Uyaphi?" (Where are you going?) One of them asked. I don't even know really. "Lendawo okuyo iyingozi kakhulu. Ungase uhambe futhi ungaphinde ubuyele lapho uvela khona. Ngiyabuza futhi, uyaphi?" (The place you're in is very dangerous. You may walk and never get back to where you're from.) I looked at them again, moving closer. One defining feature. Orange eyes. I knelt on the ground, bowing my head. "UseZizathu."

Me: "I am so sorry, I didn't realize ningaboo Sikhosana. Ngiyaxolisa makhosi ami." (I'm sorry my kings.)

Another spoke: "Asibona oSikhosana. Siyimbewu akakaze ayivume." (We are the seeds he has never acknowledged.)

Me: "You are the late brothers of King Sizwengaye. The sons of King Ngidumise, that he killed. I am sorry."

Another: "Uxolisani? Ubumazi?" (Why are you sorry? Did you know him?)

Me: "No sir. I... I don't know how to answer. I met King Ngidumise's grandson. I went up the mountain and met the elders on the other side. From that, I then had dreams as uMam Nonkosi." I swallowed nervously. "Why am I here, my elders?"

The first one spoke: "Asazi nathi sibona wena kuphela." (We don't know, you're the only one we see.)

Me: "Your blood is so strong that it can connect beyond the limits of the different spiritual realms. I need to connect you to your rightful place. This is not where you belong." They kept quiet, all five of them staring at me with orange eyes. I was almost amused at how this lineage looked so similar. "How do I go back?"

The first: " The Same way you came." ...

I opened my eyes, seeing Zwe next to the bed with his stethoscope on my chest.

Me: "Zwe." He jumped.

Zwe: "Thembisa. You're awake?" I looked at Nkosi. He stared right back at me. Next to me, Amahle was fast asleep.

Me: "Yes. I am so thirsty." Nkosi went to pour water in a glass. My father came closer.

Xolani: "How are you mntanam?"

Me: "Better." I sat up, accepting the water. "How long was I out?"

Ama: "Two hours." Zwe checked my heart again. Then my blood pressure.

Zwe: "That's better." He breathed a sigh of relief.

Me: "Did I get sick?"

Zwe: "You fell into a coma."

Ama: "Did you see anything?" She woke up.

Me: "Yes. Where was Ma Nonkosi buried." My mother fluffed up my pillows adding another one for comfort. "Thank you ma."

Nkosi: "I would think the royal grounds, she was the queen."

Ama: "I don't know Nkosi. I don't think she's there."

Me: "We'll figure that one out later. I was in a different place, a village. Ezizathu. Is that a place?"

Ama: "That's... How?"

Me: "I don't know."

Ama: "Ezizathu can only be traveled by those who have passed and on their way to their respective realms. Like a waiting place, for the dead. It wouldn't be possible for a living person to go there."

Me: "There's a problem. About 5 of your uncles are stuck there."

Nkosi: "We don't have unc- Wow."

Ama: "What did they say?"

Me: "Your grandfather never acknowledged them. They aren't allowed to cross into the proper realm where your ancestors are. They're stuck there."

Nkosi: "So what must we do?"

Me: "They're royalty. We need to take them home." ....

## PRINCE POV\_

Friday morning, I was awake and ready for the day. Last night, Thembisa's sleep coma scared me. Today was going to be a bad day for me. I didn't want to leave her but her family would take care of her. Zwe was happy with her health when he left last night. I shouldn't worry. I dressed in my regal attire, this would be for the address. I wasn't a big fan of this outfit but I would be coming back home soon. If push comes to shove, I'd rather we worked from here instead. I walked out my suite to the restaurant area. The family was seated. Everyone seemed well.

Nkosi: "Good morning family."

Mama: "Good morning my prince."

Sasa: "Hello." I stood next to her, looking down at her. "I'll be okay. I'm feeling much better but I'll still be resting in bed for most of the day."

Nkosi: "I'll be home early today."

Sasa: "Okay. Do you think he'll stop the storm today? It's really bad."

Nkosi: "If he's in a good mood. Probably an hour from now after his morning coffee." Her mother chuckled.

Mama: "It's a good thing that you're religious, My Prince. Indeed, the Lord will be in a good mood today. Let's have faith." Lord? That's not the right title. Thembisa disguised a laugh with a cough. Maybe it's an inside joke.

Nkosi: "Yes ma'am. I should be on my way. I'll be on the news soon, if there's a problem, Amahle please contact Mthunzi immediately. I'll be back soon." I brushed her cheek, walking out. Mthunzi and I got in the car. The guard had brought up Sibonelo's car to take us to the City Hall.

Mthunzi: "How are you today?"

Nkosi: "Fine I guess. How are you?"

Mthunzi: "I'm okay."

Nkosi: "What's on our agenda?"

Mthunzi: "A brief meeting with your council and then the address. Zwe has closed the hospital officially. I've closed the hotel, the harbour. Hopefully things go well after this announcement."

Nkosi: "Unlikely. Amahle believes more is yet to happen."

Mthunzi: "Is Sasa okay?"

Nkosi: "Yes. She had another dream. She was in Ezizathu. It's a place unknown to living humans so that's messing with my brain."

Mthunzi: "Thembisa is definitely alive. Also, she was dreaming of the past, living in it. That's also impossible but it happened to her."

Nkosi: "You're right. I keep asking myself why my ancestors are showing her... And not anyone in my family instead. Amahle answered me, she believes the spirit of Nonkosi, took to her when they were in the mountain. My grandmother loved my father so much, she is still fighting for his lineage. That's probably why Thembisa asked where she was buried. It's just too much."

Mthunzi: "It is but it's doable. We'll focus on that later, for now, the citizens." I nodded, waiting for the driver to stop the car. I whispered to him, erasing the past journey.

City hall was unusually quiet. Something is wrong here. I got out the car, walking with my guards into City Hall. I started at the office, finding my council already there.

Nkosi: "Morning."

Zwe: "Hey."

Mnqobi and Khaya: "Good morning Your Highness."

Sibo: "Your Highness. I have something for you to hear." I sat down.

Sibo: "First things first, last night I did a little more digging. There were specific targets to the explosions, the hospital being the first. The others would've been your new res, the hotel, and the beach line district."

Nkosi: "So, Zwe, me and you is who they're attacking."

Sibo: "Yes. This list was compiled by Nakhamula, obviously. Secondly, we have another more immediate problem. Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "Your Highness, I got a panicked message last night from Petunia."

Nkosi: "Who is Petunia?"

Mnqobi: "The girl I was seeing." Probably the wife's friend but I still don't see why I'm now involved.

Nkosi: "Oh."

Mnqobi: "She claims to have overheard a conversation. In said conversation, there is a chance there may be a riot at 8am today." So that's the energy I was sensing.

Mthunzi: "How well do you trust her?"

Mnqobi: "She was ignoring me. The only text she sent was this, to warn me to be safe. She's not a person who lies. I trust her."

Mthunzi: "Okay." He got on his phone.

Mnqobi: "Also, I know this is alot to ask but...there will be someone she loves in that crowd. I don't want ..."

Nkosi: "Them to die? I'm sorry Mnqobi. This is not how protests work." He nodded. I checked my speech. "It's been a very long week for all of us. I have tried my best, I have protected all those that I can. From this

point forward, there's not a thing more I can do. I can only react to those that act against me."

Sibo: "I'll collect Petu, maybe she'll be safe at Khaya's. What if she decides to go after her father to stop him? Yes Mngqobi, I know it's her dad, she doesn't live with anyone else, there's no way she can overhear the neighbors from inside her home." He got up, walking out.

Khaya: "Bobo can be very mean sometimes, I think I should go with him in case he scares her into the car."

Zwe: "No. You need to stay here and help Nkosi with his speech, and Mngqobi needs to take over Sibonelo's role. Maybe a little tough talk will be good for her to get to safety." So Khaya knows this Petunia lady too? This situation confused me but I don't have the time to ask about it right now.

It was 07:55am. Ready to walk out of the office and address my people.

Mthunzi: "Alright. I stay on Nkosi's right, Zwe you're on the left. Sibonelo you're by me and the young princes are behind. When Nkosi is at the podium, you will remain behind, out of camera view with the guards. This is for safety precautions and not to overwhelm the viewers with confusion. I will be standing with Nkosi until he is done. Ready? Let's go, my princes." We walked out. There was some noise happening outside but the place we will be in was the hall. The media was here with all cameras set up. The storm had finally subsided. We reached the hall, I went up to the podium. Mthunzi check my face and chest then stood in his place. Everyone present bowed in greeting.

Nkosi: "You may all rise. Good morning, to the city of Mountain Peak. I've come to address you all as the citizens of our city. As you all know. My family suffered a tragic incident this week. Our last princess was shot at school, fortunately her injuries and that of her friend were not serious. Both ladies were treated at Mountain Peak General Hospital and are on the road to recovery. They have been discharged and are taken care of by family. The throne thanks you profusely for your patience and understanding. We had to lock the city down, to lessen the traffic to the hospital and of course until we get to the bottom of this incident. Yesterday, unfortunately, our city was attacked. A bomb was dropped at Mountain Peak General Hospital, destroying an entire wing. No one was hurt. It is unfortunate that we have lost two members due to this attack

on the harbour, as that is where one of the aircrafts landed. I would like to issue my heart felt condolences to Joseph Randsfield and Gareth Langer's families. This has been a traumatic time for you and I sympathize. The aircrafts that had invaded our city still remain unknown. The connection between that and the shooting in the previous week hasn't been determined as of yet. With that, we have decided it would be safer for all to continue the lock down. Allowing only, necessary travel in and around the city. The army was deployed as a source of protection against enemies who try to gain entry in the city and all those attacking the throne. We are doing all we can to protect you in this time. We will keep updating and of course taking care of those who are unable to provide at this time. Please do continue being safe-" the noise outside was getting louder. Singing, it was. Probably a crowd of more than 100 people. Mthunzi came close to my ear, pulling me aside.

Mthunzi: "The crowd outside is getting aggressive, more harder to control. And...others have invaded the New Res grounds, protesting there. The generals are asking for command. What should they do?" I hate this. I hate that it has come to this. Why couldn't people just listen?

Nkosi: "They must issue out two warnings, if they refuse to comply and vacate... Shoot."

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 65

SIBONELO POV\_

I got in my car, tracing on my phone where Petunia lived. Using her surname, I already got a hit because her father was registered in my family payroll for car service. I drove to the address as fast as possible. It took only 10 to get to her house. I knocked on the front door. Petu opened, still dressed in a warm gown and slippers.

Petu: "Prince Sibonelo." Her expression filled with surprise and confusion.

Sibo: "Hi Petu. Please grab your things, we need to get going."

Petu: "No, Prince Sibonelo. I'm not going back to your home-"

Sibo: "PETUNIA."

Petu: "No. The only reason I told Mngqobi about the protest is because I couldn't get hold of Amahle or Thembisa. Since you guys are close to the future King now, I told him. I don't want anything from him."

Sibo: "I don't care about what you and Mngqobi are going through to be honest. The only reason I'm here is because you need to be safe. I'm not sure about you either going there to save your father from this stupid decision or the people he's pissing off coming to his house and hurting you. Anything is possible, now get your things or I'm carrying you out in that gown." She quickly turned around rushing to her room. Why do women make things difficult for no reason? She came back in a tracksuit and a small travel bag, locking her home. We got in the car.

Sibo: "I'm taking you to Khaya's place, at least your friend is there and it's secure."

Petu: "Actually, I'd rather go to my sister's house. I need to be with my family." I know she was running away from Mngqobi because he obviously has easy access to Khaya's apartment.

Sibo: "Enter the address on the screen then." She typed her sister's address in and I started the car, driving off.

Petu: "What's going to happen to my father?"

Sibo: "Probably die." She started crying immediately. "But Petu, you do know conspiring against the throne is illegal."

Petu: "He's the only parent I have left in the world."

Sibo: "He sure as hell isn't moving like he is." I made a turn onto the freeway.

Petu: "I should've just kept quiet."

Sibo: "And be implicated in the charges as well. Like I said, he's pissing off the wrong people. Look, you're a smart girl Petunia. But people make very stupid choices in life to their own detriment. What you did, was a smart decision. Even apart from that, you know it was right."

Petu: "How will I look my sister in the eye knowing I had our father killed? How will I keep living?"

Sibo: "If you didn't overhear his conversation, and the same thing that is about to happen, happened. Would you still feel it's your fault? The end result doesn't change. The only thing you changed, was your safety. Even if we didn't know, the army is there to protect. If you're going against the law, you will be punished. You didn't make the law." I turned into Oceanview, an area built for middle upper class citizens. "What does your sister do?"

Petu: "She's a housewife."

Sibo: "So she married rich. That's lovely."

Petu: "She loves her husband."

Sibo: "I didn't say she doesn't. I said it's lovely. No one should aspire for lower class all in the name of love."

Petu: "Not everything is about money Prince Sibonelo. It may make things comfortable but without basic natural needs such as love, trust and respect, it means absolutely nothing. You'd find that alot of people with the statement you gave are actually living miserable lives and have no source of joy without opening their wallet."

Sibo: "Eh. That's a mouthful." As long as she's stopped crying. I don't care what she's saying. I'm very comfortable and happy with my money. I parked in front of a gate.

Petu: "Thank you."

Sibo: "Call her to fetch you from this gate. I'm not leaving until I see you walk in." She made the call, her sister coming out in a few minutes with a baby on her hip. She looks kinda hot. Too bad she's married.

Petu: "Thanks again." She got out of the car, walking in the house. I typed into my phone again, tracking her father's phone, the location he was in was back eMoyeni. This was fucking annoying. I drove off, increasing my speed once again. It was only 30 minutes to the King's speech and I don't know if I'll make it. What looked like an informal gathering in a run down half burnt house. He was at the center, shouting and singing. Immediately, he noticed my car. There was no chance he wouldn't. After addressing his crowd, he found a way to come to me.

Sibo: "Bhekokwakhe Nyanda."

Bheko: "Good morning my Prince. You shouldn't be here. I respect you enough to let you aside but the people can't see you. You're part of the reason this is happening."

Sibo: "I absolutely understand. I do also share the same sentiments. I don't want one family to keep ruling above all of us. Me and you are the same Bhekokwakhe. I have a few ideas and protection mechanisms to help you with this. I can't speak here though, as you said, the people can't see me. Would you like to come with me? I'll bring you back in time for this, and also with proper information to avoid a massacre. Let's go." He hesitated, looking around. "You need a person on the inside, Bhekokwakhe. I'm your person. Trust me. I protected your daughter and took her home to our palace for safety for days then when she wanted to go home, I made sure you can receive her safely and back home. Even now, I've taken her to Oceanview to be with her sister safely. I would never hurt you. Come." He got in the passenger seat and I drove off to my house. It's always come easy to me to convince people to give in to anything I want.

Bheko: "What are your ideas?"

Sibo: "Well, first you need a mandate. It's possible that the Prince may want to hear your concerns, you need to state your reasons clearly. Secondly, you need protection. Your movement is a strong one, therefore it cannot lose its leader in the early stages. You, Bhekokwakhe, are a leader, a pioneer. If you are shot today, do you think this initiative will move further? No. So, first things first. You can't be in the firing line."

Bheko: "I fight with my soldiers, I'm not a coward."

Sibo: "No you're not. But you are a father and want the best for your daughter. Leaving her while she's in tertiary unable to pay for school and expenses? That's not good." I drove into my estate. "See these houses? All owned by only two families. The entire residential is currently at R160 million as of this week. Even the current King has a house here. Wouldn't you want to see a future in which more people like you, live here?" He stared at the houses in wonder. "Doesn't your daughter deserve to live here?"

Bheko: "Yes. She does."

Sibo: "Of course she does. That's why you work so hard, to provide her with the best education and it helps that she's a very smart young lady."

She's going far in life and I'd like you to see that." I parked my car. "This is my house. My office is inside, let's be quick so we can make it back to the protest. It's important." We got out the car. He followed me inside. I turned into the first passage next to the staircase and opened the door. "It's a little weird to have an office in the basement but I focus better down here. Look, how comfortable it is." I walked down the stairs into my basement. Concrete floor no windows or natural lighting. Beautiful bright lights, a 55 inch tv on the screen, a comfortable couch and work desk in the corner. It also had a small door that led to a toilet. This was not my office. I watched him walk around, looking at the small space. He stared at the glass cabinet, confused. I walked up the first two stairs and locked the burglar gate. He spun around, looking at me.

Sibo: "This would be a good time to reflect, Bhekokwakhe. Going against the throne is a criminal offense in which the sentencing is death. You wouldn't want to leave your daughters as orphans. Think about your actions very carefully. Watch the news on the tv to see what happens to your friends and remember, no one disrespects the throne. When we're on the same page, I'll probably let you go. Oh and, your phone is practically useless here. The walls have been wired to lock outgoing or incoming signal from any device. It's also sound proof. You've currently fallen off the face of the earth. Have a blessed day." I walked up the rest of the stairs and locked the door with a deadbolt. There. Simple and safe. I drove back to City Hall in dangerous speed, arriving just in time as Mehluli was about to leave the office for his address.

Mthunzi: "Where the hell have you been?"

Sibo: "She was difficult but I'm here now."

Mthunzi: "Alright. I stay on Nkosi's right, Zwe you're on the left. Sibonelo you're by me and the young princes are behind. When Nkosi is at the podium, you will remain behind, out of camera view with the guards. This is for safety precautions and not to overwhelm the viewers with confusion. I will be standing with Nkosi until he is done. Ready? Let's go, my princes." We walked out..

PETU'S POV\_

I walked in the house with my sister. She looked at my bag then me.

Siza: "And then? You're sleeping with a prince now?"

Petu: "You're judging now?" She frowned.

Siza: "Since the lockdown, Jackson is working from home so the house has to be intensely quiet. He's never in a good mood, so let's thread carefully."

Petu: "I always do." I sighed. "I'm not sleeping with Prince Sibonelo. We need to talk Siza." She led me to the guest bedroom that I use whenever I'm here. "Where are the kids?" I took the baby from her.

Siza: "I put them down for a nap. So what's going on? Why is a prince bringing you here?"

Petu: "It seems like dad has involved himself with the wrong people. I don't know what happened."

Siza: "I still don't see how this involves a Prince."

Petu: "Right.. so you remember the invite we got for the reed dance? My friend, is a princess."

Siza: "You told me you won those in a school raffle!" She hissed.

Petu: "Really Siza? To be royal guests from a raffle? These kids are making you dumb." I giggled.

Siza: "Continue, how does it get to the prince."

Petu: "Well, his brother approached one day while we were hanging out. Since he knows my friend, he came to say hi and introduced himself. From there he kept saying hi then asked me out."

Siza: "Don't tell me you slept with both these men Petunia."

Petu: "Come on Siza, have some faith. Him and I broke up anyway but with this whole thing happening with dad, his brother thought I may be unsafe. Remember dad works for them."

Siza: "That's suspiciously kind."

Petu: "Well, at least I'm here with you. I don't know where dad went, I woke up and he was gone." I couldn't tell her what I'd discovered. She too, might blame me for snitching and I couldn't take more guilt than I already felt. My heart was bleeding that my only parent could die today.

Siza: "Why are you sad then?"

Petu: "The break up is messing with me." This wasn't a lie but what hurt much more was losing my father.

Siza: "Break ups are hard Petu but baby sis, you're not royal. This relationship probably didn't mean enough to him so why hurt yourself over him? It's hard but you need to pick yourself up from the ground and keep moving. Fortunately for you, you're not pregnant or married." She sighed. I stared at her shocked.

Petu: "Don't tell me you're pregnant again. Sizani, this baby is only six months old." I whispered.

Siza: "I know Petu. It was careless of me. Especially with the situation with Jackson right now."

Petu: "What situation?"

Siza: "He's been having a long term affair. Actually, it doesn't even classify as an affair, she's more like a second wife at this point." She held back her tears.

Petu: "Sizani, why didn't you come home?"

Siza: "With what Petunia? I have nothing to my name. I was made to sign pre nuptial agreements before we married. If I leave, I go home to the township with not a cent to my name. 3 kids, pregnant with a fourth and no degree or job. I'm only going to be a bigger burden to dad and you."

Petu: "Sizani, that's not what's important. Your peace of mind is. We're your family, you aren't a burden." My heart broke even more knowing this, we might not even have a father to go home to.

Siza: "Still. I should fight for my marriage Petu. This is how it is. I have to. My children need to live with their father and be raised by us both. I can handle this."

Petu: "How bad is it?"

Siza: "It's not bad. I just need you to look away, okay?"

Petu: "SIZANI, that's not going to happen -"

Siza: "Petunia, I'm the adult here. You know nothing about marriage. You've only just touched penis now you think you know life? No. If you want to stay here, Please don't disrespect my marriage and home." I

knew one thing about my sister is I can't convince her to change her mind.

Petu: "Can we watch the address? I think it's starting now." The room had a plasma tv on the wall, I took the remote and switched it on.

Siza: "Now that is a beautiful man." She blushed.

Petu: "Who?"

Siza: "The heir. Ever since he started talking to the public, he's just got this different sexy aura. He commands respect just by his appearance and the way he carries himself. His voice, I'd gladly go to hell for him." She sighed.

Petu: "Hmm." I couldn't tell her anything about the Prince's relationship status. It would be illegal until he himself or the throne announces it. Probably nearing the wedding or the actual wedding day. My friend would be so happy to be his wife, I can only imagine how she'll be on that day. She was so in love with him.

Siza: "You see it too, huh?" She giggled.

Petu: "See what?"

Siza: "The way you're smiling silly!"

Petu: "Oh." I chuckled nervously. "Yeah, sure." I in fact did not see it. Whenever I looked at His Highness, I couldn't help but shiver in fear. That man was way too important to lust over. I hated it because it felt like I was comparing him to God. I can't think of him like that, or any other way. It was purely sinful and disgusting. No thank you. I listened carefully to his speech.

Siza: "Look at those eyes."

Petu: "Sizani, this is important, I'm trying to focus." I snapped. This was incredibly uncomfortable. She giggled.

Siza: "No but you already got your royal session, why can't I day dream about mine?"

Petu: "Please try and do it when you're alone with your vibrator then." She kept giggling.

Siza: "Oh I do-"

Petu: "OH MY GOD. STOP TALKING." She couldn't stop laughing. What is wrong with her?

Siza: "You're literally red in the face. Why are you so embarrassed? He's a man, he's -"

Petu: "Don't say it!"

Siza: "Built like a god." I wanted to fucking scream but I stared at her coldly I. She fell back on the bed, laughing.

Petu: "Sizani."

Siza: "Okay sorry ke. Let's listen to the sexy godman." I rolled my eyes and looked back on tv. His lord, called him aside and whispered in his ear. He responded to him and stood back straight, staring directly into the camera. I felt a chill in my spine.

Prince: "Again, my dear citizens, the throne thanks you for your unwavering support, your outstanding patience and your compliance to the law. I would like to remind you, conspiring against the throne is punishable by death. I do not wish to lose any of you, I do not wish to keep you locked in your homes but my current priority, is your safety. My council and I, will keep you up to date with any developments. May you all stay blessed." He stepped away.

Siza: "Wide open, flat on my back, toes above my head." I stared at her.

Petu: "That is a very important man Sizani."

Siza: "And I just want to please him." She giggled. The broadcast changed the scene to the new res. My heart stopped.

Petu: "Sizani!! Look!! I think dad is there!!" The crowd of people were protesting, singing loudly with placards written their demands. I couldn't see everyone but I was looking for my father. My hands were shaking, my heart in my throat. The army marched, aiming at the sky, their guns were set and shots went off. I flinched.

Siza: "What the hell is happening!!! What do you mean you think dad is there!?" I couldn't stop staring at the TV but I didn't want to see it. The second round went off. My tears rolled down my face. I knew there won't be any more warnings when the guns faced the people. "No, no, no." The third was possibly in slow motion. The remote slipped from my hand, as I started wailing. The last shots went off as the screen went black.

## SASA POV\_

After the address, the broadcast turned to the protesters. I switched the TV off. I couldn't watch it.

Mama: "Haibo Thembisa."

Me: "I don't want to see it mama. I don't think it's okay for us to see that."

Xolani: "I think so too. Perhaps we should find something to do."

Me: "I need to meditate and take a nap after."

Ama: "There's meditation huts, on the east of the garden."

Me: "That would be perfect. I just need candles."

Ama: "And a few other herbs. Come, we'll take a slow walk."

Nele: "I want to sit by the pool."

Mama: "I'm going to the spa, I need a massage."

Xolani: "You just woke up Ntombenhle."

Mama: "Yes it's been a stressful day already. Come with me Xolani. Let's try to enjoy. Come Zanele. When you go back to the village, you must be able to relax with these memories."

Xolani: "Thembisa.."

Me: "She's right tata. I know you're worried about me but I'm okay now. There's security all over. Go and enjoy yourselves, I'll see you in an hour or two."

Xolani: "Okay. Be safe." I walked out with Amahle, turning towards the huts. I didn't even know they were for meditation, I thought they were fancy looking toilet houses and didn't even bother to ask.

Ama: "I brought some candles and some water." She gave me one white candle and a bottle of water.

Me: "Thank you babe." We stepped on the stones that led to the hut path.

Ama: "Here, is a tree that has leaves that help with purifying the air."

Me: "Good for the chest?" She smiled.

Ama: "No, good to get your message clearer." She pulled a branch out. "This will be enough." We kept walking, the path on both sides was filled with flowers and trees.

Me: "Are there snakes here?"

Ama: "No the snakes are in the mountain." We reached huts. It was two of them. "Here you go." She gave me a box of matches. I took off my shoes and entered the hut. There were two big cushions on the mat on the floor and a small enamel bowl. On the wall, a light blanket hung on a rail. I sat on the floor, covering my shoulders with it. I lit the candle first.

Me: "I'm starting a journey to light up our space and provide sight." The candle flame shon bright. I then picked the leaves from the branch, placing them in the bowl then set it alight. The flame died down but still burnt through the leaves. I closed my eyes. "This herb is to purify the air, welcoming only the good sources of energy, sources of light and righteousness. I am only opening this space for good, for well intending and for protectors. May the herb burn, seeping out the bad energy and Ill hearted. May no negative thoughts linger or intrude my meditative state." I felt my body calm. The pain from my wound subsided instantly. I felt better, fresher. All of my senses tapping one at a time. This was amazing. I opened my eyes and choked. My heart racing. I stared at her sitting opposite me on the other pillow. She stared right back with the most beautiful youthful round face, dark brown eyes that you could swim in forever and a pleased smile on her face.

Me: "Mam Nonkosi." I breathed...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 66

SASA POV\_

I was still in shock and she kept quiet, letting me settle. After I calmed down, I tried again.

Me: "Good Day my Queen." She smiled again.

Nonkosi: "You addressed me correctly the first time. Have a sip of water my child, lest you faint from the shock and dehydration." I chuckled, drinking half the bottle of water.

Me: "I'm sorry. I was not expecting to see you. Am I seeing you?"

Nonkosi: "Indeed you are."

Me: "I have, experienced a portion of your life and honestly sometimes I felt like I was intruding. I am sorry."

Nonkosi: "It is no worry, you were not intruding, you were invited Thembisa. Only the chosen ones are."

Me: "But I don't understand. I keep dreaming and now seeing you but I am not a Sikhosana. Why is it happening to me?"

Nonkosi: "It would be easier if it was you. The Sikhosana lineage wasn't raised with kindness and patience. This journey needs someone who is as respectful, strong, dedicated and empathetic."

Me: "I think I'm very delicate. A lot of things overwhelm me. For example the pregnancy. It hurt my heart physically to touch my belly and find it flat when I woke up from the dreams. A part of me feels like it was snatched away. It hurt so much. Now with the lost princes Ezizathu, I'm so worried for them. I know they've been there since before I was even born but now I'm just worried and scared. How then am I strong mama, if the past hurts me as if it's happening to me?"

Nonkosi: "You're still marching forward, you haven't backed down. That means you're strong. You're just as eager to finish this journey, not to get it over with but to repair a broken lineage. One that is so powerful and extremely important to you." I sighed. She was right. I was not about to back out especially since I spoke to the king. I don't know his thoughts, I don't know if he believed me but I was glad that he at least listened until I finished talking.

Nonkosi: "How is he?" Oh right. Her baby. I smiled.

Me: "He's Well, physically that is. I don't know about anything else but he did try to kill me." I shrugged. She looked to the floor, sadly. "He has a part of you that he needs to unlock. Before that, he has to shed the layers of thick skin his father taught him. King Ngidumise was a very sad man after your death mama. I don't want to say he didn't try being a

proper father to him because I wasn't there. What he did though, is rectify his mistake at Nkosi's birth. Which was good, because now we're here, making amends. Also, if it's of any comfort, King Sizwe is a supportive father to Nkosi. He may have raised him like he was raised but he supports him, he tells him he is proud of him constantly, I think he really likes his son and he may be his only friend. So it's not so bad." She smiled.

Nonkosi: "Thank you."

Me: "You're very welcome. Mama, what is the next step from here."

Nonkosi: "Since you are of my blood, your ancestors and mine reside in the same spiritual realm. Since my death was at the hand of a Sikhosana, they took me to my home realm. The Gods decided to grant them one last chance for reparations. Should this chance be wasted, the lineage will stop with the last born son and thus cease to exist."

Me: "That means if I'd died from the shooting, Nkosinhle would never have sons? His entire family name would end with him?"

Nonkosi: "Yes. Fortunately for you, the Sikhosana ancestors were pleading for this chance and thought to do everything in their power to keep you alive. That's why they created Mehl'amahle. Her sole purpose is to keep you alive."

Me: "That's upsetting. What about her own life? Her dreams and aspirations?"

Nonkosi: "She still has a life and she has come to terms with enjoying it because of you. The ancestors also thought to trouble Ngidumise before he died. He has always been stubborn but eventually he gave in and went up this mountain. That is where they revealed to him that he needs to make sure the future heir that is to be born, is good. He needed to remind him to be good. With that, Ngidumise thought to whisper to the baby until his time came and he died."

Me: "If he whispered to the prince to remind him of his destiny, doesn't that gain him entry? Shouldn't he be with his ancestors?"

Nonkosi: "No. He did a lot of bad things but the worst of all was killing his father and his children. You cannot fix those issues in the roaming realms. There's no way to. That is where you and Nkosi come in. Those children need help. Our village needs to be rebuilt."

Me: "What about King Bhekizizwe? The King that had you killed? His father before him as well. How do their issues get fixed?"

Nonkosi: "Easy my young queen. One step at a time. For now, we need to find the spirits of the lost princes. Once they have crossed over, we can go to the next task."

Me: "How do I find their spirits?"

Nonkosi: "You will need Mehl'amahle with you. The spirits are most likely in the villages they were killed and buried in."

Me: "Okay."

Nonkosi: "This journey is sacred to you and Mehl'amahle. And of course Nkosi because you cannot lie to your king."

Me: "Yes ma." I blushed.

Nonkosi: "He will treat you well. His love is infinite, unconditional, blinding and extremely protective. But when you carry his prince, it will be overwhelming. Their blood is very strong." I giggled.

Me: "The prince will have to give us a few years mama." She smiled, chuckling.

Nonkosi: "Blessed journey, my child."

Me: "Thank you mama." I looked at my hands on my lap, still smiling.

PETU POV\_

I've tried calling my father frantically but his phone was disconnected. It has been hours since the shooting. I couldn't watch any more news but I needed to find out what had happened to my father. In the kitchen Siza was cooking dinner. The baby was down for a nap. Her two kids, Miles who was 3 and Mia who was 5 were finally awake. Since Jackson was a Mexican mixed with Caucasian man, their kids were mixed and so had these names. The only thing I loved was that they all looked exactly like Siza and I. She had a slender, tall body. We both had our mothers face, I also took her body whereas Siza took daddy's. Her kids were exactly like us. Mia looked like me, as if she was my child or a younger me. Miles looked like Siza, his three year old body looked slightly taller than

that of his peers, he was a slim baby unlike the chubby Mimi. He had a face exactly like Siza too. Their hair was the only trait they didn't get from us. The 6 month old was named Maya. She looked so cute and she was a quiet baby that never fussed.

Petu: "So, is it a boy or girl?"

Siza: "Doesn't matter."

Petu: "Oh. Have you told him?"

Siza: "Nope."

Petu: "How far now?"

Siza: "9 weeks. I hope the lock down is done soon, I would hate to miss the 12 week mark."

Petu: "For what? A check up? Surely you can go now, it was said only necessary travel in the city is permitted. You'll be going to a hospital and back home."

Siza: "Not exactly a check up."

Petu: "I'm confused."

Siza: "I'm not keeping it." She whispered so low I barely heard.

Petu: "Siza!" I whispered back.

Siza: "I can't Petu. I have way too much on my plate and it won't help my situation."

Petu: "Won't this affect you? Seeing that there's 3 of them running around already?"

Siza: "I still have my therapy sessions, so I'll work through it there." She seemed so detached from the situation so I didn't know what to say.

Petu: "Okay. Will you need me to come with you? For support?"

Siza: "That's sweet baby sis, but I was hoping you'd look after the babies instead? It'll only be one day."

Petu: "What will you tell..."

Siza: "He won't notice. Just say I'm sleeping if he asks." I nodded.

Petu: "When will you go?"

Siza: "I'll book an appointment today. Hopefully I can get one sometime next week."

Petu: "Mountain Peak General is closed though."

Siza: "I wouldn't go there. That hospital will probably charge me 10 grand. The fertility clinic on Baker road is good and provides safe and affordable removals. Yes, I checked and did my research. It's registered on the health department and rated third in our kingdom. So they're good."

Petu: "For curiosity reasons, how much is affordable exactly?"

Siza: "R4700. Inclusive of pre and post care, medication, counseling session and a ride home."

Petu: "Oh that's a good price."

Siza: "It is. Guess who owns it?"

Petu: "I'm going to watch TV." She laughed. Sizani has always found pleasure in making me squirm and feel icky. It really gets her going. She has never been mean to me but her teasing irritates me sometimes. Today I'm only letting it slide because we're in a mess. I tried my father's phone again. Still voicemail. I was really trying not to read social media because the last thing I need was to hear on there that your family has passed away. People can be insensitive like that. I would probably get a call, from who? I don't know but it was cutting me deeply. I had to have hope. Somehow maybe he got away? Would Mngqobi even tell me? Why would he though? My phone rang, surprising me and also scaring me. The caller was Amahle.

Petu: "Hey babe."

Ama: "Hello."

Petu: "How are you? You hardly call."

Ama: "I'm fine. How are you?"

Petu: "I'm okay."

Ama: "Your father is alive." Wait, what?

Petu: "How...how do you know that Amy?"

Ama: "I just do. Did you play the Powerball numbers I sent you?"

Petu: "No I didn't Amy. I was honestly too distracted this week."

Ama: "No worries. Did you save the money from the previous ones?"

Petu: "Yes I did."

Ama: "Invest it in Bi-motive."

Petu: "No ways. Not that man's company." She chuckled turning into full laugh. "You clearly hate me Amahle. You know Mnqobi is being groomed to take over that company in a few years, it's basically his. Absolutely no."

Ama: "You're funny. That's not how investment works Petu. It's not for feelings. The reason I chose Bi-motive is because it's value will triple and stay very lucrative. I'm sending you the number of a broker that will help explain it all, you need to do it as in right now. Invest today." Thembisa did say I should listen to Amahle. I trusted my friends with my life.

Petu: "Okay."

Ama: "You can't tell anyone about this Petunia. Not even your sister."

Petu: "Okay. I won't. Thank you Amy."

Ama: "You're welcome. Bye." She hung up. I was nervous but also relieved. Amahle wasn't someone who lied or spoke on things she wasn't sure of so if she says my father is alive then I believe her. No questions asked. I was however skeptical about investing in this company but again, I'll take her word for it. The message came in with a number. I saved it and immediately sent a message.

SIBONELO'S POV\_

The media was in a frenzy. It was hours and hours of back and forth on the new res shooting.

Sibo: "I think we should prepare a statement."

Khaya: "It's still a little raw, Sbo."

Sibo: "We'll release it tomorrow or Sunday but it needs to be prepared and thoroughly combed through. Right now, the entire country is screaming in panic."

Khaya: "Okay. Mngqobi, can you call your publicist friend?"

Mngqobi: "Did all those people have to die?" He cannot possibly do this right now. "Those are people's father's, mother's, uncles and aunts. They are sons and daughters-"

Sibo: "Mngqobi." I warned.

Nkosi: "Let him speak." Oh hell.

Mngqobi: "I just feel that was callous."

Sibo: "Mngqobi we zitha zakwa Biyela!!" I jumped up, standing before him. Zwe stood in between us, holding me back.

Zwe: "Calm down." HOW? How can Mngqobi talk so loosely at Mehluli, KNOWING what he can do? Why must I let that happen? How will I explain to our parents that our younger brother was tossed to his death by an angry king that he in actual fact offended?

Sibo: "Mngqobi cannot speak like that to a King, Zwelethu. You baby him and he needs to know that's not okay. His mouth is loose."

Zwe: "I baby him? Me?? He's like this because of you! Calm the hell down!" I stepped back.

Nkosi: "I'm not offended, by the way. For the sake of entertainment though, what would you rather I did Mngqobi?" My heart has never felt this much fear. The only reason I was still standing was to jump in front of whatever impact comes next. Mehluli's calmness is just as dangerous as his anger. This is the man that stared at a sky flood made by his father and nonchalantly continued with a meeting with zero emotion.

Mngqobi: "The people could've been heard. Maybe a sit down like you did in the villages, where they explained their grievances and you solved them."

Nkosi: "Khaya, do you share the same sentiments." There's a reason we call them twins. One makes a stupid decision and the other supports them.

Khaya: "Yes, Your Highness." Fucks sake.

Nkosi: "That's unfortunate but, there's a reason I'm the King and you're not. The people didn't have grievances that could be solved. Reading the placards, they wanted a democracy because they believe they can elect someone better than me to lead them, to lead this country. Someone who can lie to them and enrich themselves leaving them to starve in the end. Do you know of a better candidate Mngqobi? Perhaps someone who would make a great... President?"

Mngqobi: "No Your Highness."

Nkosi: "That, sounds sad. If the people wanted to communicate with me, they would've staged a peaceful plea and I would oblige. But the people didn't want peace even after I warned them twice. Now, does that still make me callous, to you?"

Mngqobi: "Yes, Your Highness." Deep down, I was proud of him for standing his ground. Not many people would. Zwe was right. I turned him into a mini me. Nkosi smiled.

Nkosi: "You are right about that. If I have to kill people to continue the vision I have for this country then let it be so. If that's what makes me heartless then I'll gladly accept that. We have a long relationship ahead of us Mngqobi. Let's not get lost in the politics of always giving in. We lose respect that way. You're on the right path standing your ground because that's exactly what I did. You and I are the same. Now, can we continue with work?"

Mngqobi: "Yes My Prince."

Nkosi: "Good. Sibonelo. Should we start with the statement soon? I'm looking forward to finish this meeting so I can enjoy the rest of my weekend."

Zwe: "Enjoy?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Enjoy. I have a wife and her family up in my mountain villa."

Zwe: "Nkosi, we're in the middle of a crisis."

Nkosi: "I've done my bit Zwe. Anything else will be taken care of Monday."

Zwe: "Mthunzi?"

Mthunzi: "He takes weekends off. There's nothing I can do."

Sibo: "Well, there's not much to do. Apart from the statement, the repairing of the city's infrastructure, and updates on the other royals, we can handle things. We'll correspond at the end of each day or at first sign of emergency."

Mthunzi: "Please also share your recordings with me. I want to analyse them in my spare time."

Sibo: "Sure." I sent them all to his email. "Done."

Nkosi: "Let's draft the statement." ..

The statement took about 3 hours to just draft. Khaya will be putting it all together with the publicist and sending the first layout by end of business today.

Zwe: "That should be all for today gentlemen."

Nkosi: "Thank you. Mthunzi, please call my helicopter."

Zwe: "Nope. We're driving you home. I want to see your wife."

Nkosi: "Why?"

Zwe: "I'm her doctor, remember?"

Nkosi: "I meant why must we drive? We'll be there faster if we use the helicopter."

Zwe: "And how will I go home?"

Nkosi: "You also have a helipad Zwe."

Zwe: "Not in my house, I don't."

Nkosi: "Your palace has a helipad."

Zwe: "We're wasting time. Helicopters are noisy. Let's drive."

Sibo: "Uhm... I have something to attend to. Zwe, do you want to take Khaya with you?" He looked at me. I know he wanted to know and knowing him, he'll try to snoop so I had to remove Mnqobi from his grasp since he's the only one who can digitally find me. I regret teaching him that everytime.

Zwe: "Something like what."

Sibo: "I just want to check on the club then pay my staff, since they haven't worked for the whole week."

Nkosi: "You're lying." Are you serious?! I stared at him.

Zwe: "Where are you going Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "I'm going to my house."

Zwe: "Why?"

Sibo: "Haibo Zwe? Why can't I have privacy?"

Zwe: "Whenever you ask for privacy, you're doing something wrong. I know you."

Sibo: "Me? Cha, uyangisola manje. I'll see you at home. I just need some time to reboot." I walked out the office quickly. Mehluli can smell lies?? Was he in my head just now? This needs to be added on the agenda at our next meeting because it would be very uncomfortable working with someone who's going through your thoughts. I drove to my favourite takeaway spot. It was a home closer to the beachline where my club was. The lady that lived there, cooks for my club. I placed my order an hour ago so I know it's ready. I parked outside the house, Zoe came out with the paper bag.

Zoe: "My Prince." She placed the bag in my passenger seat.

Sibo: "Hi Zo. Thank you. I've sent your payment and for the month as well."

Zoe: "Thank you sir."

Sibo: "Sure." I drove off, toward my house. I probably had an hour before Zwe came looking for me. He is that obsessed especially now that he closed the hospital. I hope Mehluli can keep him up in the mountain for a bit so I can have breathing space. It's not like I'm doing anything wrong. I parked the car and walked in the house with the bag setting it on the table. I opened my laptop, sitting on the couch and clicking the security system on and checking the camera in the basement. He looked distraught. The broadcast of the protest shooting was switched off everywhere except that basement. I finally switched the TV off from my computer. Surely by now, the message is received. I took the paper bag of food walking to the vault door, opening it and walking down the stairs.

Sibo: "Good Afternoon, Mr President." I sat on the stairs on the other side of the locked gate.

Bheko: "How could you do this?!"

Sibo: "Me? No, you did this. Had you minded your business and not filled hundreds of people with these silly thoughts of a democracy, you'd probably be in your house right now enjoying the generous salary you earn from my family. But not you, Bhekokwakhe. You're an opportunist. You are greedy. You use people for your benefit so they can put you in a position to enrich your own self. Not gonna lie though, that's the basis of a politician so you would have fitted perfectly." I put the paper bag in between the bars, dropping it on the next step. "That's some food. I'm sure you must be starving. Besides, we all make better decisions when we're full. The cabinet behind you has supplies. Toilet paper, salt packets, plastic cutlery. Don't worry, it's not sharp. I can imagine how senile you must be feeling after watching your friends die for four hours straight." I stood up. "Have yourself a blessed day, Mr President. They say all the good ones need a little prison time to shape them properly... If they survive." I walked back up and locked the deadbolt on the door...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 67

KHAYA'S POV

Instead of going up to the villa with Zwe, he told Mngobi and I to go home. Mngobi wanted to start at my apartment first. I didn't mind because I needed more clothes. The guard drove us to my building.

Khaya: "You okay?"

Mngobi: "Not really, no."

Khaya: "Is it about what the Prince did and said?"

Mnqobi: "Yes. Khaya, Petu's father was in that crowd. She doesn't have any other parent in the world. I fucked up on my side but this? I don't know, this not repairable."

Khaya: "I'm sorry."

Mnqobi: "She's not going to forgive me. I already had a slim chance with the Nothando issue but now, I don't have a chance at all."

Khaya: "How's Nothando?"

Mnqobi: "Not talking to me. Like at all. You heard how she iced me out at dinner."

Khaya: "Do you care?"

Mnqobi: "Of course I care. I love her. Mom told me to give her some time. In the meanwhile, I'm groveling. Nothando is not the type to be impressed by jewelry."

Khaya: "No woman should be."

Mnqobi: "No, they should be impressed by whatever they want. If jewelry, flowers, chocolate or just sweet words makes them feel better then that's okay. As a man, it is my job to find out what would appease my woman when I have fucked up. My apology needs to be sincere but also accompanied by something. This is the fourth rule in prince camp."

Khaya: "Wow. That's what they teach in prince camp?"

Mnqobi: "alongside many other things. It's a great time. Hey, you know we should do it this year for our Yearly boys holiday? I mean we are old for the actual camp but maybe we can do our own version to brush up on what we learnt."

Khaya: "We are still at war Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "Fuck. Anyway, how are you doing? How you feeling about working for the guy who took your girl?"

Khaya: "He didn't take my girl. He approached a single woman that I fumbled. I regret it but I'm glad it's him. He seems to really love her."

Mnqobi: "I know, I'm just teasing you. So are you thinking of dating soon?"

Khaya: "Definitely not. I don't think I'm in the right space for a relationship or a fling. I'm starting my therapy on Monday."

Mnqobi: "That's great. Do you want me to come with you for support?"

Khaya: "It'll be virtual, so I'll just be in the bedroom."

Mnqobi: "Okay." The driver parked in the underground parking, we got out and took the lift up to my apartment. I walked in first. Zimmy was sitting in the dining table with her books, studying.

Khaya: "Hey love." I hugged her.

Zimmy: "Hey guys."

Mnqobi: "Hi Zim." He walked to the bedroom.

Khaya: "What are you up to?"

Zimmy: "Doing my assignments. I was so behind with school work. I'm almost catching up now. Did you get the emails from school? Apparently we need to choose which learning we want to do starting from this week. I chose virtual. I've been doing better, just being indoors and alone. What did you take?"

Khaya: "Virtual as well. I work for the future king now so I don't have the time to get to school everyday."

Zimmy: "Hmm. Fancy. How's that going?"

Khaya: "Fantastic. I'm actually enjoying it. He's not so bad."

Zimmy: "Really? He looks scary."

Khaya: "Oh he definitely is." It wasn't my place to tell her he is dating her friend. Only Thembisa could tell her that. Mnqobi came back to us.

Mnqobi: "Where's Petu?"

Zimmy: "I don't know. Did she say she's coming here?"

Mnqobi: "No. Sibonelo was supposed to drop her here." He dialed his number. "Sbo."

Sibo: "Young prince."

Mnqobi: "Where is Petunia?"

Sibo: "Leave her be."

Mnqobi: "No, Sbo. You said you're bringing her to Khaya's apartment. She's not here!"

Sibo: "So?"

Mnqobi: "Are you being serious right now?"

Sibo: "Mnqobi, Petu doesn't want to see you. She specifically asked not to come there and with good reason because there you are not giving her a minute to breath."

Mnqobi: "Oh my God, did you take her to your house?! Why would you do that?"

Sibo: "No I didn't. When you're done throwing a tantrum, come home."

Mnqobi: "Not until I find her."

Sibo: "If you come anywhere near my house, I'm sending a flying squad to teach you a lesson. Mnqobi, if Petu wanted to speak to you, she would. Give her space. Leave her be. She's home with her family." He hung up.

Khaya: "He's right, Mnqobi. Leave her be."

Mnqobi: "Fine. I hear you." He sat down sadly, playing with his phone. He'll be fine. I was in the place he's in, just a few weeks ago.

Khaya: "So you're fine here by yourself?"

Zimmy: "Absolutely. I'll probably go back to res after the whole drama outside goes down. I did have an idea though. I don't know if it'll work."

Khaya: "What is it?" I sat down at the table with her.

Zimmy: "So, since there's a lockdown, we can't really go outside unless necessary right? Now with the explosions and stuff, most people want to stay in doors. The throne is providing food parcels and such but this area doesn't qualify for them. I'm ordering food from the kitchen here in the building. That is bound to run your bill sky rocketing high."

Khaya: "That isn't a problem for me. Don't worry about it, order anything you need or want."

Zimmy: "There are stuff they don't have, Khaya. Like tampons and snacks and toiletries."

Khaya: "Oh damn. You need them now?"

Zimmy: "No, but soon. So my idea was, I want there to be a way to connect consumer to store, without consumer leaving the house."

Mnqobi: "Like a delivery service but for grocery?"

Zimmy: "Exactly that."

Khaya: "That's a good idea. Especially now, we're not sure of how long the lock down will last. We need to kick-start this immediately."

Mnqobi: "I love new projects. I have 10 scooters that were initially used for delivery by my family. Since all production is down, they're available. I can ask Sibonelo to create an app, we launch it by Monday and offer 10 people vouchers to start. We use those 10 to market and attract the rest of the citizens with a discount code. I'm going to make a phone call to the CEO of Fresh Foods market since they own the biggest supermarkets in the city. We'll add more as time goes."

Zimmy: "Are you serious!?"

Mnqobi: "I'm always serious about business. We can start planning, it's not like I have anything better to do." He sulked.

Khaya: "You are such a baby. Zimmy, put away the school work. This is your project, we're only here to assist. Let's start." ....

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

For once, I'd gotten a bit of time alone. I was in my parents house, watching TV. My mother walked in.

Queen: "Buns, where are your brothers?"

Sibo: "Zwe is with Prince Sikhosana. Mnqobi and Khaya are at the apartment."

Queen: "What on earth are they doing at the apartment?"

Sibo: "Boy stuff ma."

Queen: "Khaya isn't allowed to drink Sibonelo!"

Sibo: "He's not drinking. They're responsible."

Queen: "Okay, but they must come home." She sat down. "What are you up to?"

Sibo: "Watching TV mama." I know my time alone has come to an end. She wants something.

Queen: "Oh that's nice." I looked at her. "Can we have tea?"

Sibo: "Sure. I'll make it." I got up, going to the kitchen. My mother and I had our dates together regularly without anyone else. She was my best friend apart from my brothers. The only woman who can listen to me and properly advise. I made the tea, putting her favourite biscuits on the side and took the tray to the garden where she waited on the garden table I bought her.

Queen: "I raised you so well. Your wife will be a lucky woman."

Sibo: "I'm never drinking tea with any woman but you mama. They'll have to find another beverage to force on me." I smiled, sitting down. She giggled, her cheeks flushing red.

Queen: "You're sweet. So tell me why you're not dating."

Sibo: "I haven't found someone I like mama." I added one teaspoon of sugar in mine and two in hers.

Queen: "Are you even looking?"

Sibo: "Nope. I'm kind of working in the middle of a war."

Queen: "I want grandchildren Sibonelo." She sipped her tea.

Sibo: "There's five children in this house mama and you want me to bring the grandchild?"

Queen: "You know Zwe is busy with that hospital and Mngqobi and Khaya are young and foolish. You're the only one I have faith in."

Sibo: "I don't know ma. Children aren't in my two year plan." I sipped my tea.

Queen: "What is?"

Sibo: "I didn't expect to be working with Prince Sikhosana but now that I am, I'm sure it may be a permanent position. It's been going well so far."

Queen: "This is so good. I'm glad that man is including you all. His father isn't much of a...welcoming person."

Sibo: "I thought so too. For a long time, I judged the prince that way but this past week has been a different experience. He's not so bad."

Queen: "That's good. What do you think about this Nothando and Mngqobi? Do you think he still loves her?"

Sibo: "He does, mama. If he didn't, he would've let me know."

Queen: "What if he's scared to?"

Sibo: "Scared? The same Mngqobi who was screaming at me just a few minutes ago?" I laughed.

Queen: "For what now?"

Sibo: "He thought I hid his girlfriend. It's a long story mama."

Queen: "Girlfriend? The girl that was here? Kanti uMngqobi ufuna ngife?"

Sibo: "She broke up with him and won't speak to him. You see this tea of yours is turning me into a gossip?" She giggled.

Queen: "Tell me man Sibonelo. Mngqobi is really serious about that girl?"

Sibo: "He said he loves her mama. I believe him. I'm just waiting on him to admit he wants two wives." She gasped.

Queen: "Sibonelo, why do you kids hate me? Where have you seen that happening? Your father has only been with me."

Sibo: "I know that ma. Just that as people we're different. For example, Zinhle doesn't even like men." She screamed. "Mama."

Queen: "Sibonelo, what are you saying?"

Sibo: "I'm saying we need to be open. The objective is happiness. You taught us that as a family, one person's happiness is as important as the other person. We should all work together to achieve it. Once Mngqobi accepts what he wants, he will tell us, we'll find a way to support him."

Queen: "Sibonelo, his marriage to Nothando is a business arrangement, he can't be breaking her heart like this."

Sibo: "Nothando knew mama. She knew about Petu since they started dating and she didn't mind it. Now I'm not one to talk about other people's comfort but it seems to me that she is okay with it."

Queen: "We have to discuss this first with her."

Sibo: "Yes, but only once Mngqobi makes up his mind."

Queen: "Sibonelo how can Zinhle like other girls?"

Sibo: "How am I supposed to know mama? Even so, we have enough alliance, power and money. She can be with whoever she wants."

Queen: "I'm just worried Sibonelo but you're right. We have enough even without alliance." She shook her head and sipped her tea. "What about Zwe?"

Sibo: "He's not seeing anyone at the moment."

Queen: "Well? What happened to his girlfriend?"

Sibo: "She was pushy so I got rid of her." She smacked my arm. "Ouch."

Queen: "Does he know?"

Sibo: "He's the one that asked me to mama. Did you really think I'd do that without his permission?"

Queen: "Sorry my angel. How did you get rid of her?" I sipped my tea.

Sibo: "She's alive and unharmed, before I get smacked again." She smiled.

Queen: "I still want to see your woman."

Sibo: "When I find her, you'll meet her ma. I promise." I placed my empty cup down. "Where's Sienna?"

Queen: "I asked her to go on maternity leave since this lockdown business."

Sibo: "I should've married her when I still had the chance."

Queen: "Yes, you were as foolish as Mngqobi now she got herself a good man and she's expecting her first blessing that should've been ours but nooo, Sibonelo wants to be a play boy." I rolled my eyes. She smacked me again and I laughed. Sienna started working for us three years ago. I did like her but as my mother says, I was foolish but mostly busy. She finally stopped being patient and found herself a better man. He married her almost immediately and now they're having a baby. I was quite happy for her because she was really happy. Sienna was one of those women who didn't care about things like money and status. Her true joy is making others happy. She is kind and loving. Her husband is just as kind as she is and loves her dearly. My father walked towards us.

King: "When will you stop stealing people's wives Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "When you stop leaving them by themselves."

King: "Hehe. Dinner is ready."

Queen: "Sibonelo please call your brothers to come eat."

Sibo: "Zwe is on his way surely."

King: "He just parked. Where is Mngobi and Khaya?"

Sibo: "At the apartment."

King: "It's time to come home now, go fetch them please." I sent a message on my phone.

Sibo: "They'll find their way. I'm starving. Mama, should I bring our food or do you want to eat inside?"

King: "I wonder where I went wrong with you."

Sibo: "You asked the gods for someone you truly love and they gave you me." He laughed. Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "My people. Dinner under the stars tonight?"

King: "Might as well."

Sibo: "Where have you been?"

Zwe: "In the mountain with Nkosi and his in laws."

Queen: "He found a maiden!? We're having a wedding!!!" She squealed.

Sibo: "Mama, woah there. Please contain that much excitement for me and only me. Maybe a bit for Zwe but mostly me. Haibo, wajabula kanje?"

King: "Yuh, we'll wait until we turn to dust before you get married. This is great news. Is it a royal from another nation?"

Zwe: "I can't reveal that information Tata."

Sibo: "Hawu Zwe. This is family. Besides, we don't talk to other royals anymore."

Zwe: "Nkosi's bride isn't royal. She's a sweet girl from eMthinomkhulu. He's in love and that's the only thing important."

Sibo: "Very in love. I never would have pictured him in that way. The only time I've seen feeling from him is when she is mentioned or around. It's sweet shame."

Queen: "Too sweet. I'm so happy. Sibonelo why didn't you say anything?"

Zwe: "He wouldn't because he wanted to take her from Nkosi."

King: "What!!"

Sibo: "Why are you being messy?" I asked Zwe.

Queen: "Sibonelo!!"

Sibo: "It was when I wanted to distract him, when I was going after the throne. I knew he liked her and if I could show his weakness, his reign would be questioned. I'm no longer there mentally."

Queen: "That is a very mean thing to do Sibonelo!"

King: "Very very mean and immature."

Sibo: "I know, I'm sorry. I know I was wrong and I hate that I might have even scared her but I wouldn't do that again."

Zwe: "Might have? You did scare her. You definitely won't do it again because you know him now." Oh trust me, I do. I'm not even thinking about attempting it.

Queen: "Did you apologize Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "Ma."

Queen: "I'm not talking to you until you do." She got up and walked to the house.

Sibo: "Really Zwelethu? I couldn't just have one night alone with my mother?"

Zwe: "You have every night with her. It's my turn." He laughed walking to the kitchen. I hated this. It was malicious of him to bring this shit up in front of our parents.

King: "You don't want to spend time with me instead?"

Sibo: "It won't be more than 10 minutes before you start judging the things I tell you."

King: "Fine then, sit there and sulk." He walked into the house. I can't believe they walked up here to ruin my tea time with my mother just because she's paying attention to me. I took out my phone, checking the security footage in my house. Bhekokwakhe was trying to break the burglar gate in the basement. I laughed out loud. I so wish it really does break because I want to see what he will do at a vault door. I switched

on the TV again and saw him jump to look at it. I selected the video. It was the broadcast of the protest shooting. He shut his eyes and ears. I increased the volume. Zwe was approaching me again. I pressed the button to switch the TV and the lights off. The basement went completely dark. I exited the security system.

Zwe: "Why are you sitting by yourself in the dark?"

Sibo: "After you got my mother mad at me?"

Zwe: "I was joking with you, Hawu Sibonelo. Now you're upset?"

Sibo: "I never get between you and dad's private time together."

Zwe: "I'm sorry, brother." He sat down.

Sibo: "How was the mountain?"

Zwe: "Fantastic. That place looks heavenly."

Sibo: "It really does. But the road up isn't too good for his cars hey. We're approaching winter, there'll be a bit of rain."

Zwe: "You want to gift him your Country RX?"

Sibo: "Not mine. Maybe a brand new one. The new stock is supposed to arrive on Monday. I had ordered four more RX with the mud terrains for royal visits about a month or so back. I figured if I'm going to be installing network in villages I'll have to travel there often. So maybe he can get one."

Zwe: "That's super kind of you."

Sibo: "It's just a decent thing to do."

Zwe: "Hmm. So who's in your basement?" Fuck.

Sibo: "How do you know it's not a woman in my house and not the basement? Why did you jump straight to basement?"

Zwe: "Because if there was a woman in your house, you wouldn't be here, sitting under the stars playing with your phone. So it's obviously someone in your basement. Who?"

Sibo: "Petu's father."

Zwe: "Why are you keeping him hostage?"

Sibo: "Hoping he can realise his mistake and say he's sorry. I'm driving him to a close point of insanity so that he can sign the agreement that he will never again conspire against the throne."

Zwe: "If he doesn't?"

Sibo: "Then we'll never hear from him again." ...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 68

MTHUNZI'S POV\_

I woke up Saturday morning. The bed was empty. I got out of bed, walking to the lounge. My wife was ironing my shirts.

Mthunzi: "Hey." I kissed her cheek, hugging her body from behind.

Busi: "Hi love. I was fast asleep when you got home. What time did you arrive?"

Mthunzi: "At about 10pm."

Busi: "Hm. How is Nkosi?"

Mthunzi: "Your favourite person is doing great. He has a girlfriend now." She spun around to look at me. I know she'll be mad.

Busi: "Girlfriend? Who is she?"

Mthunzi: "Don't worry. She's good for him. I'll be with her today, we're going to the funeral. The guard that died was hers."

Busi: "Then I'm coming with you because I need to see this girl and make sure she has good intentions." I smiled, kissing her nose.

Mthunzi: "Before we get ready then, can I proposition you?"

Busi: "Now baby?"

Mthunzi: "Yes now, to give me some energy for the day." I kissed her lips, pulling her to the bedroom. She untied her robe, showing a very sexy pair of shorts and bare breasts that turned me on immediately.

Busi: "Please don't rip these off baby, this is the last pair I have." I chuckled, pulling off the shorts gently and kissed her lips. "I missed you." She pulled off my boxers, laying me on the bed. Her lips kissed my tip. Her tongue teased me slowly before she sucked in the tip again. Watching her sucking on me got me hard enough already. She seemed to be enjoying herself, deep throating until my tip touched the back of her throat. I shivered in pleasure, pulling her with her hair to kiss my mouth. I need to be inside her right now. She climbed on top of me, pushing me back on the bed before she fit her little hole on my tip. I surrendered when she entered herself with me.

Mthunzi: "Hmm.." her hands were on my chest as she pushed herself up and down making me weak. I let her ride me, her waist bouncing softly, pushing me in and out of her in a slow rhythm. Her moans filled the room. I stared at her breasts bouncing on her chest and I held tight on her thighs.

Busi: "Mthunzi..." She cried, going faster. Her climax was reaching. I sat up, turning her on the bed, getting on top of her. Her leg hung on my shoulder, and I drilled into her. Her nails dug into my arm and waist. I held her waist to me, going deep inside her feeling her walls constricting and throbbing. She screamed, her body shaking under me. My body joined hers, releasing into her. I bent down to kiss her lips.

Mthunzi: "You woke up the neighbors."

Busi: "They need to understand my husband is home." I chuckled, slowly pulling out of her with difficulty and lay next to her. She cuddled on my chest. "How is work this week? Things seem hectic."

Mthunzi: "They are. We're working with the Biyela's to sort this mess with the others."

Busi: "Can the Biyela's be trusted?"

Mthunzi: "So far, yes but I am keeping an eye on Sibonelo. I don't know why he's keeping a prisoner in his house."

Busi: "I'm not surprised. So what will you do?"

Mthunzi: "I'll ask him first. If he hides it or denies it then I'll tell Nkosi. He fears him." She chuckled.

Busi: "Good." I kissed her forehead.

Mthunzi: "Have you not changed your mind about a baby yet?"

Busi: "Mthunzi, not this again."

Mthunzi: "I'm not being pushy love. I'm only asking. If it's about my work, we can work on that. Especially now that Nkosi has a woman, he doesn't need me as much."

Busi: "It's not about your work. Baby, I just don't want a child. Even if you worked here at home, I still wouldn't. It's not to do with you. I know you'd make a great dad, I just don't want to be a mother. I love my life as is." I was really hoping a few years would change her mind. I want a child. That isn't going to change. I love my wife dearly but she doesn't want one at all. Not even by mistake because she has an implant.

Mthunzi: "Okay."

Busi: "Baby? Please don't be upset."

Mthunzi: "I'm not. You made this decision before we married. I thought I'd probably change your mind but that was a selfish thought. I should respect that you don't want one. I won't bring it up again."

Busi: "Now I feel bad."

Mthunzi: "Please don't, my love. I'm okay."

Busi: "Maybe we can look at other options."

Mthunzi: "I'm not taking another wife. You're enough for me. My job is way too demanding."

Busi: "Not a wife exactly. A mother of your child."

Mthunzi: "Absolutely not."

Busi: "Listen Mthunzi. I don't want to take care of another person but I know how much this means to you. So perhaps you could have a child with someone who wants to be a mother and primary care taker. I remain your wife, she becomes mother of child."

Mthunzi: "What happens when she expects more from me? Also, I don't want to sleep with another woman Busi."

Busi: "We can use medical technology. You'll have a contract with her on what she needs to understand and expect of you."

Mthunzi: "Won't this affect us? I don't want something that will hurt you Busi."

Busi: "You think I'd suggest this if it would hurt me. The woman will only be a mother of your child. Mthunzi, I know how much you love me. I know you've never cheated on me once in all the years we've been married. So I trust that this arrangement will work for us." I looked at her, feeling so much love right at this moment.

Mthunzi: "Only on one condition then."

Busi: "Anything."

Mthunzi: "You choose who can be the mother. You're a great judge of character and you're fair. I trust you."

Busi: "That's sweet." She kissed me. "I just want you happy. We can do this."

Mthunzi: "So what will the baby call you then?" She chuckled.

Busi: "They'll call me Busi." I smiled.

Mthunzi: "You're silly." I kissed her, getting on top of her once more.

I got dressed in my military regalia. Busi wore a gorgeous black dress and a coat on her shoulders. I watched her part her hair in the middle and brush it flat into a low bun. She wore the gold small hoop earrings I got her for our anniversary last year. They were her favourite with the gold necklace I bought her for Christmas.

Busi: "I'm almost done. I know you hate being late so I didn't do a full face of makeup."

Mthunzi: "I haven't said anything. I'm just admiring my beautiful wife." She puffed her perfume on her neck and wrists.

Busi: "Done. Let's go my love. You look so handsome my General." She kissed my lips and took her clutch bag.

Mthunzi: "Thank you. We have to start at the Biyela palace." We walked out the house.

Busi: "Why?" I opened the passenger door for her and she got in. I climbed in the driver, checking my gun. I had tight security around the house but I needed to be sure I had my things close by.

Mthunzi: "Zwe wanted to come with me."

Busi: "Oh? Okay. Let's go baby." I drove out my house to the Biyela's. He did say he'd be at the palace and not his house.

Busi: "The houses here are gorgeous."

Mthunzi: "Very." I entered the estate.

Busi: "And there's still so much land hey? Are they planning on building more?"

Mthunzi: "I don't know my love. I doubt it though. You want a house here?"

Busi: "This place is too expensive baby. The cheapest house is a cool R12 million." I chuckled.

Mthunzi: "We'll use my retirement, baby. It'll be our old age home." She giggled. I parked in front of the Biyela palace. "Coming with?"

Busi: "Only because it's rude to sit in a car in front of a palace."

Mthunzi: "He's probably not even here." I laughed getting out of the car. We walked to the entrance, a guard opened for us. Zwe came down the stairs wearing a suit. Sibonelo came around the corridor holding a bowl, wearing socks on his feet. He looked extremely comfortable for a person with a prisoner in his house.

Sibo: "Hi? What are you doing here?"

Zwe: "We're going to a funeral. Hello, I'm Zwe."

Busi: "Busi." She shook his hand. "Mthunzi's wife."

Sibo: "Wife?"

Mthunzi: "Yep. This is my lady."

Sibo: "Congratulations I guess." Busi already told me when we first met this was her ex. I teased her every time.

Mthunzi: "Isn't your prisoner hungry, seeing that you're having breakfast?" He looked at Zwe.

Sibo: "Really Zwe?"

Zwe: "Who do you think told me?"

Sibo: "Why are you stalking me?" He asked me.

Mthunzi: "I'm making sure you're not doing anything stupid."

Sibo: "We're on the same side Mthunzi. I don't appreciate being kept tabs on."

Mthunzi: "Only being sure that the council members aren't putting themselves in unnecessary danger." Nkosinhle doesn't take kindly to traitors but I don't need to remind him that. "I trust you have everything handled." I walked out with Busi, looking at her. "Baby-"

Busi: "Don't start please. I'm embarrassed enough." I laughed.

Mthunzi: "But baby, why him?"

Busi: "He was charming and handsome. Don't judge me. You also have questionable exes."

Mthunzi: "I don't baby, none of my exes are questionable."

Busi: "What's the girl from eMoyeni again? Oh yeah, Kelly." I laughed.

Mthunzi: "Okay fine. We're equal."

Busi: "Not even. I only have one questionable ex, how many do you have?"

Mthunzi: "Okay fine. You got me." I smiled.

Busi: "Stop teasing me about 9 years ago. Or I'm gonna bring up your list."

Mthunzi: "I'll never stop teasing you. I love to see how embarrassing this is for you." Zwe walked out to us.

Zwe: "We're taking one car?"

Mthunzi: "Sure."

Zwe: "We might as well take Sboni's RX since we're going up the mountain and it's still muddy."

Mthunzi: "Okay but you're driving."

Zwe: "All you do is use me for driving you around."

Mthunzi: "It's nice being driven by a prince for once." He laughed.

SASA POV\_

I got more of my clothes delivered yesterday. I needed my black dress for the funeral. I also had a big cream scarf that I would cover my shoulders with. I wore my black heels and packed my clutch bag with a few items. I really wanted my phone but I'd probably get it later today or tomorrow since Zwe took it yesterday for Sibonelo to check it.

Nele: "You look so pretty, my sis."

Me: "Thank you baby." I combed my afro loose.

Nele: "Here. This would look better." She took out her pearl headband and put it on me, pushing my hair back. "See, like a queen." I giggled. My mom and Amahle were the only ones still sleeping. For once, Nele was awake at this time. My father usually wakes up and takes a walk in the garden. Once I was done getting dressed, I left the room to go find him.

Me: "Hello Tata."

Xolani: "Good morning my child. You look beautiful."

Me: "Thank you Tata. How are you?"

Xolani: "I'm well. I'm just worried about the livestock."

Me: "But there's someone looking after it."

Xolani: "Yes but I'm still worried."

Me: "Maybe they should send you videos."

Xolani: "Can they do that?"

Me: "Yes. I'll speak to Mthunzi." I hugged him. "Thank you Tata. I know this wasn't easy for you and I'm so grateful you chose my happiness above your own."

Xolani: "Your happiness is my happiness Thembisa. It wasn't difficult for me. At least I can see how much he loves you but I'm not making it easy for him." I giggled. "Here is Mthunzi. He's in the military?"

Me: "He's a general."

Xolani: "That's nice." Nkosi came out his room as well as we approached the entrance of the villa.

Mthunzi: "Good morning sir, Thembisa."

Me: "Hello."

Xolani: "Good morning." Nkosi walked to us.

Nkosi: "Good morning sir."

Xolani: "Your Highness."

Me: "Hi."

Nkosi: "Hello." He smiled.

Mthunzi: "This is my wife, Busi. Busi, this is Thembisa and her father."

Busi: "Lovely to see you again. Nice to meet you sir."

Xolani: "Hello."

Me: "Hi sis."

Mthunzi: "Are we ready to go?"

Me: "Yes."

Xolani: "I'll see you when you're back my child."

Mthunzi: "Nkosi, what are your plans for the morning. You look like you're about to go running."

Nkosi: "I'll be hiking the second trail. Haven't done that in a while."

Mthunzi: "That's a nice trail. Are you taking Mr Ntaka with you?" Nkosi stared at him. I know that look, he's not impressed. Mthunzi was teasing him.

Nkosi: "Sir, would you like to come with me? It's beautiful this time in the morning."

Me: "Does it have snakes?"

Nkosi: "No. No snakes here."

Xolani: "Alright. We can go." I was nervous at this. My boyfriend and father spending time together alone. Especially because Nkosi would be in his element in nature.

Nkosi: "There's a hiking equipment shed just down this path. We can get you some boots."

Me: "Have fun." I kissed my father on his cheek and smiled at Nkosi. Mthunzi led us out. Zwe was by the car talking on the phone. We got in the car and drove out to the nearby village.

## PRINCE POV\_

I can't believe Mthunzi put me on the spot like this. My Saturday morning hikes were special to me because I got to be in nature by myself. How he thought this an Open invitation still boggles my mind. I opened the equipment shed. It looked more like a shop than a shed. The hiking gear was grouped by size. From pants to tops and most importantly shoes. We also had hiking sticks, some gloves and a backpack of essentials. I never need them because I never hurt myself out there but I have to carry it now.

Nkosi: "I have sizes from 6 upwards. They're comfortable with the socks. The trail can be a bit tiring."

Xolani: "Hm." He took his size and socks. Talking doesn't come easy to me, except when I talk to Thembisa. So obviously I'm stuck. He put on the boots while I checked the supplies in the back pack. First aid kit, some energy bars, snacks. I took three bottles of water from the fridge and placed them in. The weather won't change so there's no need for a jacket. "Ready."

Nkosi: "Okay. We can go." We walked out, starting at reception to report where we're going. In case, the family worries. We walked down the garden path quietly. Thembisa liked fruit. As short as she was, she couldn't reach the branches that had fruit hanging on them so her instinct is to jump instead of ask for my help. It was so cute.

Xolani: "Something funny?"

Nkosi: "Uhm. No. Thembisa can't reach up at the fruit, so I'm just thinking of her."

Xolani: "Hm.."

Nkosi: "Would you like some fruit?"

Xolani: "You think I can't reach up to the fruit?"

Nkosi: "No sir." This is why I rather keep quiet. Mthunzi really reeled me in this time.

Xolani: "Do you hunt?" I didn't know the right answer so I chose the truth as usual.

Nkosi: "Yes."

Xolani: "What do you do with the animals you hunt?"

Nkosi: "I let them go after I catch them."

Xolani: "So then why do you hunt?"

Nkosi: "It's good exercise." He looked at me. "I run after the animals, I don't shoot at them. If that wasn't clear."

Xolani: "I don't know if that makes it any better." I sighed. I wasn't winning here. We reached the gate on the edge and I opened for him to go through. I walked out behind him, toward the second path. We walked into the woods in silence. I listened carefully for animals. They were not plenty here but a few. I looked at the tree with pain in my heart, I couldn't climb it. That would be suspicious. We continued to walk, further into the trail.

Xolani: "I think that's a rabbit." I didn't have to look.

Nkosi: "It is."

Xolani: "You're not going to hunt the rabbit?"

Nkosi: "I wasn't planning to."

Xolani: "I'd like to see how you hunt." I looked at him, thinking deeply. Fine. I took off the backpack and went after the rabbit, it took me less than 2 minutes to catch it. I brought it back to him.

Xolani: "That's fast."

Nkosi: "I run fast I suppose."

Xolani: "Kill it." I stared at him. "You eat meat, don't you?"

Nkosi: "I do but I won't eat this."

Xolani: "That doesn't matter, it's food. You hunted. Surely, you're entitled to eating it."

Nkosi: "That's not why I hunt. I don't kill for sport. I have enough food at home therefore, I don't need to kill this one."

Xolani: "So if you didn't have food at home?"

Nkosi: "I'll never not have food at home." I placed the rabbit on the ground and it ran away quickly.

Xolani: "Hm." He kept walking. Was that a test? I don't know. I took the backpack and kept walking after him. "It's good to know you're not greedy or performative." So it was a test. The rest of our hike was mostly quiet. We reached the end of the trail. It was beautiful, with a garden and a bench. He sat down. I took out the bottle of water and gave it to him. I drank my own water and finished it. The sun wasn't as hot but it was there. I watched over the city. It was quiet and empty. I really didn't like this. I didn't like having to lock people in their homes. Maybe on Monday we need to review the lockdown. The biggest threat to citizens was the other royals attacking. Now that I know they'll be using a witch instead, perhaps I should let the people gradually ease into normal living. We'll discuss it.

Xolani: "I want Thembisa to finish her education. No matter what. She must graduate. I don't want anything from you but that." I looked at him, surprised.

Nkosi: "Yes sir. I'll make sure she does." He nodded.

Xolani: "Good." He stood up. "Ready to go again?"

Nkosi: "Yes." We walked back down.

Xolani: "Have you done this with your father?"

Nkosi: "When I was younger, yes. Before he brought me Mthunzi."

Xolani: "I thought Mthunzi was your friend."

Nkosi: "He is now. But Mthunzi started as my guard. He came to us when I was 11, he was the same age. His family line is advisor's of the king. His father was my father's advisor unfortunately his father passed away when he was about 8, his grandfather would've been my grandfather's advisor but my grandfather didn't want any advisor. Anyway, his family line was always next to mine but he's my brother now. I wish our kids are like us. I want my child to have a friendship like this."

Xolani: "That's nice. What about Zwe?" I smiled.

Nkosi: "My daughter will marry his son. He made me promise when we were 10 so that we'll always be best friends." I laughed.

Xolani: "That's good. He's a good friend to have."

Nkosi: "I know my father is sometimes unreasonable but I should understand his first and only priority was to keep me safe. It hurt me, cost me a proper life and a friend but I get it."

Xolani: "He isolated you from the whole world and raised you to be above all else. Is that what you want to do to your child?"

Nkosi: "I wouldn't do exactly that but he'll be raised with love, family orientated, having good manners and having friends."

Xolani: "How long are planning to wait to start a family."

Nkosi: "Hopefully years. I really want to settle into my reign first and of course for Thembisa to finish school."

Xolani: "I see." We walked quietly until we reached the gate. "Good walk. The scenery was great."

Nkosi: "I'm glad you enjoyed it. It's my Saturday ritual. Fresh air and nature helps me think"

Xolani: "Hmm..." He looked at me closely and smiled. "Well, we should get to breakfast Your Highness."

Nkosi: "Yes." What was going on now? What did he notice? I was not about to whisper but I was really nervous now. Why did he look skeptical? And then smile? Like he noticed something? I'll need a distraction for the rest of the day.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 69

SASA POV\_

The drive to the funeral wasn't too long. Qhama's village was just outside the town. I sat in the backseat with Mthunzi's wife.

Busi: "So you're the lucky lady." I looked at her, a bit confused. "Mthunzi says you're seeing the future king."

Me: "Oh. Yes. I am."

Busi: "Hm.. I was not expecting you when Mthunzi mentioned it. I'd already prepared myself to be a boxer." I giggled.

Me: "Why?"

Busi: "I only want what's best for Nkosi. I've already met you. You seem to be a sweet person."

Me: "Thank you." I smiled. "How long have you been married to Mthunzi?"

Busi: "Five years now." She smiled.

Me: "You look happy."

Busi: "I really am. All my life, I prayed for someone that would understand me and the gods gave me him. I grew up in a very crowded house. My parents left me with my grandparents. The house was filled with my cousin's and foster kids. My grandparents would collect the grant money for all and then spend it on themselves. Since my parents abandoned me, I had to take care of all of them as a way to pay for my stay. 9 people from the age of 7 years old, I had to cook for. The babies my cousins would birth became my own. Right up until I was 18. I almost didn't make it but god's grace, I passed and I was accepted at university, I left that house with a bag of clothes and my certificates, never looking back. In university, I met a guy. He was nice I suppose but he always reminded me of family. Every chance he got, he would ask about when last I spoke to family and so I decided to go back home and visit them. I didn't last a week there. I was stripped off everything I'd worked hard for. I was belittled, stolen from, beaten and just alot of stuff I'd rather not mentioned. Done by my own family. That was the last time I saw them and cut them off. So by the time I met Mthunzi, years later, I'd decided the type of man I wanted and what life I wanted. And I got just that."

Me: "That's heartbreakingly sweet."

Busi: "It is but I'm okay with it now. Therapy takes long but it does help. Enough about me. I want you to tell me about you. Where are you from?"

Me: "I'm from eMthnomkhulu. I was raised there by my parents. I have a little sister too. I arrived here in Mountain Peak last year January."

Busi: "And? How is it so far?"

Me: "I think I'm getting used to it. It's only now starting to overwhelm me." We giggled.

Busi: "It's a very calm city. One of the calmest in the country."

Me: "Yes, that's true. I guess that's why the King's family chose to reside here."

Busi: "Yeah. What are you studying?"

Me: "Law."

Busi: "Oooh. The noble profession. Are you enjoying it?"

Me: "I want to say yes but not really." We laughed. "I do enjoy it, it's just a lot of work."

Busi: "Keep at it, my love. It's important for people to find a purpose. You're destined for great things, you're so beautiful and amazingly sweet also, I foresee a wedding seeing how the Prince protects you and your family."

Me: "I have a question." I whispered even though the guys were having their own conversation.

Busi: "Sure."

Me: "Did you meet the last girlfriend?"

Busi: "The Prince's? Yes. Girl, don't get me started."

Me: "What?"

Busi: "Look, I'm not one to say bad things about someone but she was pretentious. She was the typical girl that looked down on others but pretended to be a sweetheart in front of Nkosi. I told Mthunzi after the second time I met up with her that I cannot be her friend or even close. That's why today, when he mentioned he has a girlfriend I had to come see you for myself. Now I can relax." I smiled.

Me: "Don't worry, I'll take care of him." She smiled. We parked close by the community hall. A few cars were already here. We got out of the car and walked toward the entrance. Mthunzi was by my side, Busi walked behind us with Zwe. "Mthunzi, I'm sure we're safe here. I can walk with Busi."

Mthunzi: "No, this is my job Thembisa. You walk next to me and with no one else. You are just like Nkosi, always trying to run around unsupervised." I giggled.

Me: "You can't make me laugh just before we enter a funeral."

Mthunzi: "Sorry." We walked in the hall as they were singing a hymn. An usher, led us to our seats right behind the family in the front of the hall. We sat in the chairs and I sang along with the church. More people came in. The gift basket would be taken to the home, so I didn't need to bring it in here. At 8, the casket was brought in and placed in the front, we stood up to sing once again. I looked at the large portrait of his on the projector screen. Mthunzi went all out shame. The band played Umbhedesho beautifully and softly touching my heart. I can't believe this man died, trying to save my life. The last conversation we had was about his family. How proud he was of them and now he's taken from them. I looked at the little baby on a lady's lap in the front row and my heart ached. He stared at me because that's what babies do but I felt so guilty. I sat down, wiping my tears. The incident replayed in my mind as it was happening right there. The way Qhama was so careful with my life. He did check. He checked the mirror and looked around us, always. Yet, his life was still snatched away just like that. Even as I got out of the car, we were laughing and chatting as friends would. His last moments, he had to spend running to me. Not protecting his child, his girlfriend or his parents. Me. Busi handed me a tissue, snapping me out of my guilt thoughts. She rubbed my back and I tried to breath. The lump in my throat won't be going down anytime soon. The song came to an end. Someone had gone up on stage to start the program.

"The song that was played is said to have been Qhama's favourite. He was raised in a Methodist church by loving parents. On this day, it is sung as a prayer to welcome him to heaven. We are here to celebrate his life, and to guide him well in the after life." He flipped a page. "Our first speaker today will be our pastor. Pastor Libona." The pastor went up to the stage.

The service was beautiful. All the speakers spoke wonderfully about Qhama. Mthunzi said a few words as his boss, highlighting how he died a hero. It was time we went to the gravesite nearby. I walked out with Mthunzi, Busi and Zwe. We followed after the family to the gravesite. The casket was placed on the green bands to hold it before going down.

Pastor: "In 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4, Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." he looked at the family. "May you be comforted in the knowledge that Qhama is with the Lord, he passed our world doing what he loved and swore to do till his last day. Your faith in the Lord, will ensure you are reconnected with your loved one in the coming life. Celebrate him and continue to love him. As we lower his body down into this earth, may the roots that bear from him bless your family abundantly. Amen." The casket lowered into the ground. His girlfriend, sobbed quietly holding her child tight. I turned to Busi, who enveloped me in her arms immediately. May Qhama truly rest peacefully. After placing flowers in his grave, we made our way back to the car.

Busi: "How are you feeling?"

Me: "Really sad. He didn't deserve to die like that."

Busi: "It's really sad but it is what he signed up for."

Me: "I know. I don't think I can get used to it."

Busi: "Will you be able to talk to the family?"

Me: "I have to. They deserve my acknowledgement." She rubbed my back. We got in the car waiting for the guys. "What are they doing?"

Busi: "They're closing the grave." Zwe had a shovel and so did Mthunzi, working with other men to fill up the hole. I giggled.

Me: "Nkosi would never. I don't know why he's such a snob." She laughed.

Busi: "He has every right to be. Imagine a whole future king shoveling."

Me: "But Zwe will be a king too."

Busi: "For his family heirarchy. Not for the nation."

Me: "At least Nkosi is easing into stuff now, when I met him? Yoh." She giggled.

Busi: "That bad?"

Me: "My poor baby. He didn't know life until he met me." She smiled.

Busi: "This is so sweet." The guys came to the car when they were done.

Zwe: "Are you ladies fine?"

Me: "Yes, Zwe." He started the car, driving out to the home. I didn't like eating at a funeral, the ones I've attended in the village, I'd always just washed my hands and went home. The street was packed with cars. "Okay? What's happening?"

Mthunzi: "Someone mentioned a prince and the whole village called everyone to come see." He stared at Zwe.

Zwe: "Was I supposed to wear a disguise Mthunzi?"

Mthunzi: "Yes. That would've been perfect." We laughed.

Zwe: "You're crazy. Maybe I can find myself a wife here, finally."

Mthunzi: "At a funeral Zwe? Have shame." He laughed.

Me: "You need to stop." I giggled.

Zwe: "Now where will I park?"

Mthunzi: "Right here in front of the house. What will they do?"

Me: "Okay, while you guys figure that out. Busi, let's go in. Can you please help me carry these."

Busi: "Yes, let's go." She took the basket, I took the flowers. We got off the car and walked to the house after washing o. I knocked on the door and stepped in. The parents were in the lounge with other people.

Me: "Good Day, elders."

Them: "Hello."

Me: "I am Thembisa, I'm here with Busi, General Mthunzi and Prince Zwelethu Biyela. We are here on behalf of the throne. We would like to

extend our condolences to the family and once again we truly apologize for your loss."

Mother: "We thank you for your presence. We also feel seen, and respected. We understand that Qhama loved his job and clearly the people he worked for cared for him to even come and pay their respects."

Me: "It's the least we can do mama. Qhama was a wonderful person and very dedicated to his job. But what he was most proud of was his family."

Mother: "That is comforting to know. Maybe his son will join the guard and continue his legacy." Not if I can help it, he won't. This child is not going to be a guard. His mother won't lose the love of her life then have her child work the same job. That would be a nightmare for her.

Me: "May I see the boy and his mother?"

Mother: "Yes. She's in the kitchen." I went to the kitchen, finding her making tea with the baby on her back.

Me: "Hi." She looked at me and smiled through her tears.

She: "Hi, do you need anything?"

Me: "What's your name?"

She: "Khanyisile."

Me: "I'm Thembisa. How are you Khanyi?"

Khanyi: "I'm okay." She looked back the tea cups with tears in her eyes, getting the boiled water from the kettle.

Me: "Let me help you." I took it from her and poured in the tea cups. I took the tray to the lounge and went back to the kitchen.

Khanyi: "Can I get you something to eat?"

Me: "No. Do you have a place where we can talk?" She led me out the back door. Without thinking, I knew Mthunzi was right behind me. Khanyi opened the door of the back room and we walked in. Mthunzi stayed outside. The room was beautifully decorated with pictures of Qhama and his baby and her in frames. I sat on the chair, she sat on the bed taking the baby off her back.

Me: "Khanyi, I'm so sorry."

Khanyi: "It's okay."

Me: "No it is not. You're not okay and that is perfectly normal."

Khanyi: "I don't have time to not be okay. I have a son who needs me. I'm the only parent he has left."

Me: "I understand. Qhama loved you both. I was with him before he died. He was trying to save my life. Just moments before, we were talking about his family. He mentioned his son's name is Qhamani. That made him so happy. You made him happy Khanyi. I just need you to know his heart was always with you. His job may have come first but, his heart had you in it." She chuckled turning into a sob. I went to sit next to her, hugging her. "I just need you to know, whatever it is you need at any given moment. Don't ever hesitate to call me. I won't abandon you and your child."

Khanyi: "You know. Everyday we sent messages to each other. He described the lady he worked for as "not the same as the others" and I was worried about what he meant by that. I thought you were a princess honestly because he never disclosed who he was guarding, I just knew it was a lady. Thank you Sisi, for coming here. Just seeing someone who understands my pain makes me feel a little better than I did." She wiped her face and checked her child. The little boy sat on the floor playing with his shoe. "I might have to come to the city earlier than I planned. We had planned that, I'll come next year when Mani was 3 so that I can get a small job and he goes to crèche."

Me: "You can go to university instead. There's a full scholarship available and you'll probably get a share from his life insurance to get yourself a house at least."

Khanyi: "I won't get a cent Thembisa. His parents didn't really like me when he was still alive. He was the one who stood up for me. Everytime without fail. Now that he's gone? Hee. I might not last here."

Me: "You were still his partner, you deserve a share."

Khanyi: "We weren't married."

Me: "We can find a way to fight this."

Khanyi: "Thembisa, I know you're trying to help but I'm honestly just not willing to fight. I've already lost enough, all I want to focus on is rebuilding my life." I nodded.

Me: "Give me your phone." She gave me the phone. I typed my number and saved it. "When you get to Mountain Peak, call me. Please promise me?"

Khanyi: "I promise. Thank you Thembisa." I looked at the baby. He looked so cute. I picked him up.

Me: "Do you want a moment so long?"

Khanyi: "Yes please." I took the baby out with me. Mthunzi was still outside.

Me: "Say hello to General Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Hi little one." He brushed his cheek. Qhamani tried reaching for the badges on his shoulder. "Someone wants to be in the military."

Me: "Nope, I'm enrolling him in law." He laughed. "How is Zwe and Busi?"

Mthunzi: "I think he's signing autographs." I giggled.

Me: "Umenzani uZwe."

Mthunzi: "He can come stand with me but he chose fame instead."

Me: "He didn't want to leave Busi alone."

Mthunzi: "Busi is in the kitchen, washing dishes." What? I walked up to the house and entered. Indeed, she had her sleeves rolled up, washing the dishes.

Me: "Mrs Mwelase."

Busi: "Hi babe. Who's this cutie pie?"

Me: "Qhamani. Our future lawyer." I smiled. "Do you want one?"

Busi: "Definitely no. He's adorable though."

Me: "At all, at all?"

Busi: "At all babe. After the way I grew up, I think I've had enough of taking care of others. It took too much of my life then."

Me: "But you'd share the responsibility with Mthunzi and a nanny."

Busi: "You know, everytime I express that I don't want a child, I'm looked at as a villain. Just because I'm a woman, a wife, I'm expected to want to have children and I think that's incredibly unfair. The reason why it's

unfair is that this is my choice that took so much trauma for me to make, years before I even decided to be married. And when I do give in, and have a child for the sake of being a good wife, I'm going to be villainized for being a horrible mother when I clearly stated I don't want. Why is that? Why is my purpose as a woman, questioned when I've made this decision but if I was a man, who had a vasectomy and says he doesn't want children, I'd be applauded and supported?"

Me: "I'm so sorry, Busi. I didn't think of it like that."

Busi: "Don't be sorry. Nobody thinks of it like that until they see my therapy bill." She dried her hands and walked out. I felt so bad because she was absolutely right. Who was I to force someone to do something they don't want? The baby was gumming on his little fist.

Me: "We don't eat our hands, angel." I pulled out his hand.

Zwe: "Hey you." He took the baby. Qhamani was too cute, you couldn't resist. "Thembisa where did you find a toddler? I'm taking him home." I laughed.

Me: "Haibo Zwe. That's kidnapping. This is Qhamani."

Zwe: "Oh, he is adorable. And hungry."

Me: "His mother will be here soon." I sighed.

Zwe: "Are you okay?"

Me: "Yeah. I'm fine. I'm glad we came here."

Zwe: "Are you sure you're okay?"

Me: "Yes Zwe. I'm sure." I dried the dishes and put them away. Khanyi came in the kitchen.

Khanyi: "Good afternoon My Prince."

Zwe: "Hello. I'm Zwelethu."

Khanyi: "It's nice to meet you sir. May I?"

Zwe: "Don't worry, I got him. You can make his food." She made the baby his food. I finished tidying up. "Okay big guy. It's time to fill your little tummy. Will you come visit me?" The baby smiled. "Right? I'll wait for you. Bye for now." Khanyi received him and started to feed him.

Me: "Please do call me Khanyi."

Khanyi: "I will sis. Thank you again for today." I went to the lounge to say goodbye to the family before we left for the car.

## PRINCE POV\_

Amahle was enjoying her day with Zanele and her mother, I couldn't go to my father without her because he wanted to see her.

Ama: "Your thoughts are weighing me down."

Nkosi: "You can't hear my thoughts because if you did you'd stop ignoring me."

Ama: "Fine. Let's go." I got up walking to the car where the guard waited. We got in and went on our way. "Are you nervous that Thembisa is outside."

Nkosi: "Yes but she's safe."

Ama: "She is."

Nkosi: "Do you think it's safe? The way I love her?"

Ama: "For her, yes. Not for anyone who wants to try you by disturbing her."

Nkosi: "That's my concern."

Ama: "The love you feel is soulmate tied. It's normal. Magnified by your power but definitely normal."

Nkosi: "Hm.."

Ama: "Did you speak to mum?"

Nkosi: "Yes, this morning."

Ama: "She's lonely."

Nkosi: "Then go home."

Ama: "Why won't you go home?"

Nkosi: "I will. Maybe tomorrow."

Ama: "I think I'll go with father today." We looked out our windows watching the silent city pass by until we entered the estate. The car

parked at father's house and we went in. He was reading a newspaper on the couch.

Nkosi: "Father." He looked at us and looked back at his paper.

King: "Hello."

Ama: "Hello Father." She sat next to him.

King: "How are you feeling?"

Ama: "Absolutely fine."

King: "I'm sorry my child. I didn't intend to hurt you."

Ama: "You'll obviously have to make it up to me."

King: "Anything, name it."

Ama: "Let's go up the mountain." He looked back at his newspaper.

King: "I love you but I'm not doing that."

Ama: "I'll even come home." He looked at her. "And stay the night." He continued to look at her quietly. "Several nights. Starting today."

King: "Fine. See, if you hold out long enough, people always give you what you want." He chuckled. She rolled her eyes. "I'm older than you, Amahle. Much older."

Ama: "Okay. When can we go up the mountain?"

King: "You can lift my casket there when I die." He laughed.

Nkosi: "Father."

King: "I'm joking. What's wrong with you two today?"

Nkosi: "Today seems like a good day to go."

King: "I've already got a schedule for the day."

Nkosi: "I'm not doing this with you. We're going today."

King: "Fine, if I die tell your mothers you killed me yourselves. And I want 7 days of mourning. Put the lock down on hold. Have my people celebrate me. Don't serve cheap wine at my funeral. The masses must taste the finest of wineries."

Nkosi: "Should I write this down, it sounds like a will."

King: "Go ahead and joke. Can I at least finish reading my newspaper? I wouldn't want to crossover without finishing this article." I chuckled. Why was he so sure he would die? Even Amahle was amused.

Ama: "Can I have your Rolls when you die?"

King: "Take it because you already told yourself you would when you came here to kill me." She laughed. "Giving birth to children only for them to kill you."

Nkosi: "You're being dramatic. Come, I'll have the kitchen prepare your favourite meal for when we come back."

King: "I won't even eat because I'll be cold by then." He got up from the couch.

Nkosi: "Do you even have hiking boots? Why are you wearing your most expensive shoes while sitting on a couch doing nothing?"

King: "All my shoes are expensive Mehluli. Were you expecting to find me bare foot? Why would I show you my feet?"

Nkosi: "Let's go then. I have hiking boots in the villa." We walked out the house, he in his car with Amahle. I was in mine. The guards drove us out in six cars. I didn't expect my father to accept going up the mountain, but Amahle played that one easily. Once he gets there, I don't even know what to do. I hope they do because one mistake and truly he might not make it back.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 70

MTHUNZI'S POV\_

I noticed the silence from the backseat when we drove back to eNtabeni. I wonder what happened, they seemed to have been hitting it off.

Zwe: "Got any plans for the day?"

Mthunzi: "Probably gonna see what Nkosi is up to. You?"

Zwe: "I need to find Sibonelo and sort him out before he does damage. Sometimes he can go a little overboard. Speaking of which." He took out a phone. "You can check this, it's Thembisa's phone. I watched him sweep through it, it's clean."

Mthunzi: "Oh, thank you." I'm sure he could also sense the tension. Surely I'm not making this up.

Zwe: "Great service. You pulled it off beautifully."

Mthunzi: "Thanks. Did you know just like weddings, there are also funeral planners? This shocked me."

Zwe: "It would make sense. A funeral is an event. Just that the main guest is late." I almost choked, laughing.

Mthunzi: "I hate you. That is the darkest joke I've ever heard, coming from a funeral Zwelethu."

Zwe: "I'm sorry." He chuckled. We drove up the mountain and parked. There was hardly space because the King was obviously here.

Mthunzi: "The King is here." I got out the car, opening Busi's door.

Busi: "I'll wait here." Zwe opened Thembisa's door and she got out. I was worried about my wife and what was going on but I had to go inside. I closed her door, leading Thembisa in. Nkosi met us at the door.

Nkosi: "My love." He hugged her tight, kissing her face. "What's wrong?"

Sasa: "Just tired. I need my pills, and maybe a nap." She kissed his lips and walked away. Nkosi stared at me.

Mthunzi: "I don't know. The funeral was okay. I have no clue what happened afterwards." He looked behind me.

Zwe: "Hi Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Why is your wife in the car?"

Mthunzi: "She's not doing okay either. One of the guards will take her home. The king is here?"

Nkosi: "Yes. We're going up the mountain. Mthunzi, your wife isn't okay. Please take her home. Also, take the rest of the weekend off."

Mthunzi: "Nkosihle."

Nkosi: "I have 17 guards staring at me right now. The perimeter of this villa has actual soldiers defending it. I'm safe. And with family. You need to go home."

Mthunzi: "Okay. Call me. Here." I gave him Thembisa's phone.

Nkosi: "This is not my phone, how can I call you with it?"

Mthunzi: "Yoh Nkosi. That's Thembisa's phone. Give it to her. You must call me with yours."

Nkosi: "Okay. Hi Zwe, are you staying?"

Zwe: "Now you see me? Mxim. Let's go Mthunzi." I laughed.

Mthunzi: "You know how his brain sorts problems first before actual manners. Call me Nkosi." We walked out. Zwe drove back to his family home, so I can get my car.

Zwe: "Alright we'll talk later."

Mthunzi: "Yes. Thanks for today Zwe."

Zwe: "Pleasure. Even though I didn't find myself a wife."

Mthunzi: "What were you doing all that time? Busy posing for the camera?"

Zwe: "Next time I'm taking Nkosi with, so that he can be the superstar. I can't be your celebrity again." We laughed.

Mthunzi: "I'll see you."

Zwe: "Sharp." I drove out, toward my house. Busi was still sitting quietly next to me staring out the window. We arrived home, I locked the doors and we went inside. She immediately took her pills and drank two. Anxiety medication.

Mthunzi: "Baby."

Busi: "Hey." I held her close to me.

Mthunzi: "What happened?"

Busi: "Nothing. That was a beautiful funeral. I think I just need time to gather myself."

Mthunzi: "Okay." I don't know if they made a pact to not discuss what happened or maybe nothing happened, I'm just being too cautious.

Neither of the women seemed to want to talk. I led her to the bedroom, closing the curtains. She got in bed after undressing herself. I switched the TV on and selected her comfort show.

Mthunzi: "I'll be in the lounge, do you want a glass of wine?"

Busi: "Not now, love. Thank you." I kissed her cheek and went to the lounge with my laptop and charger. I had to figure out what Sibonelo had planned for the prisoner in his house. His security was impenetrable so I could only ask him. I sent a message.

Mthunzi: <Sibonelo.>

Sibo: <Mthunzi.>

Mthunzi: <What are your plans for the prisoner?>

Sibo: <Not this again. I already told Zwe, I'm keeping him until he agrees to sign.>

Mthunzi: <Can I see the agreement?> He sent it quickly. I read through the agreement, it was good. <Okay. This is good. How will this affect your family's relationship with him afterwards? Isn't your brother seeing his daughter?>

Sibo: <That has nothing to do with me. My actions are solely to protect the throne.>

Mthunzi: <Okay. We'll talk soon.> I checked through all of our businesses, Busi's, mine and Nkosi's. It took about 3 hours and I was done. I had nothing else to do. The TV had gone quiet in the bedroom, I got up to check. Busi was fast asleep. I wanted to remove her wet pillow but I couldn't wake her up. That would be upsetting, she doesn't like being woken up. I left the room, deciding on cooking for us. I haven't cooked for her in a few weeks now. An attempt of the creamy pasta with shrimp from Amelia's would be the best. I got to work, making it and finishing in just 30 minutes.

Busi: "What are you doing?" She walked in the kitchen.

Mthunzi: "Some lunch. I tried the Amelia's recipe. Do you want a taste?" She tasted it.

Busi: "Hm... It's close." She smiled.

Mthunzi: "Let me get you a glass of white wine. Are you gonna eat now?"

Busi: "Yes baby." She went to sit on the couch. I poured a glass of wine and dished up a plate, taking it to her. "Thank you." I got my plate as well.

Mthunzi: "Have you called Bethany?"

Busi: "No. I'm seeing her on Tuesday for my session." Bethany was her therapist who had also become a good friend. Busi always separated their relationship. She never spoke to Bethany about stuff that affected her outside of a paid therapy session. Their friendship was pure and healthy, only consisting of the healed part of her. The trauma was for the doctor. "I'll call her tomorrow, she's supposed to have a date today." She ate her pasta.

Mthunzi: "Oh? With the German guy?"

Busi: "No that one was into weird things, she's seeing another guy, he's South African."

Mthunzi: "I thought she didn't like South African guys."

Busi: "She doesn't but this one has ticked all the green flags so we're crossing fingers." I laughed.

Mthunzi: "Can I check him out?"

Busi: "No baby. You promised. Everytime you check a guy out, you find worrying things about him."

Mthunzi: "Isn't that good? It saves her time."

Busi: "Not until she asks baby. Let's not do it again."

Mthunzi: "Fine but what if he's an axe murderer?" I laughed.

Busi: "You have a very dark sense of humour. He's not an axe murderer. He's an engineer."

Mthunzi: "As if you can't be both."

Busi: "I'm not letting you check until the second red flag."

Mthunzi: "Second? That's a sneeze away from murder."

Busi: "Relax. You'll need to find another way to occupy yourself on your day off. Leave Bethany's man alone."

Mthunzi: "I thought it was a date." She stares at me. I chuckled. "I'm teasing you love. I really am bored."

Busi: "Good luck then. I'm going back to bed."

Mthunzi: "Is that an invitation?" She smiled walking away. It was good that she was back to smiling. Her pills helped a lot but I really wished one day she would cope without them.

## PRINCE POV\_

I was worried about Thembisa. She was in her family room with Zanele and her parents. I went to knock on the door. Her father opened.

Nkosi: "Hello sir. I just came to drop off Thembisa's phone. She can now use it." I handed over the phone.

Xolani: "Thank you."

Nkosi: "Is she okay?"

Xolani: "Yes. She's asked to be in bed for a while."

Nkosi: "Okay. I'll be going up the mountain with my father. I'll see her when I'm back." He nodded. I walked away, to find my father in the equipment store, my heart tearing just a little bit from not seeing Thembisa.

King: "These look good." He fitted on the boots and stared at himself in the mirror, he already had hiking pants on. This was going to be a long walk. He liked clothes and always dressed himself to the occasion. It's just hiking. "Do you think this stick will match my outfit? Of course it will."

Nkosi: "Can we go now?"

King: "Yes. We can. Amahle where are your boots?"

Ama: "I'm wearing sneakers, they're fine. Let's go." We walked out. "Where is Thembisa?"

Nkosi: "Sleeping."

Ama: "Oh."

Nkosi: "Do you know what you'll say up there?"

Ama: "Why do you think I was asking for her?"

King: "We'll figure it out." We walked out the garden, through the path and out of the gate then started the trail up iDlozi. "So.. what have you two been up to?"

Nkosi: "Busy with the address and smoothing out the lockdown. Now busy with the statement for the protesters shooting."

King: "I don't see why you think you must explain your decisions to civilians. You're their leader."

Nkosi: "A good leader involves his people."

King: "That sounds like a weak leader that needs validation." This is why I don't like you.

Nkosi: "I don't need any validation. I have a responsibility to my nation, remember the nation you've abandoned?"

King: "Abandoned? I've approved all of your projects to develop this nation and all of them, benefit the civilians. Not me. That sounds heavily generous to me."

Nkosi: "It's our duty."

King: "Our duty is to make sure power stays in the correct hands and those idiots don't kill each other for sport. Giving them things is kindness." He was obviously trying to irritate me. As usual. We walked quietly for a few minutes. "Are you upset now?"

Nkosi: "I'm annoyed!! Civilians are not idiots father!"

King: "Really? Because they marched a student resident building, built FOR THEM, for FREE, and they stood there to die. After two warnings. They would rather die."

Ama: "That's triggering."

King: "Your case is different Amahle, I'm not going to apologize a third time."

Nkosi: "Still. That's a very small percentage."

King: "That you've now gotten rid of because you made a king decision. No one will be that stupid again."

Nkosi: "The former royal council will."

King: "See? Idiots. They're a non factor. Once they're dead, nothing will stop you." I felt something around us and stopped immediately. "What is it?"

Nkosi: "Don't move." He stood in one spot. "you can't spill another royals blood."

King: "They started it."

Nkosi: "Still. It's forbidden."

King: "To who?"

Nkosi: "Do you want to make it to the top or not?" I kept walking.

King: "Fine. I won't hurt them but I will defend myself if it comes to it. I'm not about to sit by and watch clowns dance on my head."

We made it to the top of the mountain with difficulty because we kept having to stop. We stood there quietly.

Nkosi: "Someone has to say something."

King: "I'm someone?" I sat down on the ground, tired of arguing with him. Amahle dragged him to sit as well.

Ama: "Father, you have to acknowledge the elders."

King: "How?"

Ama: "First let go of any negative feelings. Just meditate. Focus on the waterfall. As the water is running, may the negative pour out of you. Eyes closed." I kept my eyes closed.

King: "This feels nice." He whispered.

Ama: "May the Sikhosana elders welcome us kindly into their sacred place." I felt a thud and I quickly opened my eyes. My father had collapsed to the floor. "Oh-oh."

Nkosi: "What now?"

Ama: "I guess we wait. This is his journey." I felt a strong presence around me. The snakes had circled around us. In a few minutes, they left. Thunder hit the sky and rain poured immediately. Great. I guess this is how stuck Thembisa felt when she came here with Amahle. It took five

minutes of rain but father only woke up two hours later, gasping. He sat up.

Nkosi: "Are you okay?" He nodded.

Ama: "That was surprisingly easy." For us, yes but my father looked out of it. I helped him up.

King: "Why am I wet?" His usual menacing tone was replaced with a softer one.

Nkosi: "It rained." We walked down the mountain in silence. Was he not going to tell us what happened? At all? That's a bit selfish but okay. I guess it's his journey. At least we're making it back.

## SASA POV\_

I woke up from my nap and stretched my body out. I'd taken off my funeral dress and wore a navy blue maxi. My family wasn't in the room and Amahle as well. I walked out, going down the passage. I saw Nkosi walking in and I went straight to him and hugged him.

Me: "Hi baby."

Nkosi: "Hey. You're awake."

Me: "Yes. I had such a heavy dream. Like I had electricity coming out of my arms. Where do you come from? You're wet." I looked up at him. He kissed my head.

Nkosi: "I was in the mountain." I noticed his father beside him. Oh dear God. I stepped back.

Me: "Your Majesty. Good day, I did not see you. I apologize."

King: "My new power must be invisibility." Nkosi looked at him.

Me: "I'm sorry Your Highness."

King: "Mehluli, I need to change my clothes."

Nkosi: "Okay."

King: "It would be nice to be led to a place where I can change my clothes?"

Nkosi: "Someone will lead you to your room. Hold on." He walked to the reception desk. I stood awkwardly, with the King staring me down.

Mama: "Thembisa mntanam. You're awake." What on earth was she wearing?

Me: "Mama." It was a long black dress with long flared sleeves. She also had jewelry on.

Mama: "Hello." She smiled. The king stared at her.

Me: "Mama, this is the King."

Mama: "Hayi Thembisa!" She bowed her head, looking at the ground. "Good afternoon, Your Highness." The king did not respond. He just continued to stare at her. This family did alot of staring with those orange eyes. "Thembisa, is he still looking at me?" I held in a laugh.

Me: "Yes. My King, this is my mother." I introduced. Nope, he just kept his mouth quiet. No wonder Nkosi is the way he is. He got it from him. Wait, can he read my thoughts too? Surely Nkosi would've mentioned this fact.

Nkosi: "Okay, father you can co- Why??"

King: "Why what?"

Nkosi: "Amahle, please accompany father to his room. Raven will show you." They walked down the passageway. "Mama, you can lift your head."

Mama: "Oh. I didn't know the king was coming."

Nkosi: "It was a spur of the moment decision. My apologies."

Mama: "Okay. I need to tell Taka Thembisa I met the king." She almost ran back to the restaurant.

Me: "Your family likes to stare hey? You guys think those orange eyes are cute?" He laughed.

Nkosi: "Now why am I catching heat? I didn't stare."

Me: "Hayi Nkosi, how did we start dating? Even your father stares. Your eyes are scary. I don't know who told you they look cute." We sat down on the couch at reception, I cuddled into his chest.

Nkosi: "Shame baby you'll be seeing these eyes for the rest of your life and giving birth to plenty of them. They can't bore you just yet."

Me: "I hope my children disappoint you and come out with normal brown eyes." He laughed.

Nkosi: "We'll see baby. What were you saying about your dream?"

Me: "Oh. My arms felt tingly and heavy like they had electricity in them. I can't remember the dream."

Nkosi: "How do they feel now?"

Me: "They're okay. Is Mthunzi around?"

Nkosi: "No, he went home with his wife."

Me: "Oh. I wanted to apologize to her. I said something insensitive."

Nkosi: "What did you say?"

Me: "She mentioned she doesn't want kids and I probed into why wouldn't she want kids and it upset her. I should've just kept quiet."

Nkosi: "You can still apologize."

Me: "Yes, I want to send her some flowers and a note."

Nkosi: "You can do that tomorrow. You haven't eaten today, maybe we should get you food."

Me: "Yes. I'm starving." We got up. "One last kiss." I kissed his lips, almost losing myself in his embrace. I missed holding him freely at any moment. We walked to the restaurant, where my family was. They were having tea.

Mama: "Here's Thembisa, she'll tell the truth."

Me: "Hello Tata. Hi angel."

Xolani: "Good afternoon my child, Your Highness."

Nkosi: "Hello sir." He pulled a chair for me to sit and sat next to me. I love how comfortable he was becoming now.

Mama: "Thembisa, tell your father that I met the King and he looked at me." I giggled.

Me: "It's true. I was there."

Mama: "Exactly."

Nkosi: "My father is cold, mama. Please don't take offense to his silence. He's socially awkward." I smiled. He looked at me. "What?"

Me: "He's exactly like you."

Nkosi: "No he's not. I'm very sociable."

Me: "You try and that's what counts." He smiled.

Xolani: "Will your father be joining us for dinner Your Highness?"

Nkosi: "I don't think so sir. He should be going back to the palace soon." I needed food in my belly. I looked at the evening menu, it changed everyday but I know today was my mother's influence. I decided on the butternut soup, it was her recipe surely. It can hold me until dinner.

Xolani: "How was the funeral Sasa?"

Me: "It was beautiful Tata. The service was amazing, it reminded me of church. I felt at home in there. A few times I cried because of how close I was to death but also was grateful that I made it there. It was such a different experience." Nkosi looked at the door. In a few seconds, his father walked in with Amahle. Now he looked like a king. The hiking gear made him look ordinary. I'm sure he didn't like it at all. You can feel his presence has doubled now.

Nkosi: "Father."

King: "This looks cozy."

Nkosi: "What are you doing?"

King: "Joining you for dinner. Might as well get to know my in-laws."

Nkosi: "No." I know Nkosi didn't want him near me.

Me: "Nkosi." I held his heating hand. It wasn't flaming yet, just hot. "Let's move to a bigger table so we can have dinner together." He looked at me, his eyes softening.

Nkosi: "Are you sure?"

Me: "Yes, we're family." ...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

## SASA POV\_

Dinner was awkward. We haven't even begun to eat but we all sat in silence. So no one was going to say anything? Our starters came to the table. Even my mother couldn't speak? No but I get it. I also wasn't about to say a word in front of the King of a nation.

Sikhosana: "Hm.." he had more of his soup. "This soup is nice."

Mama: "Try it with the bread Your Highness." He looked at her. I was holding my breath. At this moment I wish Nkosinhle would read my thoughts and answer some of them. He looked at me. Is he reading my thoughts?

Me: "You better not be."

Nkosi: "What? You're thinking of me." He whispered in my ear.

Me: "How would you know that Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "It's my name. I can hear it anywhere." I giggled.

Sikhosana: "It is better with the bread." He mumbled. Okay, someone needs to say something. I would, but what would I say?

Me: "Nele, how is school this year? Second year in high school." She looked at me like her eyes would pop out of her head.

Nele: "Fine." She whispered in a mousy tone.

Me: "Hmm. Nkosi, dad was worried about his livestock, is there a way that he can receive videos of their progress?"

Nkosi: "Maybe a security system will be better. It will have cameras on the whole property so you can watch at any moment what exactly is happening. Would that be fine sir?"

Xolani: "I'd appreciate that."

Sikhosana: "Sir?"

Nkosi: "Don't start." The king sighed.

Ama: "So I'll be going home to visit my family for the week."

Me: "That's great. I'll miss you though."

Ama: "You can come with me." I laughed.

Me: "I would be honoured, one day. Just not today. You need your private time with your mothers and sisters." I looked at Nkosi. "Will you be visiting your moms too?"

Nkosi: "Yes, I'll go see them."

King: "Hm. If I knew you can get my children home this quickly I would've sat down with you for dinner months ago."

Nkosi: "Do you want to apologize for shooting at her?"

Me: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "It's only right."

King: "Fine. I apologize for shooting at you."

Me: "I forgive you Your Highness."

King: "I didn't ask for your forgiveness."

Me: "It's okay then, I don't forgive you, My King."

Xolani: "Thembisa." Now why am I the bad guy?

King: "We can all move on from the incident, it will not happen again." Moving on will be slow for me but it's good to know I don't have a target on my back. I flexed my left hand as it started stinging at me for no reason.

Nkosi: "What's the matter?" I looked up. The King was also looking at his hand twisting it around. We locked eyes. Don't I have enough awkward moments in my memory?

Me: "My hand is stinging."

Nkosi: "Should I call Zwe?"

Me: "Not yet. Maybe it's passing. I'm okay now." I drank some water.

Mama: "Thembisa. You never told us how you met the Prince." I stared at my empty soup bowl.

Me: "Really mama?"

Mama: "Yes, where did you two meet?" I can't tell my parents I went to a club.

Nkosi: "We met at a nightclub."

Me: "Nkosi!"

Nkosi: "But it's true. You were there with your friend and I was sitting alone with my guards. Don't you remember?"

Me: "It was only once. I haven't been there again."

Xolani: "I thought we had an agreement of no clubbing and night places."

Me: "We did Tata. I'm sorry. It was once off thing that will never happen again. I didn't even enjoy being there." Nkosi stared at me. I looked back at him. Why can't he lie just a little bit? "You left."

Nkosi: "Then we met again at my restaurant. She refused to speak to me." He was still looking at me.

Me: "Because you take a guard to the bathroom like you're going to war." He chuckled.

Xolani: "Is it the restaurant we went to?"

Mama: "You went to a restaurant?" Oh dear God.

Xolani: "Yes sthandwa. We were tired and a bit hungry."

Me: "Yes it's the same restaurant Tata."

Mama: "Then what happened." I grabbed Nkosi's hand under the table to keep him quiet.

Me: "He invited me to dinner and we came here." I smiled. The king was staring my hand holding his son. I know he was itching to say something.

Mama: "That's so sweet.

King: "So you were already dating when you attended the reed dance? I remember the indistinct chatter between the royals about the Prince's interest. It was you?"

Me: "Yes, My King, we were seeing each other."

King: "And you spent the previous night with him because I remember clearly he didn't come home until morning and he was too excited to reason with." I choked. "Not a Mehluli trait at all. My child doesn't get excited."

Nkosi: "Father."

King: "Are we not having a conversation?"

Nkosi: "Thembisa is still pure if that's where you're going."

King: "Oh? That's good to know." He smiled. "Are you planning to wait till the wedding?" This was uncomfortable.

Nkosi: "Yes we are."

King: "Delightful. Can't give her a chance to escape with our heir." He chuckled.

Ama: "How long have you been married father?"

King: "As old as Mehluli."

Ama: "Do you have any advice for him as a husband?"

King: "I assume this will be your only wife and you have enough money but when you have the chance, make much more."

Nkosi: "Really? Money?"

King: "Yes. Children are very expensive but they are damn near impossible if they are princesses. Then add two wives. If you want to please your wife, take care of your children."

Ama: "That's not bad. Mr Ntaka, do you have any advice?"

Xolani: "Yes. Listen to your wife. Respect her first before you respect people outside of your marriage. If you have a problem, you prepare a table and sit her down to talk about it. It should never be a fight. It is two of you tackling an issue as a couple. The issue is the enemy not each other. Feed her, and be affectionate. Thembisa loves being held."

Nkosi: "Thank you fathers. That was good advice on both ends. Mama, do you have any advice?"

Mama: "I just want to add, don't neglect your family after marriage. Also, Thembisa, take care of your husband so that he doesn't go outside." I hung my head in shame. Why NOW?

Xolani: "Maka Thembisa."

Mama: "Xolani it is just as important. Thembisa cook for your husband. In the kitchen and in the be-"

Me: "Thank you mama. I will definitely remember this for the rest of my life. I promise." This was so embarrassing.

Mama: "Yes, you must remember it. A wife does not get tired." I was going to collapse in utter shame.

Nkosi: "Zanele? Do you have anything to add?" He chuckled. She shook her head, holding in a laugh.

Nele: "Sasa is a good person. Please love her fully."

Nkosi: "I will." He smiled. "Amahle?" She was laughing with her father. So I'm the joke of the day? Good to know.

Ama: "I don't have any advice. I know you two will love each other to the ends of the earth. Please name at least one baby after me?"

Nkosi: "I'll think about. Thank you family." Our main course came to the table delivered by the waiters.

Dinner had gone fairly well with my father telling Nkosi about his goat business. Amahle and Zanele had their usual conversation. I was chatting to my mother about her new dress, apparently it wasn't new but I've never seen it before.

Me: "You look gorgeous. With jewelry and a headscarf and all."

Mama: "I have to look gorgeous Thembisa, don't you see we have an important guest?" She hissed. "Now that you're getting married, I must always be looking amazing. I have to ask your father to buy me high heels."

King: "The queens don't wear high heels. Short ones maybe, but definitely not high." He stared directly at her. The whole table went quiet. My mother looked down, shy. I don't blame her, those eyes were horrifying.

Nkosi: "Really father?"

King: "It was either the goat conversation or TV shows with Amahle. I'm not interested in either. I would obviously choose clothes."

Me: "My King, do you have a stylist? Your clothes really look put together." What I imagine he thinks is a smile happened on his face.

King: "I have a tailor who makes my clothes, I put them together myself. I used to dress Mehluli when he was a baby. He hated it."

Nkosi: "You dressed me in Rainbow colours."

King: "It was one scarf. It looked good with your eyes."

Nkosi: "Too many colours in one place make me very uncomfortable."

King: "Hm. A lot of things I do make you uncomfortable. I should get going. Dinner was wonderful. Thank you for having me, Thembisa. And family."

Me: "We were honoured to have you, Your Majesty." He stood up from the table.

Ama: "I'll see you soon." I hugged her.

Me: "Okay, we'll speak on the phone." They walked out with Nkosi. My family and I went to our room.

Mama: "Yoh! Yoh! Yoh! Can you believe we just had dinner with a King? A whole King?" Zanele laughed.

Nele: "The whole village will be jealous of you mama."

Me: "We can't tell the village yet."

Mama: "Yoh Thembisa mntanam. You have taken my status up there. Yoh! Heee. Who would've thought? My own child would marry a future king? Yes, you would've been successful but to marry into the royal family mntanam? No, you've made me the happiest woman alive. We can't tell anyone because they might bewitch us. Let's wait until the wedding. Xolani don't make things difficult for them please. In fact, we must be paying them for lobola." I laughed.

Xolani: "Can you please calm down."

Mama: "How can you be calm Xolani? Our child is about to marry a king! Oh bawo, Waze wandibona nam." (Oh God, you finally see me too) She cried. My hand was stinging again, a little numb now. Maybe I should get Zwe but I didn't have his number.

Me: "I'm going to ask Nkosi to call Zwe Tata. I need him to check my hand."

Xolani: "Okay my child." I walked out to find Nkosi. He was still at the entrance area with his father.

Me: "My apologies for disturbing my king. Nkosi, I need you to call Zwe. My hand is persisting. I think I may have disturbed a nerve or tissue." The king stared at me. Why does he stare so much?

Nkosi: "Okay, I'm calling. Does it hurt?"

Me: "It's getting numb." He called Zwe.

Nkosi: "Zwelethu? Please come to the villa? Thembisa has pain in her arm, she said it's falling off-"

Me: "I said it's numb."

Nkosi: "Same thing baby. Are you coming? Okay." He hung up. "He's coming."

Me: "Alright, I'll wait in the room."

Ama: "When did your arm start hurting?"

Me: "When I was sleeping." She looked at Nkosi. "What?"

Ama: "Let's go to the suite." We followed her to what I assume is the King's suite. It was beautiful. "You were asleep when we were at the mountain. I think it has something to do with father." She looked at him.

King: "What about me?"

Ama: "You're having the exact same pain in your arm and hand."

King: "You don't know that."

Ama: "Well, do you?" He looked away. "father please."

King: "It's nothing. It will go away."

Ama: "It won't. It's not nothing because two different people are experiencing it at the same time."

King: "So what?"

Ama: "Touch her arm."

King: "No."

Nkosi: "Father." The king sat down in the throne-like chair.

King: "The doctor is coming, he'll explain her condition. I'm going home to my healer. Stop trying to make it a big deal."

Nkosi: "Baby, touch his hand."

Me: "I can't do that Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Father. Please work with us. Just this once. If nothing happens, then great, we won't bother you again."

King: "Ever again?"

Nkosi: "Ever again."

King: "Fine." He held out his hand. But I don't want to. I sighed and knelt in front of him then took his hand in mine. "See? Nothing. Don't bother me aga-" sparks started to go off on his hand. I pressed my thumb on his palm, a bolt of lightning surged off his hand shocking my arm immediately. I jumped, screaming. "What the hell?" He stared at his hand, wired with electric volts sparkling about. My arm was in excruciating pain. Nkosi held me up, confused.

Me: "We have to switch it off." I stepped forward, the king pulled back.

King: "This will kill you."

Nkosi: "Maybe it works the same way as my flames. Flick them off." He did just that and sparks fell over the floor, like live electricity. "So it doesn't." He looked at me.

Me: "I've never seen this one." And by looks of it, not one of them knew either. "Press hard into your palm." He held a fist, pressing hard and it switched off. He stood up stepping on the sparks on the floor and smiled.

Nkosi: "You have a new ability."

King: "I can feel it all through my body." He laughed. "This is good. How do I switch it on?" I was scared to tell him, he looked too happy for my comfort.

Me: "Snap your fingers." He snapped his fingers and sparks erupted in his hand. He laughed louder.

Nkosi: "Father!"

King: "What?" He switched it off. "So you know about our abilities?" He asked me.

Me: "Yes sir." I looked to the floor. If he wasn't scary before, he definitely was now.

King: "That's good. Thank you."

SIBONELO'S POV \_

I spent most of Saturday in my house working. Since my mother wasn't speaking to me and Mehluli wasn't answering his phone, there was no more I could actually do. Zwe walked in my house, I continued on my laptop, ignoring him.

Zwe: "Brother." I'm brother now?

Sibo: "What do you want?"

Zwe: "You can't possibly still be mad."

Sibo: "Really? You want to dictate my emotions?"

Zwe: "Mom is not talking to all of us. She obviously misses you just do what she says. Damn."

Sibo: "The prince isn't answering his phone and I can't call or message his wife, that would be disrespectful."

Zwe: "Fine. How's the guy in the basement?"

Sibo: "Refuses to eat now. Barely goes near the food."

Zwe: "Surely he's ready to sign."

Sibo: "Almost."

Zwe: "You're going to drive this guy into a mental institution."

Sibo: "That's my plan, yes."

Zwe: "One more day Sibonelo. That's it. Stop these games."

Sibo: "Fine." Someone knocked on my front door. "Enter." She walked in carrying the food bags. "Zoe, thank you."

Zoe: "You're welcome, Prince Sibonelo. Good day Prince Zwe."

Zwe: "Hello." She placed the food on the table.

Sibo: "Did you receive your payment?"

Zoe: "I'll check when I get home sir."

Sibo: "Okay, the guard will take you back home. Thanks again." She nodded, walking out.

Zwe: "Who's that?"

Sibo: "My cook."

Zwe: "Hm." He smiled.

Sibo: "No."

Zwe: "No what?"

Sibo: "I don't sleep with people that work for me Zwelethu."

Zwe: "Let's not lie to each other, brother."

Sibo: "Okay then Zwe, since you know my dick history. Why are you here?"

Zwe: "I don't have anything to do."

Sibo: "So disturbing me is your plan?"

Zwe: "Let's do something. Let's go to Kingstown for a drink."

Sibo: "I don't want to be on the road for hours. Why can't we have a drink here?"

Zwe: "We'll take the helicopter. Come on Bobo. I never have off days."

Sibo: "I didn't say build a hospital."

Zwe: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Fiiiine!" I closed my laptop. His phone rang.

Zwe: "Yes, Nkosi? Alright I'm on my way." He hung up. "Okay. I have to go up to the mountain quickly, Thembisa isn't well. Do you want to come with me?"

Sibo: "I would but I wouldn't want to be in your way. You might be up there a while. I'll wait for you to come back instead."

Zwe: "Okay." He walked out. I called Mngqobi.

Mngqobi: "Sboni."

Sibo: "Where are you."

Mngqobi: "Home. We're working on the app."

Sibo: "Okay. Have you registered the trademark?"

Mngqobi: "I'll check with Zimmy. It's her thing."

Sibo: "Oh it's her idea?"

Mngqobi: "Yes sir."

Sibo: "Hm. Okay. I have a few minutes to spare. I'll speak to her." I hung up, getting up from my couch. I took the food to the basement. Bhekokwakhe had been sitting in the corner for a while now. His lunch pack was still untouched next to the gate. I placed the fresh dinner next to it. "Don't have an appetite? Happens to the best of us. Why don't you try a bite first? Food is such a valuable resource, you never know when it might run out." He didn't move. I unlocked the gate. He flinched. So he's still alive. That's good to know. I opened the gate and walked in. He was planning to attack thinking I do not expect it. I'm a black belt, I'm always expecting it. "Are you feeling cold, Bhekokwakhe?" No answer. I moved even closer and squat down to his level. Any second now. Almost immediately he jumped to stab me with the plastic knife. I blocked his arm, and grabbed his neck, twisting him around and pushing him to the floor. "Good strategy. Wrong opponent. That earns you your second strike. I guess we'll be housemates a little longer than tomorrow. And I will no longer be kind." I tightened the grip on his neck and he fell unconscious. I took the plastic knife from his hand, he'd even sharpened it shame. I took the food and walked up. We'll see how a few days of starvation do. I locked the deadbolt and left the house for Khaya's apartment. I arrived, walking in to silence. Zimmy appeared from the bathroom, wrapping a towel around her body.

Zimmy: "Prince Sibonelo. I thought you were Khaya. Hello."

Sibo: "Hi." She walked back to the room and closed the door coming out dressed a few minutes later. "What's your relationship with Khaya?"

Zimmy: "We're good friends." I looked at her beautiful breasts. This black two piece she wore, fit her so perfectly, showing off her slender frame. I needed to focus.

Sibo: "He mentioned you came up with an app idea. I created one for them, they're perfecting it right now. Have you trademarked it?"

Zimmy: "Uhm no. I don't know how to."

Sibo: "Have you drawn up a business plan?"

Zimmy: "Yes."

Sibo: "Yes who?"

Zimmy: "Yes, Prince Sibonelo."

Sibo: "You do know that I'll be owning majority of your business right?"

Zimmy: "What? Why!?"

Sibo: "I made you an app and you're using my resources to start up. My scooters, my contacts, my money. I'll own 60%." She stared at me, defeated. I moved closer to her. "Does that upset you?"

Zimm: "No Prince Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Good. We don't run business, on emotions." She smells so fresh from her shower. My hunger was down bad. It's been weeks of nothing but work. "it's a pity you work for me now."

Zimmy: "Why is it a pity?"

Sibo: "I can't be fucking you senseless, you're my employee."

Zimmy: "I thought I was your business partner, since we own the same business."

Sibo: "You'll be my business partner when you can afford to buy me out of said business."

Zimmy: "Okay. I wouldn't be sleeping with you regardless. You were with my friend, so it's an automatic no for me."

Sibo: "What friend?"

Zimmy: "Thembisa. Or you don't remember her name either?"

Sibo: "I was never with Thembisa."

Zimmy: "I remember you were."

Sibo: "No I was not. I took her on one date. She's engaged to the royal heir. I've never dated her."

Zimmy: "What royal heir?" Her breasts were so distractingly beautiful. I should get going before I lose my moral.

Sibo: "Is there another one I don't know about? We'll stay in contact Zimmy, I'll send you a guide on how to trademark before you sleep. I need it done by Monday. Am I clear?"

Zimmy: "Yes Prince Sibonelo." Going forward it would probably be best to let Khaya handle this business. I don't have the strength to keep being professional in my current position. I got in my car and took out my phone, checking the security. Bhekokwakhe had regained his consciousness. I wonder when he will notice the gate. I left it open on

purpose. He looked around him, probably for his makeshift knife then looked at the gate. He jumped up running up the stairs to the vault door, he tried opening it but it was locked. He just didn't stop trying. I pressed a button that activated an electric shock. It shocked him unconscious falling down the stairs. Welcome to hell.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 72

PRINCE POV\_

I'd managed to sleep properly, waking up early the next morning. Thembisa was better when she'd gone to bed. She didn't feel any more pain she said. Zwe had checked her arm and also confirmed it being okay but he will be back today. I got showered and dressed in my running gear. If I'm going to have weekends off, I'll need clothes that are casual. This was going to be a challenge. My phone rang.

Nkosi: "Hello Zwe."

Zwe: "Come outside."

Nkosi: "Okay." I hung up. Why was he so early, it's barely 6. I walked out to the entrance of the villa.

Zwe: "Thought as much. You like running in the morning. I knew you'd be awake."

Nkosi: "What are you doing here so early? Thembisa is sleeping."

Zwe: "I'm here to get you. No one I know wakes up this early and so I needed some company. Let's go." I got in his car, he drove off. My guards followed right behind. "Your guards never miss a beat, do they?"

Nkosi: "No."

Zwe: "Good. How did you sleep?"

Nkosi: "Well. For the first time in a while."

Zwe: "That's good."

Nkosi: "Have you started rebuilding your hospital?"

Zwe: "Haibo Nkosinhle? I thought you'd do it?" I stared at him.

Nkosi: "When did I give you that impression?"

Zwe: "You said so!" I chuckled. "Your sense of humour is really strange."

Nkosi: "We'll start on Monday. Tomorrow."

Zwe: "Okay."

Nkosi: "Where are we going?"

Zwe: "On a date."

Nkosi: "I can't go on a date with a man Zwe."

Zwe: "Why is that?"

Nkosi: "I already have a woman. It would be cheating."

Zwe: "I hear you. Thank you for letting me down easy." He laughed.

Nkosi: "How is Sibonelo?"

Zwe: "Fine. Why?"

Nkosi: "Is he scared of me?"

Zwe: "A bit."

Nkosi: "Hmm. He saw my fire the other time."

Zwe: "That's not all he saw. He switched off the cameras, saw you change. Also knows you can whisper."

Nkosi: "Is it bad?"

Zwe: "No. Sibonelo doesn't run his mouth so he won't be telling anyone about it."

Nkosi: "Oh. Do you think I should talk to him about it?"

Zwe: "Why?"

Nkosi: "I don't like working with people who are scared of me, Zwe. It's uncomfortable."

Zwe: "Okay. You can talk to him Monday."

Nkosi: "What about the young princes? Do they know?"

Zwe: "Uhm, they suspect. They saw the sky flood and the pilot you brought in but they haven't asked any questions."

Nkosi: "Do you think they should know?"

Zwe: "No. Khaya is a bit fragile, I know Mngqobi acts tough but he gets shaken very easily too. It's best they don't know. They've probably forgotten already."

Nkosi: "Okay. Father has a new ability."

Zwe: "Did he hurt Thembisa? Is that why her arm was sore?"

Nkosi: "Yes but it was not intentional."

Zwe: "And you didn't rip his face off. This is good."

Nkosi: "Not really, I still wanted to attack him, but I had to attend to Thembisa."

Zwe: "It was not intentional, Nkosi. What is his new ability?"

Nkosi: "Lightening. Can you imagine? Of all things to give a King."

Zwe: "Ooh, that's bad."

Nkosi: "What's worse is that Thembisa taught him. They had the arm pains at the same time, so Amahle and I asked her to touch his hand. When she touched it the sparks came on, she pressed his palm and the lightening shocked her."

Zwe: "Jesus. Is that supposed to happen?"

Nkosi: "Seemingly. She knew how to control my fire off before I did."

Zwe: "Nah, this woman is definitely your soulmate. That's insane." He parked at the beach parking lot.

Nkosi: "Why are we at the beach?"

Zwe: "There's a lockdown. No one is allowed outside yet. No cameras. No civilians. It's your day off. You can finally enjoy the beach." I smiled, getting out the car. The sea was massive. Plenty of room to swim in. "Mthunzi warned me that you like to jump in large pools of water for hours, so I have to watch you." He went to the boot of the car. I took off my shoes and sprinted to the water, jumping in. I swam further into the

sea, enjoying the waves coming up for air to breath. I swam deeper inside, seeing the fish swimming around me. This was perfect.

I finally emerged from the water, walking to the shore.

Zwe: "Good morning Aquaman."

Nkosi: "Hello." I took off my wet t-shirt and wrung it out.

Zwe: "Did you enjoy yourself?"

Nkosi: "Incredibly." I sat on the towel next to him.

Zwe: "Mthunzi was right. I turned away for 1 second and you'd run off with the wind."

Nkosi: "I wasn't gone that long."

Zwe: "It's been an hour but I'm glad you enjoyed it. Here you go. It's morning but it's a treat." He opened the cooler box and handed me a Coke.

Nkosi: "Why are you doing this?"

Zwe: "You're my friend Nkosi. Look how happy you are." I opened the drink and gulped it down.

Nkosi: "Too early for that but it does hit a spot." I lay back on the towel. "Thank you."

Zwe: "You're welcome." We sat quietly watching the water.

Nkosi: "So the sand?"

Zwe: "Oh yeah, that just gets stuck on you. Can't do anything about that."

Nkosi: "It's irritating."

Zwe: "It's the beach." He laughed.

Nkosi: "I'm sorry."

Zwe: "For what now?"

Nkosi: "Cutting you off when we were kids."

Zwe: "Come on Nkosi, you didn't cut me off. Your father did. You tried, remember? You would run away from home and come to my home."

Nkosi: "Yeah. Then he threatened your family."

Zwe: "Don't think about that. It's the past. I know we've always been friends even when we didn't speak for two decades."

Nkosi: "I felt guilty." He showed me the necklace around his neck, that had an orange gold stone shaped like a long tiger tooth "That looks familiar."

Zwe: "Remember you came to visit with your parents, I think Amahle had just been born. You'd found this stone by the river at your home. When you came over, you showed me. It looked really cool. You asked me if I liked it and I said yes but you wouldn't give it to me." I laughed.

Nkosi: "it was my favourite stone."

Zwe: "Yeah but why ask if I like it then? Ah Nkosi." He laughed. "The last time you visited you'd brought me the stone. That meant alot to me. Even after we stopped playing together, and visiting each other, I had this, something that meant so much to you and it meant alot to me. That's why we remained friends."

Nkosi: "Okay so can I have it back now?"

Zwe: "You're horrible." I looked back. Mthunzi walked to us carrying a bag.

Mthunzi: "Hi lovebirds. Sitting by the beach at sunrise."

Zwe: "Are you jealous? I spent half the day with you yesterday."

Mthunzi: "Mine wasn't at sunrise on the beach. You made me wear military regalia." He laughed. "I brought Nkosi his clothes because he'll complain all the way back up the mountain."

Nkosi: "How did you know?"

Mthunzi: "I know you. You see water and go crazy. Then blame everyone else when you're wet and cold." I smiled.

Nkosi: "Thank you. How's Busi?"

Mthunzi: "Great. Just needed a minute to recoup."

Nkosi: "Thembisa is sorry she hurt her feelings."

Mthunzi: "She didn't tell me anything."

Nkosi: "Okay. She said she'll send flowers."

Mthunzi: "That would be sweet of her. Let me leave you guys to your romantic sunrise. I'll see you tomorrow."

Zwe: "Bye General."

Nkosi: "I'm going to take another swim then I can go have breakfast with my wife."

Zwe: "Ah? Just like that?"

Mthunzi: "You'll learn." He walked away laughing.

SASA POV\_

I woke up in the morning, taking a bubble bath making sure not to irritate my wound. I slipping into a white maxi dress after, I dressed my hair and made my way to breakfast. My family has let me sleep in this past week. When they wake up, they come to sit for tea. Even Nele wakes up early here. I found them sitting at a table and watching TV.

Me: "Good morning family."

Mama: "Hello Thembisa."

Xolani: "Morning my child."

Nele: "Hi sis. You look pretty today, do you have a date?"

Me: "No. I just felt like dressing up for once. I've been a patient too long now. I want to call Mthunzi, I want to ask his wife's favourite flowers."

Mama: "Isn't it too early Thembisa? You know city people are always sleeping on Sunday."

Me: "It is, ne? I'll wait until 9 then." I pulled a chair to sit when a guard came in. They never came directly to me and this was not Nkosi's guard. I didn't know this one.

Guard: "My lady, the king has requested your presence" I'm a lady? I couldn't help but smile. Wait, the king is here? Again?

Me: "He's here? He said he wants to see me?"

Guard: "Yes. Prince Sikhosana isn't here." You don't want to wait for him?

Xolani: "Do you want me to come with you?"

Me: "No Tata, it's okay. I don't think he will harm me." I could see my father was not okay but I had a feeling the king wanted to know more about his ability. "I'll be okay Tata, I promise." He nodded. I followed the guard out to the king's suite. I walked in and bowed.

Me: "My King. It's lovely seeing you again."

King: "Where is Mehluli?"

Me: "I am not sure Your Majesty. He usually runs in the morning but he's always back before this time." He sighed, pacing the room. "Can I help with anything?" He stopped and looked at me.

King: "It's not switching off."

Me: "Even when you try-"

King: "I did. I did what you told me to do!"

Me: "Okay. We need to control it while we try to figure out what's wrong. I'll be back just now." I left his and went to Nkosi's suite. He had his bandages and fire gloves here. I took them and went to the kitchen of the restaurant finding a wooden spoon. I went to the equipment shed, searching for any kind of rubber. I found a roll of flat rubber, meters long of it. I guess it'll do. I went back to the king.

King: "What the hell is all this."

Me: "If I touch you, I'll get electrocuted. Hopefully the rubbers will prevent that. I strongly hope." I carefully wrapped the thin strip of rubber on my fingers and wore the fire resistant gloves to hold it. "Let's see if it works."

King: "This is not a game, little girl. This will kill you." He stepped back.

Me: "It won't, I promise ." He came closer. I touched his hand and the sparks danced on the glove. "It hasn't penetrated. So I can wrap the second hand."

King: "You do realize my problem is that I need to stop my lightening. This is not about you." I sighed.

Me: "For me to bandaged you to control the lightening, I need protection."

King: "Oh. Right." He sat down. I wrapped my second hand and wore the glove.

Me: "Please extend your hand." He held it out.

King: "What is the spoon for?"

Me: "Wood doesn't conduct electricity. The rubber can only protect to a certain voltage, any higher than that could be fatal. So I'm using both."

King: "You're quite smart, aren't you?" I took the spoon, placing the start of the bandage on his wrist and held it down with the spoon. I did the first wrap and lifted the spoon and placed it again to hold down. All through his hand until fully covered.

King: "This actually worked."

Me: "Is it comfortable?" He shrugged.

King: "It works is what's important."

Me: "No, it's important that it's comfortable. If it's too tight it might push up the voltage to your arms and this whole experience will be for nothing."

King: "It could be a little looser." I undid it and started again until I finished. "That's better." I bandaged his second hand. "What are these bandages made of?"

Me: "They're fire resistant. Since this is electricity, its damage is burning. It can hold it. Just not sure for how long."

King: "Are you studying to be a doctor?"

Me: "No, my king. I'm studying to be a lawyer."

King: "You'd be a better doctor."

Me: "Thank you Your majesty."

King: "What for?" This family. I finished with both hands.

Me: "I think the bandages alone are still fine for now until you figure out what is the issue." I stood up. He looked at his hands, unimpressed.

King: "Thank you." He stood up. I took off the gloves and rubber strips, collecting all the items.

Me: "You're welcome your majesty. Should the kitchen make you a coffee or some breakfast while you wait for Nkosi?" He looked at me.

King: "No." I nodded, walking out his suite before releasing a sigh of relief. I took the items to the shed, coming back inside, I found him standing by the entrance of the villa, staring outside. Why me, Lord? I walked up to him and stood next to him.

PRINCE POV\_

Zwe drive me back to the mountain at about 8 in the morning. Why was my father back here? This was getting boring.

Zwe: "Did he sleep here?"

Nkosi: "No. He left last night. I have no idea why he is back." We walked into the villa entrance.

King: "Finally!! Where have you been?!" Thembisa stood next to him. I tried reading her expression but her face was blank. I couldn't even feel her emotions. What the hell did he do to her?

Nkosi: "Baby?"

Sasa: "Morning. Your dad has been waiting for you."

Nkosi: "Why?" I looked at him.

King: "I need to speak to you. Now." He marched to his room.

Nkosi: "Are you okay? Did he hurt you?" I pulled her to me, smelling for any smoke or bruise. Any slight hint of blood.

Sasa: "Not at all." She was clean. "Go attend to him and come have breakfast." She kissed my lips. "Morning Zwe."

Zwe: "Hi future Mrs S. Can I check on you please."

Sasa: "Absolutely. Come." I went to my fathers room, closing the door behind me.

Nkosi: "Morning."

King: "Where the hell were you Nkosihle?! I've been waiting over 30 minutes!!"

Nkosi: "You called me Nkosihle."

King: "That doesn't matter. I have a problem."

Nkosi: "What is it."

King: "It doesn't want to switch off when I'm dancing in the bedroom." He showed me his hand. It was wrapped in a bandage. My bandage.

Nkosi: "Just stop dancing."

King: "My bed is crisp with holes in it."

Nkosi: "Why are you dancing in bed? What were you expecting?"

King: "Where's your advisor? I need someone mature to deal with this."

Nkosi: "He's in his house. You need someone mature but you're dancing in bed?"

King: "You're the smartest dumb child I have. So smart you're stupid." How do you insult someone who's trying to help you?

Nkosi: "Maybe Zwe can help you?"

King: "What would Zwe know about abilities?"

Nkosi: "He helped with my fire thing before Thembisa showed me how to switch it off and control it."

King: "I am not involving other people in my bedroom affairs."

Nkosi: "Then let Thembisa help you switch off." He stared at me, blankly.

King: "Call Zwelethu." I walked out the suite. I don't understand this man. Truly, I don't.

Nkosi: "Zwe."

Zwe: "Yes, my prince." He took off the pressure band off her arm.

Nkosi: "My dad needs to see you. Apparently he was dancing on his bed and now his lightening doesn't want to switch off."

Sasa: "Oh Dear God." She covered her face. Zwe tried to stop laughing.

Nkosi: "What?"

Sasa: "Oh sthandwa sam."

Zwe: "Sometimes you make my day. Come, let's go."

Nkosi: "Are you coming baby?"

Sasa: "No sweetheart, I can't come with you. I'll wait for you at breakfast though."

Nkosi: "Okay." Zwe and I walked to my father's suite. "Here's Zwe."

Zwe: "Good morning, my king."

King: "What will you do?"

Zwe: "Who wrapped your hands?"

King: "Thembisa but it's still sparking underneath."

Zwe: "Yeah I can see that." He unwrapped the bandage, getting electrocuted twice. "Hmm." My father's bare hands were sparking with volts of electricity.

Nkosi: "She bandaged you while it's doing that?"

King: "I didn't ask her to, she offered. Was I supposed to say no?"

Nkosi: "Yes!! That is lightening father!!"

King: "She wore gloves."

Nkosi: "That makes it better? I can't stand you!"

King: "Sit down then. Zwelethu, fix this."

Zwe: "I don't know if I can. What happened?" My father looked at me.

King: "I can't disclose that information."

Nkosi: "Are you fucking serious!! You were playing with it weren't you?"

King: "I am your father, you will not speak to me in that tone!!!"

Nkosi: "A father that's snapping electricity in his bedroom burning his bed while dancing?? That's the hill you want to die on?"

King: "I WAS HAVING SEX!!!" I stared at him, shocked as my soul left my body. I stormed out of that suite quicker than his stupid lightening. This was officially a horrible day.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 73

PETU'S POV \_

It's the third day I haven't see my father, I haven't heard from him. No one knows where he is. The protestors that were shot have all been accounted for, their families contacted to view the bodies and all. We haven't been called. At first I thought, they were still counting but they announced the end of the count yesterday. So where was my father? Clearly he didn't go but where did he disappear to? His phone is off as well, has been since Friday. I was praying that wherever he is, he's alive. Maybe he was hiding from the throne. Since it's Sunday, I thought I'd cook some lunch for the family and give Siza a break. Shame, she loves cooking but now since Friday she's started to throw up. I took my bath, dressed in a pink maxi skirt and a crop top. I went to the kitchen taking out the pots. The kids were in the lounge watching TV. I started with a snack for them then defrosted the meat. Siza didn't mind if I drank some wine but I still put it in a mug, to respect her home and husband. Speaking of which, didn't come home last night. I don't know why Sizani does this to herself honestly and I can't even force her to leave because she's going to cut me off if I dare say a thing about her marriage. This man must be using serious muthi, there's no way. I started making some salads thinking about what's going on in this house and drank my wine. My phone rang. Zimmy. I haven't heard from her in a while.

Petu: "Hey babe."

Zimmy: "Hi Petunia, how are you?"

Petu: "I'm great sis. How are you? I haven't heard from you in a while. Last week we tried and tried to call you. What happened?"

Zimmy: "I was going through a family thing."

Petu: "Oh. I'm sorry about that. Have you spoken to Sasa?" I continued chopping, holding my phone with my shoulder to my ear.

Zimmy: "No. I haven't spoken to her. I tried calling last night but she ignored my calls."

Petu: "Oh Zimmy, when last did you speak to her?"

Zimmy: "I don't know. Weeks. When she went to Mthinomkhulu for the holidays, she switched off her phone. When schools opened, she locked herself in and I was also going through my own things. So we haven't spoken."

Petu: "Oh hell. Jimmy, Sasa got shot."

Jimmy: "Shot? With a gun? Wait... Is that why we're in lockdown? Wasn't it the princess that got shot?"

Petu: "Yes. Thembisa was with her, she got shot too. Her name wasn't mentioned on TV for privacy reasons. Khaya didn't tell you?"

Jimmy: "Khaya didn't tell me a lot of things clearly. No one tells me anything."

Petu: "I'm so sorry Jimmy. It was such a stressful week, we all just kind of shut down and went into pilot mode. I thought Khaya said something. Yoh."

Jimmy: "Is she okay?"

Petu: "Yeah she's good. She was discharged, we spoke on the phone. I haven't seen her though."

Jimmy: "Is she at Res?"

Petu: "Uhm no. I don't know where she is."

Jimmy: "She's engaged to the royal heir, so she's with him, isn't she?"

Petu: "I don't know Zi-"

Jimmy: "Don't lie Petu. I already heard about it. So all this time, Thembisa is dating the future King, living with his sister. And you all know about it."

Petu: "I'm not going to discuss our friend. If you need to speak to Thembisa then do that but please don't involve me."

Jimmy: "Hehe. How can I not involve you Petu? I introduced you to Thembisa yet I'm now being sidelined? Why is that? What have I done wrong now? Or is it because I'm not dating a royal prince like the two of you?"

Petu: "Now you're being petty. There's no need for that. Again, I'm not discussing Thembisa's life with you. And understand that, it is illegal now to even mention that information. Please leave it be."

Jimmy: "Fine." She hung up. How could Khaya not tell Jimmy? But then again, Khaya himself was the one who got Thembisa to hospital and waited there until we arrived. He too was in shock. Immediately after the shock, he and Mngqobi were working with His Highness. Things got busy,

and we all kind of just zoned out. I'm not going to apologize for a thing because Zimmy closed everyone off herself. The week before all this drama happened, we had tried and tried to call her and she wasn't available. Yes, she says she's going through family problems but she must also understand so are we. Haibo.

Siza: "Hey Sis."

Petu: "Hi. How are you feeling?"

Siza: "Horrible. Can't wait to get this over with."

Petu: "Do you want me to make you something?"

Siza: "I can't keep anything down babe, don't waste your energy. Have you heard from dad?"

Petu: "Not at all. I'm thinking of going to the police station on Tuesday if he's not back. We have to report him missing."

Siza: "Let's just go today."

Petu: "But you're sick."

Siza: "I'll be fine, Petu. Our priority is dad right now. I will deal with my sickness later. I'll get the kids ready."

Petu: "Let me finish cooking at least then we can go. So when we come back, we eat and relax." I continued to cook.

Siza: "Okay. Thank you for being here Petu. I'm really lucky to have a sister like you. At every point, you jump to come help me and you never complain."

Petu: "We're sisters. That's what we do. It's our job. You also took good care of me when mama died."

Siza: "Do you ever think about her?"

Petu: "Alot. Like right now with this whole dad situation. You?"

Siza: "Not often. Thinking about her makes me feel guilty."

Petu: "Siza, come on. You didn't cause the accident."

Siza: "Still Petu. Anyway, how are you? Your royal ex sent any messages?"

Petu: "It's like he sets an alarm just for that. I already received the first one for the day."

Siza: "What if he loves you?"

Petu: "How can he love me? If he did, he would've been honest and wouldn't have had to be pushed to telling the truth by his wife. And I don't want to talk about this anymore."

Siza: "Yoh I don't know then." She got herself a glass of water. "Has she sent a message?"

Petu: "One. Days ago. Just an 'I'm sorry.'"

Siza: "Ai. Anyways, what's up with school?"

Petu: "We got emails, well I did. We're being asked to choose a learning method. Virtual or physical attendance."

Siza: "Have you chosen?"

Petu: "Not yet. I'm still scared of going outside. At the same time, I hate being couped up indoors all the time. I don't know what to do."

Siza: "For safety sake, just stay home instead. We don't even know where our father is, and the prince that brought you here said you could be in danger if the people he was working with come looking for him. Ha.a, Petunia, stay home. You'll go to the garden and swimming pool in the back yard if you want fresh air."

Petu: "You're right. For now, I should be indoors."

Siza: "It's a pity you'll be spending your birthday indoors."

Petu: "I would've done that either way. We had planned a slumber party with my friends."

Siza: "At least you can still do that."

Petu: "If we can find our father."

Siza: "Kodwa Petu he clearly left the house himself."

Petu: "Even so Siza. Where is he now? For days? Something is wrong."

Siza: "Yeah. Let me help you here so we can go." ...

SASA POV\_

I drank my first cup of coffee in almost a week. I wasn't allowed any caffeine after my shooting but Zwe approved me for one cup today. I was so happy.

Mama: "Is everything okay with the king?"

Me: "Yes mama. Nkosi is with him right now." I sipped my coffee. Nkosi walked in. I looked at him, noticing a look I've never seen on his face before. I quickly put down my cup. "What's wrong?"

Nkosi: "I need to get it out of my head." So he finally realised or they told him. I could see the trauma on his face.

Me: "Okay. I think we should give Mthunzi a call and he can tell us what flowers his wife likes. You can help me make a bouquet for her."

Nkosi: "Okay."

Mama: "Haibo Thembisa, you can't be making a king sort out flowers."

Me: "It's okay mama, he enjoys plants. We'll be in the garden." I pulled him out of the restaurant, toward the back entrance of the villa out into the gardens. "Are you okay?"

Nkosi: "No. I just found out my father is having sex."

Me: "Uhm, love, people who are married do that."

Nkosi: "I know but it's my father. My mother. It's uncomfortable. Why did he tell me?"

Me: "I feel like he tried not to. He sugarcoated it."

Nkosi: "As DANCING? He called it dancing? He has ruined that word for me."

Me: "Nkosi. Your parents are human beings, just like you-"

Nkosi: "I know but I preferred not to find this out. I was fine not knowing. Now everytime someone says dancing, I'm going to throw up." I giggled.

Me: "You are very dramatic."

Nkosi: "You're okay knowing your parents do-"

Me: "She gave me advice on the dinner table." He laughed.

Nkosi: "Okay, that was funny."

Me: "Let's call Mthunzi." He took out his phone and dialed his number. It rung only twice.

Mthunzi: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Hi, Sasa wants to talk to you."

Mthunzi: "Okay."

Me: "Hi Mthunzi. How are you?"

Mthunzi: "I'm great, how are you?"

Me: "I'm okay. Uhm, I wanted to put together some flowers for Busi, I was wondering what are her favourites?"

Mthunzi: "She loves white lilies."

Me: "Is there another flower she adores?"

Mthunzi: "Also Daisies."

Me: "Alright. Thank you so much. Also, please keep this a bit of a secret?" He chuckled.

Mthunzi: "Okay then."

Me: "Bye Mthunzi." I hung up. "Do you have white lilies?"

Nkosi: "I have all kinds of flowers. Let's find them." He collected a basket by the door, a vase filled with fresh water, cutters and gloves. We walked through the garden. "Father says you wrapped the bandage on his hand still sparking. That's very dangerous Thembisa."

Me: "I was trying to help. I had protection on."

Nkosi: "Still. His ability is dangerous and very quick. On top of that, he cannot control it. So it makes it even worse. You can't put yourself in the face of danger like this. If something goes horribly wrong, how will I explain that to your parents?"

Me: "Im sorry Nkosi, I was irresponsible." He held my hand.

Nkosi: "It's not your responsibility to fix us. We need to step up too. I don't want you to get hurt so let's allow my father to figure out his ability without you in the front line of danger."

Me: "Okay. I understand baby." I hugged his arm. "Where did you go this morning?"

Nkosi: "Zwe took me to the beach."

Me: "Really?"

Nkosi: "Hm. It was fun. I swam in the ocean with the fish."

Me: "Fish are quite far out in the ocean Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Not really. I made sure to swim in safe distance."

Me: "The ocean is enormous Nkosihle, alot of things can happen."

Nkosi: "Don't worry, love. Nothing will happen to me." We turned a short corner where the lilies were. "Here. Lilies."

Me: "These are growing so beautifully. I don't even want to cut them off."

Nkosi: "Fortunately, I can do this. Let me teach you. You want to leave as much stem as possible so that it grows again. Flowers are plants, they are living organisms, you shouldn't kill them." He held the flower gently. "As we cut each one, we need to place them in the water. As you can see I'm choosing buds that have recently opened or just about to start."

Me: "Why is that?"

Nkosi: "The flowers will continue to mature after they've been cut. They will bloom in her kitchen. Like a gift that keeps getting better. Lasting longer."

Me: "That's incredible."

Nkosi: "You cut the next one. Gently." He handed me the pruners.

Me: "This one?"

Nkosi: "No baby, that will kill the flower, check again."

Me: "Oh yes.. how about here?"

Nkosi: "That's perfect." I cut it and placed it in the vase.

Me: "Who taught you all this?"

Nkosi: "Myself. Whenever I got bored, I went to the garden and took a walk. Started to notice some flowers dying and I tried to revive them. It became a hobby for some strange reason. Then I read about it, hundreds of books on plants and how and why. Something about it feels

spiritual. When I built this place, it was just open land. Now my garden looks like we're in Eden and I planted everything here."

Me: "It's beautiful, love." I cut a few more. "These smell so good."

Nkosi: "Not as good as the rose lily. You'll love it. Your fragrance is similar to it."

Me: "I'd like to smell it."

Nkosi: "Right over here." A little further down the path was a bed of rose lilies, pink in colour with double the petals.

Me: "Oh these are so beautiful Nkosi. You're right, they smell good." He picked one, placing it in my hair.

Nkosi: "So beautiful." He kissed my lips slowly, holding me close to him.

Me: "We need to finish our task."

Nkosi: "Yes but I want to stare at you some more. I miss spending time with you, in bed or watching the mountains. I miss waking up next to you."

Me: "We'll get back to that soon. We need to put this war to bed. The country needs to go back to normal. Soon, our economy is going to start buckling and it'll affect the poor, the most."

Nkosi: "It's our day off baby, please focus." I giggled. "It's a Sunday. What does your family normally do in the village?"

Me: "Why baby?"

Nkosi: "They've been here almost a week and it's been hospital or here. I wanted to do something that made them feel more at home."

Me: "Why are you so perfect?" He kissed me again. "Mama usually goes to church, sometimes I go with, most times I'm with dad working in the farm. Then I cook Sunday lunch, with Nele. Mom would usually be in the lounge watching a show with dad. After eating, I go to my room to read, Nele goes to her friends. We don't have a specific routine but Sunday lunch is a must."

Nkosi: "Hmm. Eating at the dinner table is the only time I spend with my family. I don't even know their hobbies. Except my father because we have had a meeting a few Sundays. He likes to smoke and stare at nothing."

Me: "Let's finish here baby. Maybe we'll come up with a plan as we're working."

Nkosi: "Okay my love." we went back to the vase of cut lilies. "Now we need to strip the leaves off each stem, since this will be an arrangement. After that, we'll remove the anthers off each flower."

Me: "What is an anther and why are we removing it?"

Nkosi: "Removing the anthers prevents any pollen from getting on the flower petals. Pollen stains flesh and fabric. Also, it can eat away at the delicate flower parts and shorten the life of the blooms. Which is what we don't want. Put the gloves on baby." I put on my gloves, kneeling next to him and following his instructions.

## SIBONELO POV\_

I was not having a good time while asleep anymore. I was also not going to admit to Zwe that his friend gives me nightmares. I needed to find a way to distract my brain. Immediately, my thoughts drifted to Zimmy. Good heavens, her breasts. I got out of bed instantly, going for a cold shower. Maybe a bit of work will be good. I took my shower and dressed in casual jeans and a black shirt with white sneakers. I walked downstairs to my family dining area. I hardly slept in my house but definitely not doing so with a prisoner inside it. If, he does, by some miracle breaks free, I don't want to be fast asleep as it happens. Since it was Sunday, no one was at the table. My parents usually sleep in and the brothers are usually hung over. However, Mngqobi and Khaya no longer drink so they were in the boys lounge eating cereal.

Sibo: "Boys."

Mngqobi: "Finally. Yoh, we've been waiting. Even Khaya woke up before you."

Sibo: "Did I leave with your kidneys?"

Mngqobi: "Funny. We were thinking of going to your house for a boys day and braai. What do you think?"

Sibo: "No."

Mngqobi: "No? Why?"

Sibo: "I'm fumigating."

Khaya: "Fumigating? We live in Stellars. What could you possibly be fumigating in the richest suburb of the nation?"

Sibo: "Cockroaches. They don't pick suburbs. They follow food."

Khaya: "What's going on in your house Bobo?"

Sibo: "Go see for yourself then Khaya but don't come back here coughing and choking."

Mnqobi: "Then what are we supposed to do today?"

Sibo: "I don't know. Entertain yourselves. I have plenty of work to get through for this week."

Khaya: "But what about us?" Why is it so difficult to get time alone in this house?

Sibo: "Where is Zwe?"

Mnqobi: "Only God knows. You know he wakes up like a soldier. Probably building that hospital brick for brick right now." I chuckled.

Sibo: "Good, go help him." I sent Zwe a message asking his location. "Bug, quick question. What's happening in your apartment? What is this girl to you?"

Khaya: "Zimmy? She's my friend. This hasn't changed." I won't be doing this but in case I do, I needed to be sure my brother wouldn't hurt.

Sibo: "So you won't mind if I fuck her?"

Khaya: "Sboni come on. She's going through a rough time."

Sibo: "I'll make it smooth. Don't worry."

Khaya: "But you're going to drop her."

Sibo: "I've never promised anyone marriage Khaya. First rule in my book, Be honest; She'll decide if she wants to go ahead. And I go into precise detail."

Khaya: "Can you believe he published an actual book?"

Mnqobi: "And you read it 17 times."

Khaya: "It works. 17 times is an exaggeration and you read it too. Yet somehow, we're all single. Something is wrong with that book."

Mnqobi: "Speak for yourselves. My wife may not be speaking to me but she's still in my home and I'm getting Petunia back." I laughed.

Sibo: "Good luck young prince. I'm leaving. Zwe isn't responding, so I can only assume he's under a truck, dead. Find him. I'll be back later." I took my bag with both my laptops, tablet and chargers, leaving the house for the apartment.

I arrived in Khaya's building and went up to the apartment, letting myself in. I sat on the couch setting up my laptops. There was no reason for me to be here other than wanting to see her boobs. It sounds bad but I was quite down bad myself. I checked the footage in my basement. Bhekokwakhe had regained consciousness but stayed away from the door. He sat on the couch, still, shaking and crying. Good, we're almost there. I switched off the heating. The basement was underground and cemented so the cold that would sweep in a few minutes from now would send anyone to their knees.

Zimmy: "Morning Prince Sibonelo." I looked up. She walked to the kitchen dressed in tiny pajama shorts and a matching tank top.

Sibo: "Hi." I focused back on my footage. The cold was settling in.

Zimmy: "Would you like a cup of coffee?"

Sibo: "Uhm, yeah." She started up the machine. I put on my headset and switched over to check if there's any activity from the other royals. All still quiet. Well, this is boring. I had nothing to do so I switched off. Zimmy brought a tray, with a cup of coffee and sugar.

Zimmy: "Would you like milk?"

Sibo: "No thanks." I avoided looking this time because I would've spilled hot coffee. "You always wake up this early?"

Zimmy: "No. I just couldn't sleep." She sat on her couch with her cup.

Sibo: "Why is that?"

Zimmy: "I was doing a lot of thinking about family, friends." I sipped my coffee. "It seems all my relationships have fallen apart. All at the same time."

Sibo: "That's sad. How did this happen?"

Zimmy: "With my family, my father decided to cheat and leave my mother. She insists on respecting him and his decision. Also forcing me to do so. I also have a sibling who's almost two and another one coming. I don't know how to handle all of that but my primary emotion is anger right now."

Sibo: "The anger stems from your father betraying your mother and breaking your family?"

Zimmy: "Yes."

Sibo: "Usually primary emotions breed the secondary emotional response which is usually unwanted or hard to express. What is yours?"

Zimmy: "Hopelessness. I hate how hopeless I feel. I hate that I can't do anything about any of this. I can't change his mind, I can't turn back time and most importantly, I can't make my mother defend herself. Her honour. I can't make her get angry at him and rightfully shame him for being a failure. I can't do a damn thing." I sipped my beverage some more. Psychology was one of the things I dabbled onto mostly to understand and navigate my work. It wasn't enough for me that I can access someones phone, their private network and entire data. I wanted their darkest secrets. I wanted their memories. Their souls. That's where my psychology came in handy. I sipped my coffee.

Sibo: "That isn't helpful. Feeling like that can only prolong your anger because you'll be more and more frustrated. You need to ask yourself what it is that can help your situation with your family right now."

Zimmy: "I can't even stand him. I don't want to fix his nonsense."

Sibo: "It's not about you fixing his nonsense, it's about healing yourself. Being angry forever won't do you any good." She sighed, drinking her coffee.

Zimmy: "I'll think of something. Maybe I just need to clear my head."

Sibo: "Do you want to come sit next to me so I don't have to use a yell signal to speak to you?" She giggled.

Zimmy: "You're not even yelling. We're in the same room."

Sibo: "Still, I prefer my mornings quiet." She got up from her couch and sat next to me. "Now I can speak in my normal voice."

Zimmy: "You mean whispering?"

Sibo: "I'm not whispering. It's my morning voice. Can't be screaming before 9 in the morning unless it's someone under me." She blushed, looking at her cup. I leaned back on the couch, resting my head on the top, looking at her.

Zimmy: "I already said I won't be doing this with you."

Sibo: "Doing what? We're just talking."

Zimmy: "You're trying to seduce me Prince Sibonelo. I'm not stupid."

Sibo: "I would never call you stupid and I'm not yet seducing you. Do you want me to tell you what I'd be doing to seduce you?"

Zimmy: "I'm not falling for that." She laughed.

Sibo: "That's because you're not stupid. Maybe I am trying to seduce you."

Zimmy: "Why is a Prince like you trying so hard to seduce a girl?"

Sibo: "what is a prince like me?"

Zimmy: "Sexy, rich and resourceful." I smiled.

Sibo: "You're sweet. I know what I like, it's right in front of me. My natural instinct is to approach."

Zimmy: "We've played this game before and you forgot my name."

Sibo: "This time make sure I don't. We were drunk Zimmy, that's for sure. It was probably some years ago-"

Zimmy: "One year ago."

Sibo: "Okay but I'm still interested."

Zimmy: "And I'm not." Her playing hard to get should've turned me off as it usually did with other girls but not this one. I wanted her now, on this couch.

Sibo: "I can't change your mind?" If only she knew the amount of power over me she held on to right at this moment.

Zimmy: "Nope." Bummer. Could've negotiated a better percentage for her business ownership, a second business venture, money, hell even a baby. Anything.

Sibo: "Alright. I can understand and respect that."

Zimmy: "You won't try to convince me?"

Sibo: "That would be coercion and a little rapey it's not my thing."

Zimmy: "Hmm.." I needed a quick distraction.

Sibo: "While we're still young and in good spirits let's work. Did you manage to look at the email I sent last night?"

Zimmy: "Yes. I made some notes, I was going to finish it today." She stared at me as if she wanted me to chase her. I'm a man with pride, the only way I'd touch her is if she begged me to.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 74

MTHUNZI'S POV\_

I walked back into my house, coming from the beach. What Zwe did for Nkosi was great. The rekindle of their friendship was something Nkosinhle really needed. Although he won't be needing me as much, he would be in a good space. I checked the bedroom, Busi was still sleeping. My phone rang, it can only be Nkosi. I answered, having a short conversation with Thembisa about flowers for Busi until she hung up. Best time to start breakfast. I made some pancakes from scratch, putting them in the oven to keep warm. I tidied up the kitchen as well. I cleaned the lounge area quietly then sat down to watch some TV. I was resisting the urge to check up on Sibonelo. Busi walked out the bedroom about an hour later.

Busi: "Hi baby."

Mthunzi: "Sthandwa Sam." She sat on top of me, kissing my face.

Busi: "Why are you up, sitting alone?"

Mthunzi: "I had to run a quick errand then come make you breakfast."

Busi: "Hmm. And I'm starving." I chuckled.

Mthunzi: "Your pancakes are in the oven. Should I make you some tea?"  
She giggled.

Busi: "Yes please baby." I put her on the couch and went to make tea and plate her pancakes putting it all on a tray then giving to her. "Thank you. You're not eating?"

Mthunzi: "Not yet love. Maybe around 10."

Busi: "Hm." She nodded with a mouthful of pancake, syrup dripping on her chin. I kissed it off her. "These are good."

Mthunzi: "I can see from your face. What do you want to do today?"

Busi: "You don't have work?"

Mthunzi: "Not until tomorrow morning."

Busi: "Okay, since we spent all day in bed yesterday. How about we do some painting in the back yard? We haven't made a new portrait together in months."

Mthunzi: "You always say I ruin your paintings."

Busi: "Because you do but I love it. Come, we need to change our lounge paintings."

Mthunzi: "Again? I really like these ones."

Busi: "This season is passed baby. They're too bright." I lived with this woman for years to know I won't win. She loves design, painting, decorating. It kept her busy and happy. I don't know how many times a year our "aesthetic" has to change. The current theme is seasons I suppose. Last year was what again? "Babe?"

Mthunzi: "What colours were you thinking?"

Busi: "Let's count to three and say the first colour that comes to mind when I say Autumn transitioning to Winter." I chuckled. A fight is brewing.

Mthunzi: "okay."

Busi: "1, 2, 3. White."

Mthunzi: "Green." I smiled. She stared at me.

Busi: "Babe. What part of green, looks like winter? Winter is bare. Green is full of colour."

Mthunzi: "I'm bad at this game but love, we've never had green in the living room."

Busi: "But green is for..."

Mthunzi: "Autumn! Come on baby. Admit, I got it right. Green is full of colour, white is bare. Green is the autumn, white is the winter." She sighed.

Busi: "Okay. Let's try it. But we need to swatch some green tones. We don't want something that will clash." She got up, walking to her office. I took her dishes to the kitchen. "You might be on to something." She came back with her paint box filled with different acrylic paints.

Mthunzi: "This looks nice. A little dark though."

Busi: "It's perfect. The white will brighten everything else."

Mthunzi: "What about our couch?" She looked at it funny. "You wanted a brown couch Busisiwe. It's less than a year old." She looked at me with beautiful kitten eyes.

Busi: "It won't match the aesthetic." I laughed.

Mthunzi: "We can't have two couches love."

Busi: "Okay, but now I'm thinking of a white stain resistant plush couch with green cushions and a few with the military print." She kissed my lips.

Mthunzi: "Fine. Order it then."

Busi: "I love you. So, do we donate this one or?"

Mthunzi: "What if you like it again?"

Busi: "Unlikely."

Mthunzi: "Donation it goes. Carpet?"

Busi: "We're keeping it, but in storage. I love it."

Mthunzi: "So I do have taste? Good to know." She giggled.

Busi: "Let me set up outside, so we can start. Please check for any portraits you'd like us to try out." I heard a car parked outside. I looked out the window. A guard came to my security at the gate, he let him inside. This was one of Nkosi's guards. He knocked on the door. I opened for him.

Mthunzi: "Mongezi."

Mo: "My General. I was sent by the Prince to deliver this."

Mthunzi: "Thank you." He handed me the bouquet of flowers and walked out. "This is for you." I gave Busi the flowers.

Busi: "Me? Why would the Prince send me flowers?" I shrugged.

Mthunzi: "They're your favourite. White Lillie's."

Busi: "They're gorgeous but why?"

Mthunzi: "There's a note." She took out the note and read it. A smile formed in her face.

Busi: "Oh."

Mthunzi: "You want to tell me what it says?"

Busi: "It's not from him, it's from Thembisa. It reads: 'Hi Busi. I want to apologize for Saturday. What I said was insensitive and wrong. I didn't mean to trigger you like that. I honestly meant no harm. May you have a blessed Sunday. Love Sasa.' She's so sweet." She giggled.

Mthunzi: "She is."

Busi: "The guard is going back up the mountain? Tell him to wait."

Mthunzi: "I can drive you baby."

Busi: "Not me, I want to send her something. Talk to the guard." I went to the guard outside telling him to hang back for a bit. Inside the house, Busi went to her cold room. I had a specially built cold room for her ice cream storage.

Mthunzi: "Oh you're sending her ice cream?"

Busi: "Yeah. Her favourite. Remember last week, my new packaging arrived but then Tuesday we went into lockdown."

Mthunzi: "Is it the packaging I designed?" I hugged her from behind.

Busi: "You bullied me into it, yes. But it's perfect. Look at it." I took the small tub. It was royal purple and Sikhosana Gold, with a crown in front. In honour of the upcoming coronation.

Mthunzi: "They're perfect."

Busi: "I have a few new flavours I'm working on that I wanted to sample so I'll need the smaller cups please." She took out the ice creams from the freezer. I handed her the hand sized cups. "This one is my personal favourite, I used purple colouring in a vanilla, then added biscuit pieces."

Mthunzi: "Oh that looks sooo good." I took another spoon, scooping some to taste. "Hmm, perfect." She went to her toppings and added gold flakes. "I never got gold flakes?" She giggled.

Busi: "They're new. Taste them with the ice cream, does it make a good combo?" I'm afraid, I may never leave this room. Busi was amazing with flavours. But this? Is a genius flavour.

Mthunzi: "It's amazing. Put it in a bigger tub as well."

Busi: "You sure? I was going to put her favourite one, the salted caramel with cookie crumble."

Mthunzi: "You still remember her favourites? Seems like Thembisa is quickly replacing me at work and at home and I don't like it anymore." She laughed.

Busi: "You're being dramatic. Let's do two big tubs, one of the salted caramel with cookie crumble and the new flavour. I haven't named it yet, Do you have any ideas?"

Mthunzi: "Something to do with the coronation. How about including the people? Like 'A Kings Love'."

Busi: "And because the first people to sample it are you and his queen. That's the perfect name. Let me get my label maker while you finish here." She walked out. I was left in the room, laughing to myself. My wife's brain worked overtime and it was difficult for her to finish tasks immediately. I needed to get a handle on her quickly and bring her back to pace herself properly because she will exhaust herself too soon.

PRINCE POV\_

After sending the bouquet off to Busi, Thembisa and I washed our hands then went to the restaurant for breakfast. I was quite hungry now. We walked in, the family was still at the table. Now why was my father sitting here having eggs?

Nkosi: "Father." He looked at me, ready for an argument. I don't like how he was involving himself. Thembisa led my hand, sitting down. "I hope everyone is having a good morning?"

Mama: "Indeed, we are Your Highness." She smiled. I looked at my father. Why does he have to make things so awkward?

Nkosi: "Where do those come from?"

King: "I asked Zwe to check if the kitchen had wood handle cutlery. Since wood doesn't conduct electricity, I needed to be able to eat." Thembisa and Zwe choked on their juice.

Nkosi: "Zwelethu is a prince. You can't be sending him to the kitchen."

King: "You left, who was I supposed to send? I can't just go to the kitchen and ask for wood."

Sasa: "Please excuse me." She got up, quickly walking out. Zwe held his mouth. What is so funny?

Nkosi: "There's guards everywhere."

King: "How would guards know what I mean and what I need it for? You just want to frustrate me."

Nkosi: "They'd figure it out."

King: "Fine. I'll just starve next time." Thembisa came back and sat down. We had breakfast quietly. Everyone minded their business until we all finished.

Nkosi: "Sir, the security system is being installed today, by the end of the day you'll be able to see your farm and full yard."

Xolani: "That's amazing. Thank you." He smiled.

Nkosi: "You're welcome."

King: "So, Sir?"

Nkosi: "Please don't start."

King: "I'm asking? Why sir? You're a future king. You don't have to call other men with any title."

Nkosi: "I prefer to respect my future wife's father."

King: "His name is not respectful?"

Nkosi: "It is, but my preference is sir. Or I'll just call him Tata. If that's okay with you, sir?" My father was seething in his seat.

Xolani: "Any title or my name, I'm fine with, Your Highness."

Nkosi: "Tata it is-"

King: "I'm your father." He hissed. Finally, I can irritate him too for once.

Nkosi: "Yes but once I marry, I'll have two fathers." He stared at me, I stared back at him, smiling.

King: "Thembisa, do you mind leading me out to my car, your kindness is heartwarming." My body heated up quickly.

Sasa: "Absolutely my King. I'd be delighted." She stood up.

Nkosi: "Actually, father, I was hoping you and I can hike up the mountain. Let's go." He smiled.

King: "Okay."

Nkosi: "I'll be back soon, love." I got up, walking out with my father.

King: "Will you at least wait for me to change my shoes? I can't hike in gentleman slippers."

Nkosi: "You have two minutes." I folded my arms on my chest. He went to his suite to change his shoes, coming back I started walking out to start the trail.

King: "Are you upset again?"

Nkosi: "Why are you always challenging me? Is it fun for you?"

King: "I did no such thing."

Nkosi: "You got mad that I respect my father in law and retaliated with trying to steal my wife? That's so childish!!"

King: "CHILDISH?? Please. You're the one that stormed out at the mention of sex."

Nkosi: "Stop it!!"

King: "Stop what?? Having sex? You're insane."

Nkosi: "I don't want to hear about it father!!! It's disgusting. You're my father for goodness sake!! Have some dignity!!" I screamed. He laughed until he coughed. I left him there walking up the trail angrily. Why does

he think this is funny? I don't want to know what he does in his bedroom. It's disgusting. And why the hell is he using his abilities during it? Oh my God, is it a kink? I wanted to scream. Why!!

King: "Mehluli." I ignored him. "Nkosinhle." I don't want to talk to him for the rest of the day. "Sikhosana omncane." I walked faster. He must leave me alone. A huge tree branch fell in front of me, blocking my path. I looked at him. This psychopath had undid his bandage and electrified a branch off the tree.

Nkosi: "Father. Why do you keep coming here?"

King: "You dragged me here, remember? This morning I came to fix this. I don't keep coming here, I have my own house that I like."

Nkosi: "And the dinners, breakfast?"

King: "I must now starve because you don't want me near your new family?"

Nkosi: "You're a king. You're nowhere near starving. You're trying to irritate me and poke me around for a reaction."

King: "Why would I do that Mehluli? When have I done that? You want me to be a villain alwa-"

Nkosi: "You ARE the villain! You tried to kill my wife!"

King: "Good God, I said I was sorry!"

Nkosi: "And that's enough? You don't think it's uncomfortable for her family or her to have you here, sitting and eating like you did nothing wrong?"

King: "So you want me to stay away?"

Nkosi: "Yes." He nodded.

King: "Okay." He walked over the branch climbing up the mountain. I hated that he was now upset. He's supposed to not care. He should've shrugged or told me off. Why is he suddenly emotional? That's not who he is. I walked up behind him until we reached the top of the mountain. His ability had switched off, he undid the other hand and sat down.

Nkosi: "Why now? All these years you didn't care about family time. You didn't care to be involved. It's sudden."

King: "I don't know." He looked down at the quiet city. "You're different. You smile, you laugh. You look so happy. You look at her and the whole world disappears. It's irritating but also intriguing. Why do you look at her like that?" I smiled. "See? What is that?"

Nkosi: "You're right that the whole world disappears. When I looked at her, it's like my eyes are magnets and they need hers to lock in place. My heart dances at the sound of her heartbeat. She's so soft with me. She allows me to be myself. She's interested in learning who I am so she can love me better, she respects so much. Thembisa is so special to me and I can't even explain why. It's as though I've been looking for her all my life and now that I've found her, I have the rest of my life to love and live with her. It feels so exciting."

King: "You sound stupid." I looked at him. "I can't imagine that feeling."

Nkosi: "You don't love my mothers?"

King: "I have a reason for loving them. They gave me four beautiful kids. Without the kids? I don't know Mehluli."

Nkosi: "That's sad."

King: "It's realistic. You're living in a bubble."

Nkosi: "I like my bubble." He sighed.

King: "Then let's get this useless war over with so you can get married. I'm meeting with the council tomorrow. Will you join me?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

King: "It's about time these fools know who we are." ...

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

Sunday midday, I was still on the couch working with Zimmy. She had helped with designing the last touches of the app and we launched it.

Zimmy: "Can I use it now?"

Sibo: "I just uploaded it baby, give it a minute."

Zimmy: "I can't wait! I want to make my first order. Do you really think you can get big stores to partner with us on this?"

Sibo: "Ngingubani mina? She blushed.

Zimmy: "Prince Sibonelo Biyela."

Sibo: "There'll be more offers on the table than we can use. Right now, we create demand."

Zimmy: "And it delivers anywhere in Mountain Peak?"

Sibo: "Yes." Something clicked in my brain. This will backfire quickly.

Zimmy: "What's wrong?" I took my phone.

Sibo: "We're creating demand without checking our strength. We'll need back up, in case this blows up."

Zimmy: "Do you really think that will happen? We only have a population of 1 million."

Sibo: "1,6 million. People have been locked in their homes for almost a week right before month end. Now that they've been paid, and they're at home, they'll want to utilize this. Give me a second." I dialed Mngqobi's number.

Mngqobi: "Bhut Sbo."

Sibo: "Mnqo, we only have 10 scooters right?"

Mngqobi: "Yebo."

Sibo: "Do you know of a company that rents out scooters? I'm thinking if in case this blows up and we need more to work efficiently."

Mngqobi: "Yoh. Scooters are difficult, unless we ask Fresh Foods to borrow theirs."

Zimmy: "Or let it run. To create the demand."

Sibo: "It will crash the system and create another panic."

Zimmy: "It will create attention. That will market it. Let it crash, right now prepare for picking it up when it does and implement that in less than an hour of the crash. That will create trust between consumer and brand. Consumers will feel prioritised not knowing this was already planned. That will hype it up even further." As if she needed to get any sexier.

Sibo: "Okay, but I still need delivery back up and I have no scooters and I don't want Fresh foods to have more leverage on our business in case they try to climb up our leg."

Mnqobi: "I can make a couple of calls but we still need drivers."

Sibo: "Where's bug, put me on loud speaker."

Mnqobi: "You are on loud speaker, he's playing the Xbox. He can hear you."

Sibo: "Yeh wena khanda elikhulu, ngiyakhuluma uthuleleni?" He laughed.

Khaya: "I'm enjoying my day off. What do you want?"

Sibo: "What is your suggestion?"

Khaya: "Zimmy is right in creating demand, it will help it grow and attract us to more suppliers. I have an even crazier idea."

Sibo: "Give it to me." He chuckled.

Khaya: "You're going to hate it more than you love it."

Sibo: "Khaya, speak."

Khaya: "See how e-hailing services do it. There's the standard car which is the most affordable version, this could be our scooters. Then there's the more luxury cars with a higher price. How about, we offer that delivery option with the higher price of course? Using a Bi-motive car." I laughed.

Sibo: "Okay, so standard delivery is scooters and premium delivery being our cars with a higher delivery fee. I love it. No hate."

Khaya: "I'm not done. We could advertise it as "A Royal Delivery" .. the delivery being made by a prince. Not all deliveries, just a few lucky one-"

Sibo: "And who's going to do that? Zwelethu?" Mnqobi laughed. "Cha, ngoba uyangidelela manje."

Khaya: "Come on Sboni. Just three deliveries nje? This will also help giving the citizens something to talk about. It's been all gloom the past few days. A hot single bachelor prince delivering groceries? The internet would break."

Sibo: "And I'm your public slut? Khaya, uyangihlonipha? Be honest." They laughed uncontrollably on the other side. I hung up. "Mxim." Zimmy giggled next to me. "Nawe?"

Zimmy: "I'm sorry. But it's a good idea. It will cheer everyone up."

Sibo: "So I'm a clown?"

Zimmy: "No, but you're distracting. Girls will break that website. Maybe you might find a few single girls." She looked at me in a challenging way. I can play this game.

Sibo: "You're right. This is actually the perfect opportunity." She froze, swallowing the lump in her throat. I took my laptop, checking the app pretending to ignore her.

Zimmy: "Uhm, I'm gonna go freshen up."

Sibo: "Sure." She got up walking away. You can't be upset with someone you don't want baby. That's not how it works. I continued with my work, checking at Bhekokwakhe once. I'd switched on the heat again. He was curled up in the couch. I'll see him tomorrow morning to offer him his release. He was beginning to bore me now and I wanted my house back. I went back to my notes and typed some down. This idea Khaya has come with was actually brilliant. My presence will promote the delivery e-commerce business. The car I use will be obviously by our company and giving it exposure. Instead of the bigger ones, I'll use the small one instead. I want to target entry level car buyers. The Warrior, is a sporty hatchback with a touch of luxury rivaling the biggest car brands. It would be fantastic to buy as a first car for your wife or your first car as you start your new job. If I'm seen driving it, it will create another demand. This means there's a possibility our Bi-motive stock might climb a little. While we drive this business and grow it through other parts of the nation, it would be beneficial if we have our own scooters, manufactured by us. So Mngqobi needs to start a design on delivery scooters. Our new product at Bi-motive. It's looking like a good year so far.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 75

SASA POV\_

After Nkosi and his father left for the mountain, I led Zwe out to his car.

Zwe: "You're recovering really well. I'm happy with your progress."

Me: "Thank you Zwe. Even the pain isn't as much anymore but I will still be keeping it easy. Also, is it okay if I do some school work?"

Zwe: "I'd encourage it. You'll be attending lectures virtually so it shouldn't be a problem."

Me: "Thank you. I really needed something to do." His phone rang. He looked at the screen, and answered.

Zwe: "Is the house burning to the ground? Why are you calling me? I'm at Nkosi's villa, I'm about to leave. No he's not here... No." He looked at me and smiled. "I'm sure if you give him an hour or so, he'll respond. No I'm not doing that. Goodbye Sibonelo." He hung up. "Siblings." He chuckled.

Me: "Can't relate. I have the sweetest one." He laughed.

Zwe: "Okay, fine. Let me get going. Bye Sasa."

Me: "Bye." He walked to his car and drove off. I went into the villa. Zanele was waiting for me on the couch. "And then?"

Nele: "I'm waiting for you. Mama took dad to the garden for a walk. I'm bored Sasa." Teenager language, she wants to go somewhere.

Me: "I am also bored, love. I was thinking of making more flower bouquets for my friends. I was really enjoying it earlier."

Nele: "Yes! Let's do that!" But I wanted to do it with my man. I haven't spent that much time with Zanele and maybe this will give us something to do.

Me: "Alright. Let's go." I took the bucket, got gloves, cutters, all things we will need. "Let's start with Petu. I know she loves passion, so maybe red roses."

Nele: "Red roses are for romance Sasa. Not friendship."

Me: "But she knows I'm not romantically in love with her, this won't be a mixed message sort of thing. Just a hey there I'm thinking of you."

Nele: "If you say so." We went to the roses. "They're so beautiful. Why not the pink ones?"

Me: "Those remind me more of Zimmy. She would be so happy for these. We share the colour pink because we both love it."

Nele: "I haven't heard you mention her in a while."

Me: "Yeah, since my drama I haven't really spoken to her. I'll call her when we're done here."

Nele: "Okay, I'll cut these ones."

Me: "Be careful of the thorns."

Nele: "Okay." I watched her as she cut safely. "Can I ask you something?"

Me: "Sure."

Nele: "You and His Highness, were you being honest that you've never...had sex?" I giggled.

Me: "Yes."

Nele: "At all??"

Me: "At all. Nkosi is so respectful of my virtue and family. He wants to marry me first."

Nele: "That's really sweet."

Me: "I'm going to be honest, it's very hard. For both of us because I really want to and he does too. We've come close to it as well but stopped. What we share emotionally is so much stronger than just physical touch but If I'm being honest, I cannot wait." She giggled.

Nele: "With the looks of things, it could be in a few weeks."

Me: "And you? Do you have any crush besides the old man I've asked you to leave alone."

Nele: "And I've listened. Zwe is really hot, but seeing him with His Highness is scary. It's a cold reminder that he's actually twice my age and I don't want to embarrass myself with royals. Mama is so happy, yoh. She's been praying for the war to be over so the wedding preparations can start."

Me: "I heard her." I laughed.

Nele: "And I do have a crush."

Me: "Who?"

Nele: "Please don't judge."

Me: "I would never judge you, tell me." Was it Amahle? She seemed so happy to chill with her when she was around.

Nele: "So, it's a guy from the village."

Me: "Ooh. I thought it was Amahle."

Nele: "That's my sister in law." She laughed.

Me: "Tell me about your guy." She blushed.

Nele: "He's cute. And funny."

Me: "What's his name?"

Nele: "Mfundiso."

Me: "Who's Mfundiso again?"

Nele: "He is the Chief's son." I gasped.

Me: "Isn't he in his 20s?"

Nele: "No. That's Ntsikelelo, his brother. Mfundiso is 16."

Me: "Oh. That's good. Does he know you like him?"

Nele: "We only started chatting this year. I don't know, sometimes I feel like he really likes me."

Me: "And other times?" I placed the last rose for this bouquet in the bucket.

Nele: "I feel weird. He asks stuff that I don't know."

Me: "Such as what?" I started on the pink roses.

Nele: "Like ...have I been kissed...down there." I looked at her.

Me: "Block that boy right now."

Nele: "Sasa-"

Me: "NOW."

Nele: "I'm talking to you because you're the only person who won't judge me. Please." I held back my emotions.

Me: "Okay, carry on."

Nele: "I said no."

Me: "Hmm." I carefully cut the roses as Nkosi had instructed me.

Nele: "So he invited me over this other time. To his brothers house. And they were there, drinking and stuff. We went to his room to talk. We did talk, alot. He is really sweet."

Me: "And then what happened."

Nele: "We kissed and he asked to touch me. I said yes because I wanted to. He touched me."

Me: "Zanele."

Nele: "That's not all." No, she wanted me to have a heart attack.

Me: "What else."

Nele: "Well, he said he wanted me to feel good. So he wanted to kiss me down there. I said no, I wasn't comfortable with that. He accepted and asked if maybe he can touch it again. So I let him."

Me: "And?"

Nele: "Do you think I'm not a virgin anymore?" She whispered.

Me: "Oh my God, I don't even know."

Nele: "It's just that, now mama got all excited about you and getting married. She wants to have a ceremony where we both get tested and celebrated in the village for being virgins." This was news to me.

Me: "Wait, what? You mean our mother wants to parade us to the village for being virgins?" She nodded. "I don't know Zanele but I'm also uncomfortable with having a whole ceremony like this. It's not the village's business what I do with my body. It's not anyone's business! Now she's dragged you into it too." I sighed.

Nele: "What do we do?"

Me: "Before that. How do you feel about this boy and what you guys did? Are you uncomfortable with it?"

Nele: "I don't know. I like him but I don't want to have sex yet. Since I've been here he's been asking me to send him pictures and videos."

Me: "Of what?"

Nele: "Of my boobs and it."

Me: "No Nele, this person doesn't respect you and he obviously doesn't like you. He hasn't even shown commitment to you and he's asking for

things? Also, you're still young. You're saying it yourself that you don't want sex but he's pushing and not caring if you're uncomfortable. My sis, please, block him. This is not the person for you. No matter how cute he is. Did you send him these pictures?" She looked at her hands. "Oh no. Zanele!"

Nele: "I'm sorry."

Me: "Exactly what did you send?"

Nele: "Everything." Oh my God, this will turn into a nightmare. Quickly. What if he blackmails her into sex with these pictures? What if he leaks them? What if he already has sent them around? Oh Bawo.

Me: "Okay. We need to find a way to fix this but for now, Zanele, please don't ever let someone manipulate you into doing something that makes you uncomfortable and doesn't show you in good light. In this world that we live in, women will always be shamed, for just about anything and these type of pictures will invite unwanted, very dangerous attention to you. Mfundiso can release these pictures at any moment and you will be the laughing stock. Please, sis, don't ever give someone this much power over your life." She had tears in her eyes.

Nele: "I'm sorry." She sobbed.

Me: "Zanele, you're a teen. You're bound to make mistakes. Don't cry babe. Come." I hugged her. We're in deep shit. "We're going to fix this, okay? Wipe your tears. Let's finish up here."

Nele: "What will I do Sasa? What if he shows his friends?"

Me: "Let's not worry about that now. I'll ask a friend for advice."

Nele: "Sasa, I'm getting really scared now. I didn't think of this before."

Me: "Again, Nele. You're only human, you will make mistakes. We can do the whole lecture and yell at you when a solution has come." ...

We finished collecting the flowers and made our way back to the villa.

Nkosi: "Do I still have a garden left?" He stood by the door.

Me: "No. I think you have to start over." He smiled, pulling me in for a kiss.

Nkosi: "Hello my love. I've been waiting for you."

Me: "Really?"

Nkosi: "Hmm. I want to show you something."

Me: "Now I'm excited. I need to put these down."

Nkosi: "Why did you collect 100 flowers? I thought you had four friends?"

Me: "It's not 100 baby. It's 40. I want to make bouquets of 10."

Nkosi: "Okay. Let's start with that then. Zanele, what's wrong?"

Nele: "Nothing, Your Highness, I just have a headache. I think I'll go lie down." She placed the flowers on the table and left for the bedroom.

Nkosi: "Why did she lie to me? What happened?"

Me: "It's a long story that is very sensitive. And I don't know how to deal with."

Nkosi: "Tell me." He took the flowers off the table leading me to the lounge area we used before.

Me: "I don't know how Nkosi. Its a sensitive topic but I can't fix it. Maybe you can but I don't know how to tell you without betraying her confidence." He stared at me.

Nkosi: "What would the priority be? The help or me knowing the topic?"

Me: "The help."

Nkosi: "So how do I help?"

Me: "I don't know. How do you retrieve pictures and videos from someone else's phone? And possibly the people they've sent them to?"

Nkosi: "Oh. You want them to not have the pictures at all?"

Me: "Yes."

Nkosi: "There's no way to know who they sent them to."

Me: "This is bad." I started the first bouquet for Zimmy.

Nkosi: "Why were these pictures sent?"

Me: "It's stuff people send baby."

Nkosi: "Like your pictures that you send to me?"

Me: "Not quite but something like that." I know my boyfriend needs full details and you have to tell him specifically otherwise he will not understand at all.

Nkosi: "I like those pictures, why would you send them to me then want them off my phone. Don't hurt your fingers." A thorn pricked me.

Me: "Ow." A trickle of blood came out my thumb, I placed it in my mouth. "I just need the pictures gone baby." He stared at my mouth. "Love?" He's zoned out now, great. His phone rang. "Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "Baby?"

Me: "Your phone." He fished it out his pocket.

Nkosi: "It's Sibonelo." He answered. "Hello." He looked at me, smiling. "I'm well thank you. How are you?" My bleeding had stopped, finally. "Sure, hold on." He took the phone off his ear. "It's Sibonelo, he wants to talk to you?"

Me: "Why?"

Nkosi: "I don't know. Do you want to talk to him?"

Me: "Sure." I took his phone and put him on loud. "Hello."

Sibo: "Hi Thembisa, how are you?"

Me: "I'm fine." I still didn't trust him for what he was doing weeks ago and I didn't like him at all.

Sibo: "Okay. I don't want to waste your time, I just want to apologize for harassing you, stalking you, using you for my own agenda and making you uncomfortable. I did mean to scare you and I am sorry that I did. I'm not going to lie and say I didn't mean to. I truly am sorry though. It obviously will not ever happen again." I did not expect that.

Me: "Oh. Thank you Prince Sibonelo. I appreciate the apology."

Sibo: "Thank you for hearing me out. Have a blessed day. Goodbye." He hung up. Sibonelo apologized? This was strange to me because the Sibonelo I met did not seem like a nice guy. Or is it because he saw Nkosi with the fire in the passage?

Me: "Nkosi." He was holding my hand, watching the small prick of blood ooze out of my thumb. "Sthandwa Sam, please focus."

Nkosi: "Not when I can smell your blood. You know that." I sighed getting up to go find a bandaid. "Sibonelo will know."

Me: "What will he know baby?" I put the plaster on my thumb.

Nkosi: "That's not going to help."

Me: "I know love, it'll stop the bleeding, what will Sibonelo know? Why is he being nice?"

Nkosi: "He will know how to retrieve the pictures."

Me: "Oh... I don't know."

Nkosi: "Yes. He's good with tech things."

Me: "Nkosi I don't want Sibonelo to see naked pictures of my sister." He stared at me, shocked. Crap.

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

Finally I had gotten hold of Nkosi and I could now go home to my mother. I closed my laptops. Zimmy came out the bedroom talking on her phone. She had a beige tight short dress on. It drew her body in a sexy way. Cupping those bra-less boobs. I watched her take out juice and pour herself some. Finally hanging up.

Zimmy: "Do you want juice?" I want you on top of me.

Sibo: "No thank you. I have to get going. You can use the app now."

Zimmy: "Perfect. I need some snacks."

Sibo: "Why?"

Zimmy: "I invited someone over to watch a movie." I sent a message on my phone.

Sibo: "Oh. That's cool. I'll need you to document each stage of the order process from when you open the app. Take note of everything."

Zimmy: "Does Fresh Foods market have wine? Since it's Sunday, I wanted a relaxed afternoon and evening to unwind." Khaya needed to get here ASAP. I know he doesn't want people in his house. I'm not going to lose the bet I have with myself.

Sibo: "Yeah they do. We'll talk tomorrow when we launch. Enjoy your Sunday and your date." I took my stuff and walked out. Khaya responded to my message, he was on his way. Perfect. I called Zoe.

Sibo: "Hi Zo. Can you deliver the parcel at my house?"

Zoe: "Yes, Prince Sibonelo. I'll be there in 15 minutes."

Sibo: "Thanks." I hung up driving to my parents house. Wish I could get her a scarf or something but all shops were still closed. No flowers, no scarf, no jewelry not even chocolate. Embarrassing. It doesn't matter for now because I'll find a way to spoil her soon. I parked the car in the driveway and went in. "Mama!" I went to the lounge. "Tata where's my mo-" I stared at the king. What the hell was he doing here?

Sibo: "My King, Good Day. What an honour to have you visit us."

Sikhosana: "Hm." Right, like his son, he doesn't respond. I didn't care. I needed to see my mother.

Sibo: "My apologies for disturbing your meeting my kings." I turned to walk away.

Biyela: "Actually son, it's good that you're here. Please sit." **YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME.** I sat next to him. "King Sikhosana, will be attending royal council tomorrow with the Prince."

Sibo: "Oh." To think we even got banished. Was this the end of our partnership with the Sikhosana family?

Biyela: "Have you found anything out from your research? And tapping?"

Sibo: "The last time I listened in was an hour ago. Uhm, they didn't mention a royal council meeting."

Sikhosana: "I'm calling it tomorrow." Oh you're summoning them.

Sibo: "Oh a surprise meeting. Bathonga is still in communication with Tansa nation. It seems that he offered his daughter to the prince there. He is removing her from here so that if they fail, you can't reach her because she would belong to another country."

Sikhosana: "Are they still here?"

Sibo: "Her father is, she seems to have been sent back home." He looked at his guard.

Sikhosana: "Bring her to me." ...

I had run out of time and my mother was taking a bath. I'll be back later for dinner anyway. Zoe would be at my house soon or already there. I drove quickly to my house and found her car parked but she wasn't inside it. Okay? That's strange. How would she have gone into my house? I walked in the door. Zwe was sitting on the couch with her, laughing.

Sibo: "What the hell is this?"

Zwe: "There you are. You harrass me all morning and you aren't even home?"

Sibo: "Thank you Zoe."

Zoe: "You're welcome sir." She stood up

Zwe: "So... Will I be getting an invite?"

Zoe: "I'm not sending any invites, however you can buy a ticket, Prince Zwe."

Zwe: "I'll definitely do that. When is it?"

Zoe: "Are you serious?"

Zwe: "Of course I'm serious I'm eager to learn." He smiled. What the hell was he doing?

Zoe: "Well then. The first class is tomorrow evening." She took her bag.

Zwe: "Looking forward to it." She smiled and walked out.

Sibo: "And then?"

Zwe: "Just supporting a small business. She does online cooking classes. Should I buy you a ticket?"

Sibo: "No. What are you doing in my house?"

Zwe: "You forgot that you left a man in your basement? I came to take him out. Like we agreed."

Sibo: "Not today."

Zwe: "Let's not fight. Please."

Sibo: "Please listen, I planned on giving him the papers tomorrow."

Zwe: "Why not today?"

Sibo: "Today I'm feeding him. Providing him warmth. Taking that away as punishment. He's toeing the line, soon I'll have him programmed to only do as I say."

Zwe: "Sibonelo you always go over board. I asked you not to do this!"

Sibo: "Yes but now we're here Zwe. Just one more day."

Zwe: "He is a human being, not your experiment. Get those papers and let him out. Now."

Sibo: "Zwe-"

Zwe: "I'm not going to repeat myself Sibonelo." I went to my office, taking the envelope and bringing it back. "Let him out." I walked to the vault door leading to the basement and opened it.

Sibo: "Bhekokwakhe." He looked up at me. "Come." I left the door open and sat down in the lounge. In a few minutes, Bhekokwakhe came up the stairs and stood by the lounge. He's going to run. He's not ready.

Zwe: "Hello."

Bheko: "Why are you doing this?"

Zwe: "You have a choice here Bhekokwakhe. You want to go back to your family. All you need to do is sign these papers that state that you will never, conspire against the throne again. And you've taken time out to think of your actions these past few days but never disclose where you were or taken by whom. Basically, wipe the past week out of your memory. Just that easy." Bhekokwakhe glanced at the door. In a split second he bolted out of the house. Once again, I'm proven right.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 76

SIBONELO'S POV \_

Sibo: "Are you ready to listen to me now?" He looked at me.

Zwe: "Mxim." The guard dragged Bhekokwakhe back inside the house, throwing him on the floor.

Bheko: "What do you want from me!!" I looked at Zwe, waiting for him to continue because he told me to stop and so I've stopped.

Zwe: "Bhekokwakhe, we're trying to help you."

Bheko: "You royals never help anyone but yourselves!!"

Zwe: "At which point have you never been helped? You have a good job, you didn't lack anything, you were saved from dying a horrible death and leaving your children as orphans."

Bheko: "This is not a fair nation! That family does nothing but dictate what we do, what we eat, where we work! All of our lives!"

Zwe: "And why is that bad? Bhekokwakhe, the throne decides what produce is brought into the nation because 64 years ago a ship brought in produce that was contaminated. It was sold in the markets and that poison killed about 2000 people, creating health complications in many others. The throne put in place a law that no other nation brings in food unless it is thoroughly inspected and therefore approved. The reason they decide where you work? This is obvious Bhekokwakhe. People are placed in industries and companies they are bound to actually be comfortable in and progressive in. You have no formal tertiary education, when you applied in the employment office, you were asked your skills, you wrote a test and you were placed according to your capabilities. Is that wrong?" Bhekokwakhe stared at him, the information sinking in.

Bheko: "But you haven't been honest in the information that you're sharing with the public. You aren't telling us the truth."

Zwe: "We've shared what is important for you to know. It is in your best interest. Bhekokwakhe, I am not as patient as my brother. I'm not going to lock you in a safe warm basement and give you gourmet dinners and exotic breakfast, lunch meals you've never eaten a day in your life. I will puncture your lungs and throw you in the middle of the ocean. Your body will never resurface this earth ever again. Do you understand me or would you prefer I demonstrate?" That's the brother I know.

Bheko: "You're not going to-" Zwe stood up, walking to the kitchen.

Sibo: "You can still change your mind." I chuckled. Zwe walked back in carrying a large kitchen knife.

Bheko: "What are you doing?"

Zwe: "Fortunately for you, I know exactly where to puncture and also fix it in time for you to live a normal life but that will be dependent on your cooperation." This is no longer a threat.

Sibo: "Zwelethu-" He grabbed Bhekokwakhe, I jumped holding his arm holding him back. "Sign the fucking papers."

Zwe: "Let me go Sibonelo." Bhekokwakhe took the envelope, pulling out the papers.

Sibo: "Read it, memorize it and sign." His hands were shaking as he went through it then signed each page until the last. "That wasn't so difficult now, was it?"

Zwe: "And you better keep the terms of that agreement. Should you even try to utter a word, I will find you and keep my promise. Do you remember that promise?"

Bheko: "Yes."

Zwe: "Yes what? Am I your dog?"

Bheko: "No, my Prince."

Zwe: "Make your way back to the basement so that we can organise you some transport home." Bhekokwakhe got up and walked down to the basement.

Sibo: "Haven't seen you this mad in a while."

Zwe: "I hate being made an idiot." He sat down.

Sibo: "How'd you know all that stuff? About why Sikhosana monitors food and employment."

Zwe: "Among many other things. Problem is that you don't read your history to understand why things happens. You rely too much on diluted history. Media only focuses on Sikhosana controlling the nation but fail to report why because they don't know. Read Sibonelo. For once, get off the computer and read a book."

Sibo: "Haibo? Ungithethiselani manje? Sikhosana can control the narrative around their reign but they choose not to."

Zwe: "Why must they? The important thing is, there is never a time that family didn't look after the citizens of this nation. You've started working with Nkosi, you see how his first priority is the nation at all times."

Sibo: "Yeah, I see it."

Zwe: "Where are the boys?"

Sibo: "Khaya's apartment."

Zwe: "Are they ready for work tomorrow?"

Sibo: "Yes. They've had a good break. Also, King Sikhosana and the Prince have summoned a royal council meeting. So maybe we'll only be meeting afterwards."

Zwe: "Okay. Let me handle this one, go to your mother, I know you're itching."

Sibo: "Itching is a little dramatic. Zwe, he signed."

Zwe: "I need to be sure him and I are on the same page. Go." I got up and walked out, driving to my mother.

I walked in the house, the king had left. My father was going to try to distract me so I climbed up the stairs quickly avoiding him.

Sibo: "Mama."

Queen: "Come in." Finally. I walked in. She was in bed, on her tablet.

Sibo: "Hello."

Queen: "Hello my bun. What's wrong?"

Sibo: "I apologized to Thembisa and the Prince. I couldn't get ahold of them until an hour ago."

Queen: "That's good. Are you hungry?"

Sibo: "Yes. I haven't eaten today." I climbed in bed next to her.

Queen: "You can't eat in my bed Boni."

Sibo: "Where must I eat then? I've been working all weekend, I'm tired."

Queen: "Your father is going to complain if you bring food in here. Here, have a grape." She took a grape from her fruit bowl and gave it to me.

Sibo: "Thank you mama."

Queen: "What are you working on now?"

Sibo: "Some app for grocery delivery."

Queen: "Oh that's lovely. Tell me about it."

Sibo: "Well, it's an app where you can order directly from the supermarket. For now, we only have Fresh Foods market. We're launching it officially tomorrow. My partner will be making her first order today so we can check if it needs any improvement."

Queen: "Hmm. Who's your partner?"

Sibo: "A girl called Zimmy. She studies at the University. This was her idea."

Queen: "And you like her."

Sibo: "Kind of. Yes."

Queen: "Have you asked her out?"

Sibo: "Apparently a year ago. Then I forgot."

Queen: "How do you forget?"

Sibo: "It was physical mama, I'm busy mina, I can't remember everything."

Queen: "I didn't raise a whore Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Eh, but it's okay that Mnqobi and Khaya make me the city whore for the day?"

Queen: "What are you talking about now?"

Sibo: "They said I must make a few deliveries to drive up the hype and demand. Give the people something to talk about."

Queen: "Why must you do it? Why not them?"

Sibo: "Angazi." I took another grape.

Queen: "Wena do you want to do it?"

Sibo: "If it'll help, I guess."

Queen: "Keep your guards with you Sboni. I don't want anything to happen to you. So when are you planning to tell this girl your feelings?"

Sibo: "Feelings mama? That's an exaggeration. I just like her."

Queen: "Sibonelo, please be serious."

Sibo: "I am. Hee, Zwe is buying tickets for an online cooking class."

Queen: "Zwe? He wants to learn how to cook? Why didn't he ask me to teach him? Why does he want to cook?"

Sibo: "He wants to impress the lady who hosts them. She does the cooking for my club, I think he likes her." She laughed.

Queen: "Zwelethu is a sweetheart. What is his plan apart from buying a ticket?"

Sibo: "A ticket? Knowing Zwe he'll buy all the tickets so that she focuses on him."

Queen: "That would be extremely rude. That lady must be working very hard on her craft, to have just one person gate keep it from others for his selfish reasons is very mean. He can't do that."

Sibo: "I don't know then because he's currently very bored since the hospital closed. He's only starting the building of it tomorrow. The Prince's company will be doing it."

Queen: "That's amazing. Did you see how beautiful that new Res is?"

Sibo: "Yeah, Nkosi's designs are truly out of this world. You should see his villa. A true masterpiece. Pretty sure if that place was listed, it would be no less than 30 million."

Queen: "Are you serious? Isn't a villa like a medium house?"

Sibo: "His is 8 bedrooms. Two family suites, two presidential suites and four executive suites. The garden is huge with variety upon variety of plants, trees with fruit. It's incredible shame. Also has a spa, restaurant, lounge and a vast wine cellar with the finest collection."

Queen: "Haibo Sibonelo. How do you know so much about someone's house?"

Sibo: "Mthunzi told me when I was there. We were sitting at the bar having a drink and he showed me around."

Queen: "Wow. This place sounds impressive. So Zwe's hospital is in good hands?"

Sibo: "Yes mama." I took a watermelon slice, munching on it.

Queen: "So, what is your plan? I'm getting old Sboni."

Sibo: "You don't look a day over 40. Don't worry." I kissed her cheek.

King Biyela: "Ha.a, No. Sibonelo." He walked in.

Sibo: "Here comes the jealous bear."

King: "Get out of my bed!!"

Sibo: "Mama."

Queen: "Please let him be, my king. Come sit with us. What did your friend say?"

King: "My love. Let's just be glad, we're no longer involved in council. That's all I'm going to say."

Queen: "I hope no one gets hurt. I hate all this fighting. I just want things to get back to normal. Why are people fighting over a position that is being handled well. Yoh, the way I hate unnecessary drama. Look, now."

Sibo: "And it's not the first time. I don't think they'll make it out this time." My phone rang. "It's the prince, I need to take this." ....

SASA POV\_

Nkosi was hiding his shock well but I know he had questions.

Me: "Love."

Nkosi: "Hm?" He blinked.

Me: "Do you have any questions?"

Nkosi: "I don't think they'll help."

Me: "Okay. So what do we do?"

Nkosi: "Sibonelo will know."

Me: "Can't he tell me what to do? Maybe he gives me the instructions and I'll do it?"

Nkosi: "I guess."

Me: "Okay. Please call him." I wrapped the first bouquet in black wrapping paper and a ribbon.

Nkosi: "Sibonelo? Hello." I fixed the second bouquet and wrapped it as well. "How do you remove naked pictures from someone's phone? Can you give instructions? No it's not my pictures. I wouldn't... I don't know why you think I'd do that. Okay, but can you write the instructions? Fine then, please come over. Yes." He hung up. "He's coming. He says he can only do it from his system."

Me: "Thank you love." He pulled my arm, sitting me on his lap and kissed me. I held his face, slowly sucking on his lips.

Nkosi: "You taste amazing."

Me: "What are you tasting?" I kissed his chin. He looked at the door, I got up from his lap. My father walked in. That was close.

Xolani: "Hello. I've been looking for you."

Me: "Hi Tata."

Xolani: "Just making sure you're fine. You have a delivery."

Me: "Oh. I didn't order anything." I looked at Nkosi. He stood up, walking me out to reception. "Hi Raven, I have a delivery?"

Raven: "Oh, yes. Guard Mongezi brought it in. Should I call him?" Nkosi took the large box opening it. It was a cooler.

Me: "No. It's okay, thank you Raven."

Nkosi: "It's ice cream." I took the envelope stuck on the lid.

Me: "Hi Sasa, the flowers are so beautiful. I love them. Saturday is water under the bridge. I want you to sample my new flavour and of course, have your favourite as a thank you for the flowers and being so sweet. Blessed day. Busi." I smiled like a crazy person.

Nkosi: "That's nice."

Me: "It is." I looked at the ice cream tub. It was different from the original packaging. "Aww, look at the name!"

Nkosi: "A Kings Love." He smiled.

Me: "This will be our dessert after dinner. I can't wait! It looks so good. Raven, please ask a guard to take these to the kitchen."

Raven: "Yes ma'am. My Prince, you also have a delivery." Nkosi took the box from her, carefully opening it and took out a tablet.

Nkosi: "Oh. This is not mine. It's for Tata."

Xolani: "I didn't buy that."

Nkosi: "No it's for the security system on the farm."

Me: "Oh? It's done? Let's see!!" He switched it on, showing Tata where to press.

Nkosi: "This is the system. When you press on it, you see the different blocks, which is where each camera is."

Xolani: "What if it rains?"

Nkosi: "They're water resistant, there's also a cover on them." He handed the tablet. My father pressed on the camera on the goats side.

Xolani: "They look healthy. This one is pregnant. How did I not notice?"

Nkosi: "You can type a message here if there's something you want to alert or tell them. It will show on their system."

Xolani: "Really?"

Nkosi: "Yes sir. Type anything." I left them together, figuring it out to finish my bouquets. I needed all four of them sent out in an hour.

Sibonelo arrived in an hour with a big bag. What exactly was in it? I was already by the foyer. My father and Nkosi had disappeared to the garden talking about plants and goats again. My boyfriend had this new fascination with goats and every chance he got, he asked questions. Now that there's cameras, he's going to need more information so I let him be.

Me: "Prince Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Thembisa."

Me: "Uhm. What's in the bag if you don't mind me asking." He smiled.

Sibo: "It's my computers."

Me: "Right. So it's kind of a private thing, I was hoping you'd rather instruct me on what to do."

Sibo: "I'll need information."

Me: "Yeah, that's all I'm willing to give." He smiled, trying not to giggle. Crap, he thought the pictures were mine. "They're not mine."

Sibo: "Riiight. Show me where to set up."

Me: "They're cleaning the lounge area, that's where you will set up. For now, can I get you something to drink?" He stared at me still smiling.

Sibo: "Sure, I wouldn't mind a whiskey."

Me: "I thought you don't drive when you've had a drink."

Sibo: "You remember."

Me: "Of course I do, you were an asshole."

Sibo: "Again, I'm sorry. I brought a guard, he'll drive me home." I nodded and walked to the restaurant area. My mother has been very busy today. She was wearing something I've only seen her wearing to a church conference.

Me: "Mama." She turned to me.

Mama: "Hello my sweet angel child." She has NEVER called me that.

Me: "What's going on?"

Mama: "I've decided to offer the kitchen staff your favourite Sunday recipe. The one I always make for your birthday."

Me: "It's not my birthday mama."

Mama: "Yes, I know that. I was just saying maybe we should have something nice for once."

Me: "Mama, these chefs studied food overseas. They're rated with the top in the world. They always cook nice food."

Mama: "Thembisa, fancy food is good but something that reminds us of home is even better. How do I look?" I stared at her peach and pink dress with puffy mesh shoulders.

Me: "Oh my God."

Mama: "Exactly."

Me: "You're dressing up for the king." I hissed.

Mama: "Haibo Thembisa. I'm not dressing up, I'm only looking presentable. It would be rude not to." I didn't know how to deal with this yet.

Me: "Mama. What does uTata say about this?"

Mama: "He refuses to wear his suit, Thembisa please convince him."

Me: "I need to process this." I went to the bar taking the bottle of whiskey and a glass placing it on a tray. I took it to the lounge. They had finished and Sibonelo was sitting down, setting his computers up.

Sibo: "Where is His Highness?"

Me: "Somewhere around with his father in law. I don't know how to measure this thing. How much of it do I pour?"

Sibo: "No it's okay, you don't have to do that Thembisa."

Me: "You're here to help me, it's the least I can do."

Sibo: "You're a future queen, it's enough that you fetch me something to drink, I can't allow you to serve me. It's disrespectful."

Me: "Oh." I keep forgetting this queen part. "Takes a bit of adjusting. I'm not used to being a queen." I sat down. He smiled.

Sibo: "It's sweet. I'm sure, your queen mothers will teach you the whole thing."

Me: "Oh okay."

Sibo: "I'm not going to look at your naked pictures Thembisa. Don't be nervous."

Me: "Okay. Thank you."

Sibo: "I'll need a few things though. The number it was sent to and the device used to send."

Me: "Okay. I'll get it now." I went to the bedroom where Nele was sleeping. She wasn't really sleeping, just silently crying. "Hi buttercup. I have a friend here, who's going to help. I just need a few things."

Nele: "They can help?"

Me: "Yes. I need Mfundiso's number and your phone." She handed me the phone.

Nele: "It's saved with his name."

Me: "Okay. Don't be nervous. Please go to mama, she's doing something that's bound to give me a headache. She can distract you a bit." She nodded. I went back to the lounge. Nkosi was here with my father. I hid the phone in my pocket. The room was suddenly quiet. Why were they sitting here? Oh dear God, did Nkosi tell our father?? I stared at him.

Nkosi: "Hello." He smiled.

Me: "What's happening?"

Nkosi: "Nothing. Have you gotten somewhere with the pictures?"

Me: "Uhm. Sibonelo is teaching me the ropes. I thought you guys were having fun in the garden. Why did you come inside?"

Nkosi: "I thought you needed company."

Me: "No, not at all."

Nkosi: "Alright then."

Xolani: "I'm going to check on your mother, Sasa."

Me: "Please Tata, she's doing something and I don't know what to do anymore."

Xolani: "I'll sort it out." He walked out.

Me: "Babe! Did you tell him?"

Nkosi: "Of course not. Why would I do that?"

Me: "Oh thank goodness." I looked for Mfundiso's number and gave Sibonelo the phone. He connected a cable to its charging port and started clicking on his computer. I stared at the screen not even knowing what I'm looking at. It was just numbers and symbols then a map appeared. He zoomed in then it disappeared, he was now looking at a list of numbers which kept decreasing and a name appeared, he clicked the name. A list of information appeared. He looked at me.

Sibo: "He's 16."

Me: "I know that. I told you it wasn't me." He looked back at the computer.

Sibo: "Who then is sending naked pictures to a 16 year old boy?"

Me: "A 14 year old girl."

Sibo: "Oh hell." He shook his head. "He's a chief's son?" I nodded. "This is messy. How big is your village?" I stared at him, shocked.

Me: "What does that mean?"

Sibo: "A 16 year old boy who receives nudes is obviously going to send it to his friends and those friends to theirs. I need to know how big the problem is."

Me: "Uhm. We have a population of about 120 the last time I checked."

Sibo: "So we're looking at about 200 to 300 people."

Me: "How did we get to 300?"

Sibo: "The internet is a fast thing and very accessible. Some people have relatives in other villages and cities. Once it gets to those places, anyone can access it because it then stops being the 'so and so sent me this' it becomes 'hey check this out'." This was bad. This was horrible. Zanele was such a young girl, she didn't need this.

Nkosi: "How do we fix it Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "I need to access his phone."

Me: "Can you do it?"

Sibo: "Of course. Give me a few minutes. I'm going to use her phone to send him a link. Clickbait that will distract him for a few minutes if he's stupid. I'll need those few minutes for the virus upload on his phone and I'll have full control of all of his data and everything he's ever sent." I stared at him. He can do that? "Can I go ahead?" I nodded.

Me: "Yes." I swallowed...

Chapter 77

KHAYA'S POV \_

I woke up early Monday morning. I'd had a good rest this weekend. This week was going to be a busy one. Jimmy's app would launch at midday. We had used it yesterday and it worked perfectly. I took my shower and got dressed. Not yet used to suits but I didn't have a choice. I wore a

grey fitted suit with a white shirt and brown shoes. I went downstairs for breakfast. Sibonelo and Zwe were the first ones at the table as usual. I know Zwe wakes up super early. Mngqobi hated mornings. He came downstairs, dressed and not in the mood. Petu had officially blocked him last night. She had posted a bouquet of red roses with an inlove emoji. He lost his mind. Then when we got home, found out Nothando also received some flowers, now he was confused and annoyed because not one of them were telling him anything. Nothando sat down for breakfast.

Nothando: "Good morning." We greeted her back. Mngqobi stared at her.

Mngqobi: "Nothando can I speak to you?" She ignored him. I dished up my breakfast. "Why? I've apologized, I've begged. I know this isn't about my relationship with Petu. Why are you angry at me?"

Sibo: "Aw kahle Mngqobi. We're having breakfast."

Mngqobi: "She refuses to be in a room with me Bhut Sbo, where else can I talk to her?"

Sibo: "I don't care but it won't be here while I'm trying to enjoy food."  
Mngqobi got up and stormed out the house. "Zwe, Uyambona uMngqobi ukuthi uyang'delela?"

Zwe: "I'll speak to him." I drank my coffee quietly and ate my food. We weren't allowed to use our phones while eating so I couldn't even entertain myself. "How did it go yesterday up the mountain?"

Sibo: "Great. Turns out the damage wasn't too bad. I managed to wipe the phone. He hadn't sent anything yet."

Zwe: "He didn't copy to his computer?"

Sibo: "I got into it too." He smiled happily.

Zwe: "That's good. One less thing to stress about. I'm going to be at the hospital for most of the day. You'll be meeting Nkosi at his office with Khaya. Mngqobi will be with Zim to launch the app."

Sibo: "Cool with me."

Zwe: "Nothando, what are your plans for the day?"

Notha: "I'll be attending school."

Zwe: "Oh, virtually?"

Notha: "I don't have a choice."

Zwe: "It's for your safety."

Notha: "I understand Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "Update me on how the day goes, Sboni. Enjoy your day." He held my shoulder and walked out.

Sibo: "Eat up young prince. It's a long day today. I'm waiting on you." I finished up my food and we left the house.

We arrived at the new residence.

Khaya: "Why does the Prince not have an office?"

Sibo: "I think it's because the meetings he usually has with other royals are at royal court. He works from anywhere. This, I think is his latest project."

Khaya: "It's beautiful."

Sibo: "Makes you want to move in, huh?" I chuckled getting out the car. We walked into the building going straight to his office where I did my first presentation for him. "Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Sibonelo." He looked at me, all the way to my feet. I mean, I tried. I know I look professional.

Khaya: "Good morning."

Mthunzi: "Morning." I was presentable at least. "Would you like to borrow a tie?"

Khaya: "Uhm.. I suppose." I hate ties.

Mthunzi: "I was joking but the king is inside, he's easily offended by unfinished outfits. Good luck." He smiled. I looked at Sibonelo.

Sibo: "He's teasing you." We walked into the office. Truly the King was here. For the first time, there were no guards around him. Maybe because they were all out in the passage. I bowed with Sibonelo.

Sibo: "Good morning my King. This is Khaya."

Khaya: "Good morning my King." As expected, silence.

Nkosi: "Sibonelo, do you have any information since last night?"

Sibo: "Well, the royals are panicked. Since Princess Samu disappeared from her palace yesterday."

King: "Panicked? That's not good enough, I want them dead."

Nkosi: "Father, we spoke about this."

King: "Yes, I've had a change of heart. Thanks for the reminder."

Nkosi: "No. You're not killing other royals."

King: "I'm defending myself."

Nkosi: "Only when there's a need to."

Sibo: "Have you called the meeting yet, Your Highness?"

Nkosi: "About to." He pressed on his phone but I knew he wasn't texting other royals. Out of curiosity I looked up at the King. He stared right back at me. Why was he looking at me? My heart hammered in my chest. Is he going to kill me? The king before him did that to commoners who looked at him. My whole body was shaking. Sibonelo looked at me.

King: "And then?"

Sibo: "Please excuse us, my King." He held my arm out the office. "What's wrong bug?"

Khaya: "I looked at him. He was staring at me." Mthunzi chuckled.

Sibo: "He does that, don't worry."

Khaya: "What if he kills me?"

Sibo: "That won't happen. I won't allow that to happen. Can you stop laughing?" He said to Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "I warned him."

Sibo: "Bug, just stand next to me. Nothing is going to happen to you. I promise." I nodded. We walked back in. "My apologies, Your Highness and Majesty." He sat down to set up his computer. I glanced at Mehluli. Why was he staring at me? I just knew the King was staring at me too. I sat next to Sibonelo, helping him with connecting.

King: "Who is this?"

Nkosi: "Its Khaya."

King: "From where? He just waltzed in as if I was waiting on him. Who is Khaya and why is he here?"

Nkosi: "Sibonelo's younger brother. He's Solinga's son."

King: "Solinga?"

Nkosi: "My lawyer."

King: "How then did... Thandeka would never. No." He folded his arms. I don't know if I should explain but I can't address a king until he asks me a question. "Does Biyela know about him?"

Nkosi: "Yes. He lives with them."

King: "And he is fine with this? He's very nice."

Nkosi: "What are you talking about?"

King: "Thandeka has a baby with your lawyer."

Nkosi: "That's not.." he sighed. "Khaya has his own mother and father. His mother passed away. He only has Solinga as a parent. He grew up in the Biyela palace."

King: "Oh." Thank God that was cleared up. "So then he isn't Sibonelo's younger brother."

Nkosi: "Yes he is. Family isn't only blood." He looked at his father.

King: "If you say so." He sighed.

Sibo: "I have activity from Nakhamula and Bathonga."

Nkosi: "Play it." The recording started.

Bathonga: "Do you see what you've done Nakhamula?? You've dragged all of us in your mess!! My daughter is missing!!"

Nakhamula: "I told you not to worry about anything-"

Bathonga: "We've been summoned to a council meeting in an hour!!!!" He screamed. "If my child is dead, I'm killing one of yours!!"

Nakhamula: "There's no need for threats Bathonga. I told you Nondudumo said your daughter is fine."

Bathonga: "Do you trust this girl?"

Nakhamula: "Yes! She's treasure blood. She has the strongest blood that exists. Don't worry about anything." Nkosi stood up abruptly and

stared at his father. We looked at them. Something was happening. They looked alarmed.

Bathonga: "You better be sure of your story Nakhamula. I will not hesitate to show you who I am. Not even your witch girl will save you." It beeped, signaling a cut line.

King: "What the fuck was that." He hissed. I heard sparks like a live wire was cut, and electricity was sparking. Sibonelo held my hand.

Sibonelo: "Put the headset on and make notes for me, bug." I did as he said because I obviously didn't want to find out what the hell this is. If I looked, if I heard, I don't know what I'd do.

## PRINCE POV\_

After the recording, I felt my body heating ridiculously.

Nkosi: "Sibonelo, please give us the room." He and Khaya walked out.

King: "Treasure blood sounds very familiar Mehluli. You said to me that girl you want to marry is the only one of her kind. There is another one out there and she is a witch!!!"

Nkosi: "That's not possible."

King: "How is it not!! You heard what they said! What have you brought into my house Mehluli!!!"

Nkosi: "Thembisa is not a witch Father. This, I know. YOU know."

King: "I don't know a damn thing other than someone with the same blood as hers, is a witch and they're here. After she said she's the last one. She LIED!!" I was just as confused but I know Thembisa wasn't a witch. I know her father didn't lie. He was the only one to survive that fire.

Nkosi: "I need to see he-"

King: "Mehluli, don't fucking piss me off!! Do NOT!! We have a problem here and you're not going to be a puppy running back to its mum."

Nkosi: "IM TRYING TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS!!! I can't do that standing here with you!! It's either you come with me and behave or

you stay here!" I walked out the office. My guards fell in place around me. We got in the cars and drove off to the mountain. Mthunzi was beside me as usual.

Mthunzi: "Is everything okay?"

Nkosi: "Something is wrong. I just don't understand how."

Mthunzi: "What's wrong?"

Nkosi: "You'll find out soon. I need you to control this situation. My father is seething and he's gunning for Thembisa. I need to speak to her father and to Thembisa without my father exploding lightening."

Mthunzi: "Okay." We drove up the mountain and parked. I rushed into the villa. Thembisa's father was in the garden looking at the tablet.

Nkosi: "Sir, can I urgently speak to you please?" He stood up following me. I went to my suite, opening for him to go in. "Is Thembisa in your room?"

Xolani: "Yes, what's wrong?"

Nkosi: "I need her here." I went to the family suite and knocked. Thembisa opened the door.

Sasa: "Hi baby." She smiled. I pulled her hand out the room.

Nkosi: "I need to speak to you my love."

Sasa: "Okay." I walked her to my suite and closed the door, locking it.

Sasa: "What's happening?" She looked at her father.

Nkosi: "Mr Ntaka. I'm sorry I have to bring this up. You said, you were the only one that escaped the Mcebo village."

Xolani: "I was."

Nkosi: "It seems, there's another treasure blood that exists."

Xolani: "What do you mean?" My father banged on my door. Normal banging wouldn't move it but mixed with lightening? That door will break down in minutes.

Nkosi: "I had a meeting with my council. We heard the other royals speaking of a girl. Who's treasure blood. They don't know about Thembisa and the name they mentioned wasn't hers. There's someone

out there, who has your blood, and they're a witch. A very powerful witch."

Sasa: "That's not possible." The banging cracked the door. Xolani stared at the door.

Xolani: "Why is he angry?"

Nkosi: "He's concerned. Please move to this side." They stood behind by the lounge away from the door. The door broke down. I stood in front of him.

Nkosi: "Stop it."

King: "Where is she."

Nkosi: "Please don't make me do this Father, I'm begging you." I hated that I had to turn right in front of Thembisa and her father but I had to protect them.

King: "WHERE. IS. SHE." I growled in warning. Amahle walked in. She stood next to me. My father balled his fists switching off his lightning.

Ama: "What's going on?"

King: "Ask your brother."

Mama: "What is going on?" She walked in. I stared at my father and he at me.

Ama: "Nkosi, what happened?"

Nkosi: "Tell your father if he dares lift a finger, I'm ripping him apart."

Sasa: "Hayi Nkosi!" She came up to us but I pulled her behind me.

Ama: "Everyone needs to calm down and sit. Whatever this is, we can solve it. What is the problem Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "Thembisa isn't the only treasure blood alive."

Ama: "Yes, her father is also."

Nkosi: "Yes, but there's another girl. Apart from them."

Ama: "Describe her."

Nkosi: "I don't know, we don't know what she looks like. Tata is adamant he was the only one who escaped the village."

Ama: "Yes, that's true. He was the only one who escaped. Explain exactly how you came about this girl."

Nkosi: "The Other Royals know her, apparently she's a powerful witch. Question is, how? How does she have treasure blood if the entire village was wiped out? And how did they find her?"

Sasa: "She's the witch they want to use to dethrone you?" Even her voice was pure. How can my father think she's a witch. I held her behind me. She's not going anywhere near him.

Nkosi: "Yes."

Sasa: "Nkosi." I know she was trying to face him.

Nkosi: "No."

Sasa: "Sthandwa sam, your father is not going to hurt me. The King knows I cannot harm him. Let me through."

Nkosi: "No." She was not going to win this one. I'm not letting it happen.

Sasa: "My King, we have no idea who this person is. Does the family healer have any idea?"

King: "What does our healer have anything to do with this!?"

Sasa: "When I was still dreaming of the past. King Bhekizizwe brought Melaphi, a healer. He is the one who told him of my blood. Perhaps, your current healer can figure out who this witch is. Or where they come from."

Nkosi: "Amahle, do you know anything?"

Ama: "No. I've seen a face in my dreams but that's it. She's hidden herself. The only way that can happen is if she's using powerful muthi called Sithaba. It hides your true face."

Sasa: "How can we figure it out?"

Ama: "You need to find her."

Nkosi: "What!!"

Xolani: "NOT happening. Thembisa You're not going near a witch!! Now I've sat back enough and let this royal thing happen but I draw the line at witches. Absolutely not!!"

Ama: "It's the only way Tata."

Nkosi: "That's dangerous Amahle."

Ama: "Yes. It is. But not for Thembisa. She has her blood. She can't hurt her." ...

SASA POV\_

Everyone was panicked and irritable. I was scared. How did this witch escape the fire? How did they survive? Where were they all this time? Nkosi's phone rang.

Nkosi: "Yes Sibonelo?" He listened and looked at me. "Not yet. I might have to postpone."

Me: "You can't postpone."

Nkosi: "Let me call you back Sibonelo." He hung up. "We need to figure out who this witch is. Treasure blood doesn't exist apart from you and Tata. What if this witch is imitating?"

Me: "Imitating what? Being treasure blood?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Can you remember what Melaphi said when you were dreaming?"

Me: "Melaphi had lied, love. He said I had blood stronger than the King's and I can kill him. Which is not true." I thought about the time we went to Bakhoyo village the man under the tree. I looked at Amahle.

King: "What?"

Me: "Her blood is worth that of a hundred kings. She can connect to ancestors beyond her own. Nations will go to war for her blood. Witches will stop at nothing to take it from her." I remembered. "What if this witch knows there's a treasure blood somewhere? She'll need a King's blood to attract it then bring the treasure blood close to her and then use it against the throne."

King: "This is simple. Draw the witch here so I can kill it. That's it. There's no reason to daddle around."

Ama: "Father, how do we bring the witch?" He smiled, staring at me.

King: "Bring it what it wants. Her." He moved closer to me. "Get dressed, you're going to Royal council."...

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 78

PETU'S POV \_

Monday morning I woke up early to help Siza with the kids. Their nanny would arrive at 8 to take care of them so I can attend my online lectures in my room. After the kids were ready. I made some breakfast while Siza bathed. Her husband walked in the front door. He looked at me.

Petu: "Good Morning."

Jackson: "Hi." He walked to his room. When I'd finished my breakfast, I went to take a shower and dress up in just a simple grey tracksuit. A white t-shirt and socks. I tidied up my room, leaving for the kitchen. Siza was feeding the baby, the kids sitting in their seats eating. No matter what was going on, my sister was an amazing mother. How she managed to raise well mannered, sweet babies when she herself lost her mother at a young age is just inspiring. As toddlers are, there's always chaos but she never lost her temper with them. Always gentle and kind.

Siza: "Done. That's good baby. Now you can watch your Bumble bee friends. Say Good morning aunty." I chuckled taking the baby from her. "I don't know where their nanny is. She's usually here by this time."

Petu: "Its not even 8. Don't worry."

Siza: "Yes, it's almost 8 I need to get going and you need to attend school."

Petu: "The kids are quiet Siza. It's just one morning, I'll be fine."

Siza: "Still Pet-"

Petu: "Please go. You'll be back by early afternoon."

Siza: "Okay." She went to fetch her bag. I gave the baby her bottle, while rocking her in my arms. She was sleepy already. "Alright, I'm out. Jackson is in his office, working. Mia, Miles, please be quiet my little angels. Daddy is working okay?" They nodded. Someone knocked on the door. "That must be her. Thank God." She rushed to the door. "Uhm, hello?" A man's voice spoke on the other side.

Man: "Is Petunia home? She has a visitor."

Siza: "What visitor?" I walked to the door. This was a Biyela guard. What was going on?

Man: "The prince would like to speak to her." Siza looked at me.

Siza: "Your man is here." Yoh, I don't have time to be dealing with Mngqobi when I have enough stress with my father who can't be found.

Petu: "He's not my man. Please tell him to leave."

Siza: "Don't you want to at least talk to him?"

Petu: "No." She sighed, walking out. I closed the door and watched from the window. Mngqobi was leaning on the car, with his hands in his pockets. Dressed in a full suit. Did he have to look so damn sexy? Siza spoke to him for a while. I couldn't hear what was being said but hopefully he leaves soon. I took the sleeping baby to her cot that was in the lounge and laid her down. The kids had their colouring books and crayons, with the TV volume on low. Siza walked back in.

Siza: "Yoh Petunia, this man of yours says he's not leaving until you see him. I don't have time for this. Please go talk to him." She walked back out. I followed her out. She got in her car and drove off. I stood in front of Mngqobi, my heart floating at the sight of him. I missed him so much. I'd avoided going on social media and looking at his profile. Or even the pictures on my phone but refused to delete.

Mngqobi: "My gorgeous butterfly." Those gorgeous butterflies were in my stomach.

Petu: "What do you want Prince Mngqobi?"

Mngqobi: "I want you to love me back."

Petu: "That's not going to happen."

Mngqobi: "Baby, I'm sorry. I know I should've said something. I don't have an excuse. I was just being selfish."

Petu: "Selfish? Mngqobi you were being cruel. How are you not understanding how hurtful it is to be in the position you've put me in? You let me fall in love with you. Knowing fully well you intend to marry my best friend. You know what's crazy? The signs were there. When her name is mentioned, you tensed up. When she walked in on us, you were so embarrassed you couldn't look her in the eye. You love her Mngqobi."

Mngqobi: "I do love Nothando. I've loved her since we were teenagers."

Petu: "So go back to her then Mngqobi. Go and love Nothando freely. Why are you practicing your stroke game on me? Go to her and leave me alone."

Mngqobi: "I can't leave you alone. You have no reason to believe me but Petu, I don't want to let you go. I meant it when I said I love you."

Petu: "Mngqobi why are you here?"

Mngqobi: "I'm here to ask for you my love."

Petu: "Am I your fool?"

Mngqobi: "No. You'll never be a fool."

Petu: "Mngqobi. I am begging you from the bottom of my heart, please leave me alone. If you truly love me as you say you do? Please let me go-"

Mngqobi: "You're being unfair Petunia. You know I can't do that."

Petu: "Because you don't love me." He sighed.

Mngqobi: "At least unblock me? I promise I'll let you go. I'll just be a friend. I won't bother you."

Petu: "Fine." He stared at me with those kind eyes, giving me flashbacks of when he used to hold me. I can't believe him. I can't allow him to play with me. He said it himself he loves Nothando. "You look like you're going to work, I have to get back inside, the kids are alone."

Mngqobi: "Are you doing virtual learning?"

Petu: "Yes."

Mngqobi: "Okay. I'll deliver snacks for you to study peacefully."

Petu: "You don't have to do that."

Mnqobi: "How are you doing? Have they released your father's body? I can help with the funeral." My heart stopped.

Petu: "What? What are you talking about?"

Mnqobi: "Wasn't your father in the protesters shooting? They finished the count so the bodies should be returning to their families." I stared at him, feeling suddenly cold.

Petu: "His name wasn't listed. We can't find him or his body. It's like he just vanished and.." the tears threatened my eyes. "I feel so guilty. We reported him missing yesterday and I couldn't even be fully honest and tell the police about his involvement and how I found out." He looked confused.

Mnqobi: "What do you mean you can't find him Petu?"

Petu: "Exactly that. He is not on the list, he is nowhere. His phone has been off since Friday."

Mnqobi: "Fuck."

Petu: "Do you know something?" He shook his head.

Mnqobi: "Give me a day, I'll find him. Don't worry about anything."

Petu: "Please Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "Trust me. Okay? Let me get going. I'll send your snacks in about an hour. Zimmy came up with a business idea and Sibonelo made an app. This is what will be delivering your snacks."

Petu: "That's great. Thank you ba- Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "I miss you Petu. We'll talk later. Unblock me when you walk back in the house."

Petu: "Goodbye Mnqobi." I walked in the house. He got in his car and drove off.

\*Narrated.

Mnqobi walked in the construction site of the hospital. Zwe was with one of the workers, talking.

Zwe: "Sure. I'll be available at any stage. Just contact me." The worker walked away.

Mnqobi: "Bhuti."

Zwe: "Yes Mnqo. What's up."

Mnqobi: "How's the work going."

Zwe: "They're about to start. Nkosi's team is efficient. I don't even have to be here."

Mnqobi: "Okay that's good."

Zwe: "What's wrong Mnqobi?"

Mnqobi: "Where is Petu's father?" Zwe didn't even flinch. His facial expression remaining emotionless.

Zwe: "No clue. Wasn't he part of the protestors that died?"

Mnqobi: "Bhut Zwe, I thought we made a promise to never lie to each other. Did we not?"

Zwe: "We did."

Mnqobi: "Then where is he? Sboni left here that day to go fetch Petu. He took longer than he should've. Suddenly, he's missing. What did he do to him?"

Zwe: "Mnqobi. These aren't things you need to worry abo-"

Mnqobi: "They kind of are. His daughter is worried about him. She's crying for him. She deserves to know what happened to her father Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "Mnqobi. Bhekokwakhe is fine. That's all you need to know. He will return soon to his family."

Mnqobi: "Do you promise?"

Zwe: "I give you my word. By end of business today, he'll be in his house."

Mnqobi: "Thank you Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "Let's talk about something. Walk with me." They walked out the site. "You need to apologize to Sibonelo. You can't dismiss your older brother like you did this morning. This is exactly why I didn't want you

complicating your life with two women. Now that there's problems, you will be overwhelmed and take it out on others. Specifically your family. Let's not do that Mngqobi."

Mngqobi: "I'm sorry brother. I'll speak to Sbo."

Zwe: "Good. How is Petunia?"

Mngqobi: "Not too okay. Her eyes are swollen. She's worried about her father and my situation didn't make things easy for her."

Zwe: "How are you planning to fix it?"

Mngqobi: "Well, you said he'll be home tod-"

Zwe: "I'm talking about you and her. You say you love her."

Mngqobi: "I do. I just don't know what to do because I also love Nothando."

Zwe: "Does Nothando know how you feel about Petu?"

Mngqobi: "She does."

Zwe: "Then why won't she speak to you?"

Mngqobi: "I don't know but I think it's because I wasn't honest with Petu and she dumped me. I don't want to think that maybe she wants me with Petu but it's a little strange feeling I have now. She once told me to prepare Petu for our marriage. Apparently she doesn't want to be disgraced with other women during our marriage. She wanted me to keep Petu."

Zwe: "Find a way to speak to her about this and find a solution forward. For now, it's time to work. Zim is waiting on you."

Mngqobi: "Sure." He got in his car and drove off. Zwe looked around and walked to his own car, driving to Sibonelo's house. Once he arrived, he got out the car, walking into the house. He opened the vault door, walking down the stairs wearing his medical gloves.

Zwe: "I see you're awake."

Bheko: "What did...you do to...me."

Zwe: "I removed an organ yesterday. Remember the fun exercise of me chasing you with an injection? Let me check your stitches." He undid the bandage.

Bheko: "I signed. I did as you said."

Zwe: "Not before you irritated me by trying to act smart. I had to keep insurance just in case." He cleaned around the stitches and changed the bandage.

Bheko: "I'm...sorry."

Zwe: "I know Bhekokwakhe. I know you're sorry. That's why you're not dead in the middle of the ocean being devoured by sharks. The good news is, you're going home today. I'll assign a nurse that will help you heal well. You will tell your family, you tried to stop the protest. You had changed your mind but your comrades turned on you and stabbed you instead. Almost killing you. You managed to get away and found a royal guard who took you to a prince. Tell them I helped you heal. Anything beyond that and we go back to our original ocean agreement. Or better yet, maybe I'll take one of your kids instead." He finished. "See, I'm not a bad person Bhekokwakhe but it takes a special person to piss me off. That's why I can't let it slide. Our families have a possibility to be joined in the future and I'd prefer we remain friends. Is that okay with you?" Bhekokwakhe stared at him. "I'll give you some time to think about it. Someone will come for you in the afternoon." He walked out the basement.

## SASA POV\_

I didn't have anything to wear for council and I know this should be the least of my worries but it was the very most of them. It was at the top. Royal council is a very serious thing and only attended in regal attire. A proper royal dress. I'm going to arrive in a maxi summer dress and summer heels? The disrespect. I sat in the family suite, staring at nothing. My heart in my throat.

Nele: "Mntase. Are you nervous?" I nodded.

Me: "More than anything." My parents were in a meeting with Nkosi and the King. It's been 30 minutes actually. The door finally opened. My mother walked in carrying a suit bag.

Mama: "Yoh, hayi. You people stress me."

Me: "What is this mama?"

Mama: "It's just been delivered, Amahle had ordered it. I hope it fits you." I opened it and saw a beautiful black satin dress with elbow sleeves, a mock turtle neck, it held my body comfortably, with rouge pattern. It cut off after my knees. I wore my black heels. Mama gave me her pearl necklace. I was ready.

Mama: "Yoh mntanam. I am so proud of you." This is not a proud moment, I'm bait. And I'm terrified.

Me: "I have to go mama."

Mama: "Go my child. You can't keep a king waiting." I walked out, finding Nkosi, Amahle and their father in the villa entrance. He stared at me, smiling.

King: "There's no time for falling in love, sunset eyes. Let's go." He walked out. I was scared of him again. I thought we'd passed the whole animosity stage but no, he still hated me and there was nothing I could do about it. I had to focus on the day, this needed my full attention. We got in the cars and left for the city. I was with Nkosi in his car.

Nkosi: "You look gorgeous."

Me: "Thank you love."

Nkosi: "Do you know you're the first woman to ever attend council?"

Me: "Really?"

Nkosi: "I promise. The queens have their own council. The main council is only the Kings and Princes."

Me: "Is this allowed?"

Nkosi: "The King himself invited you. He makes the rules." He held my hand. "Don't worry. I won't let anything happen to you."

Me: "What am I supposed to say or do?"

Nkosi: "Nothing."

Me: "We don't have a plan? What if this witch isn't there physically?"

Nkosi: "She will be. For her spell or whatever she uses to work, she needs to be there." I nodded. I don't know why but I was suddenly overwhelmed by nervousness and anxiety. It was starting to sink in where I was when the cars drove into the royal court grounds, guards were all over the place, each one carrying weapons. The cars stopped.

Nkosi kissed my hand. Mthunzi opened my door, as I stepped out, guards surrounded me just as they did Nkosi. He joined my side, holding my hand to walking in. My heart was hammering in my chest with nerves. We walked down a passage then towards large wooden double doors with gold handles. The guards pushed them open. Silence carried the room. We stood at the door, the other royals were sitting at a long table. They all turned to look at us, confused. Nkosi held my hand firmly, stepping into the room. All of them stood up and bowed.

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 79

SASA POV\_

Nkosi pulled a chair for me to sit. He sat opposite the table from me. The space between me and the person on my right was enough to be noticeable if he dared leaned over. On my left was the head of the table, the King walked in and we bowed. He stood in his seat.

King: "It has come to my attention that you lot want me off my throne." They looked at him and each other. "Did I pardon you to look at me?" They bowed again. Only Nkosi was sitting comfortably in his seat. The king looked at me and nodded. I didn't know what that meant but I sat down.

King: "Is there anything you want to say to my face now that I'm here?" Silence. "Nakhamula?" No response. "That's disappointing because it seemed to me you headed this take over. Bathonga, do we have a problem?"

Bathonga: "No my King."

King: "Yet, here we are." These people were scared of him. Why then did they attempt this? Were they that dependent on this witch? "While we're about to begin. I think it's the proper time to announce to you all, my son's fiancé. Our family treasure." They all looked at me. "The future of Sikhosana." The king sat down.

King: "Be seated so we can begin." They all sat down. My blood started curdling, giving me goosebumps. I looked at Nkosi. He looked at me, concerned. "I would expect to at least be addressed and spoken to when there is a problem. Yet, you all band together behind my back to plan my take down while my last born is fighting for her life in hospital." Where was Amahle? She had rode here with the King. I looked at the closed door.

Nakhamula: "My King. We weren't planning a take down. We decided as the council that perhaps it would be a better idea if we voted for our next King. Your reign has been a good one. We believe it would be better if another family was given the chance."

King: "On who's throne?"

Nakhamula: "My apologies Your Majesty, but the throne is for royals."

King: "Since when Nakhamula? Please beware I'm only engaging you purely for entertainment."

Nakhamula: "We as the kings, equal in title to you, feel that you are no longer fit to rule. You do as you please without any benefit to anyone. You take away and give less than. Now, you've disrespected the royal court by bringing a commoner, a young girl no less?!" The others mumbled in agreement.

King: "First of all, we will never be equals. I am and will always be your king. When my son, takes the throne, you will still be below him. He will be your king. If the gods permit and you live long enough to see his son, he too will be your king. That is not equal, it is power. Which is what the Sikhosana name holds."

Nakhamula: "Nevertheless. We still vote as a council, you can no longer rule. It would be favourable for you to respectfully give way to this vote." King Sikhosana laughed like thunder erupting in the sky.

King: "Or else what?"

Nakhamula: "It would be up to the gods to decide. I can imagine you don't want to go down as a weak king." This man was so sure of his witch, hey? He was convinced. Which probably meant she was quite powerful.

King: "When this is over. And I have your head in my grasp, detached from your body. I hope you will all realize how bad of an idea this was

but then again. There's a bit of Thomas in all of us." He lifted his hand. My heart stopped. He didn't snap, there was no electricity yet. The guard walked out the room.

Nakhamula: "So we can continue, King Sikhosana?"

King: "In a minute." He smiled. We waited for a few minutes before the door opened again. The guard carried in a woman who had a bag on her head. He dropped her on the floor. "Ahh. Deliveries." He stood up, holding the woman's arm helping her stand up. He took the bag off her head. Princess Samu. "Bathonga, is this not your daughter?" King Bathonga stared at him with pain in his eyes.

Bathonga: "Yes my king."

King: "Are you still voting with Nakhamula?" Bathonga looked at his friend and then his daughter.

Bathonga: "No, my King." Nakhamula looked at him dangerously.

King: "Interesting." He snapped his fingers on his free hand and sparks came alight. They all jumped off their seats, screaming. Samu cried trying to pull away from him. "No, no. Sit back in your places. You want me off the throne, don't you?" One of the kings, was on the floor holding his chest unable to breath. He was having a heart attack. I was near pissing myself scared. King Sikhosana looked ready to fry Samu right now and he was very happy to do it. Was this not the same princess he wanted his son to marry? So this man didn't care about anyone. He really does kill for sport. Finally, he switched off his lightening.

King: "You know what's funny?" He sat Samu down in his seat and stood behind her. "You've tried this before. It was my son, who pleaded for your forgiveness. You don't remember?" He looked at Nkosi. Nkosi looked around the room. I knew then, he was in their heads. "He has the ability to swift through all your memories, your thoughts and plans. Yet he didn't. He only pleaded, for your forgiveness." He held Samu's neck. I closed my eyes, flinching.

Bathonga: "Please. My King, I am pleading for my child's life, take mine instead?"

King: "Why can't I take both?" The tears rolled down my cheeks. I couldn't stop this. I was about to witness a woman die at the hands of the family I was to marry into. "Tell them what you did Princess."

Samu: "I.. I am sorry my King." She cried.

King: "Tell them please. I will let you go."

Samu: "I.. I used a love potion, putting it in His Highness, Prince Mehluli's juice."

King: "Why did you do that princess?"

Samu: "I wanted to... I wanted him to marry me."

King: "What is the punishment for those who use potions on a royal?"

Bathonga: "My King, please forgive her. Rather kill me and banish my family. Anything." King Sikhosana let go of Samu's neck.

King: "Nakhamula, since you want to be king. What would you do, if a girl feeds your son poison?"

Nakhamula: "I...I don't...know."

King: "Of course you do. Where is the witch you brought to take me off the throne?" Silence.

King: "Very well. Please take your seats so we can continue." It was over. Thank God. I breathed opening my eyes. I quickly wiped my tears. Everyone sat down and looked at him. Only one king was still on the floor, he was now still. I was afraid he might have died from his heart attack.

King: "Where is your witch?" He leaned on the top of his chair with his elbows.

Nakhamula: "I don't have a witch."

King: "Bathonga, where is the witch?" Bathonga looked at Nakhamula.

Bathonga: "Tell him!!"

Nakhamula: "I don't have a witch." He repeated.

King: "Very well." He held Samu's neck, his sparks coming alive, electrifying her. Her body seized, frying from the inside until she stilled. I was numb and cold all at once. The king walked over to a prince seated next to Nakhamula. The Prince stood up.

King: "Don't disrespect me. Sit." The sad thing is no one could speak up. Bathonga was crying silently in his seat. The Prince was pleading, moving away from the King. "I asked you to sit. I won't ask again."

Prince: "Father please tell him. Please baba." He cried. Surely Nakhamula would save his son and just lose this battle.

Nakhamula: "I don't have a witch." I felt bile coming up my throat. I was still sitting near Samu's electrocuted body. I couldn't hold this in any more. I got up and walked out, finding a bin outside to throw up in violently. My whole body was shaking as if I were cold. My heart was beating so slow, as if it would stop. Mthunzi came up to me.

Mthunzi: "Are you okay?" I couldn't breath.

Me: "I need air." I gasped.

Mthunzi: "You can't leave royal council until it's concluded." It felt like he was punching me in the stomach.

Me: "I can't go back in there." I whispered. "He's... He's killing them one by one." I covered my mouth. Mthunzi stilled in front of me, quickly composing himself.

Mthunzi: "Try and breath. Deep breaths." I inhaled long and exhaled a few times to clear my airway and regulate my breathing. "You're strong enough to be in there. You're a Queen, Thembisa. The first to ever step foot in that room. I know you can do this." I can't do this. I don't want people to die. I dont want any of this. My chest was tight with fear. I made my way back into the room and sat down. Yes, next to Samu's fried body. My heart was torn apart at how cruel this family was. Nkosi wasn't even trying to stop him. He looked at me. Shit, he can hear his name in my head. I looked at my hands, quietly.

King: "I will ask one more time, where the witch is. If I'm still unanswered, I'll take that as an offering of all princes. From each and every one of you."

Phakamisa: "Nakhamula!!! SPEAK."

Nakhamula: "I don't know where she is."

King: "Why must I believe you?"

Nakhamula: "King Sikhosana, the witch is not here to harm anyone. She was merely to help with the vote. Look at what you've done. You're threatening our entire lineages. That's not how a King behaves."

King: "How would you know? You're not a King." My skin started crawling and it felt itchy. I looked around the room. Something had

happened here before we came in. I stood up. "Mehluli, is your wife going to be a problem? If she's too weak to be in council, then have her sent home." Nkosi looked at me.

Me: "My King, please release the prince." He laughed. "Please."

King: "Give me one good reason I should release him and punish you."

Me: "I think the reason King Nakhamula is not affected by your threats of killing his son is because he's expecting you to." King Nakhamula stared at me with disgust.

King: "Please explain." Nakhamula was boiling in his seat.

Me: "I need Amahle."

King: "Talk Thembisa."

Me: "Something was done. I don't know what. The room has a stench. It had it when I entered. Either the witch is here inside or a spell was placed and will be activated once you kill the target. You're holding the target."

Nakhamula: "You fucking bitch." Nkosi stood up, grabbing him with one hand and threw him against the wall. Nakhamula fell with thud on the floor, breaking something.

Nkosi: "Say it again." He growled.

King: "Well, well, well." He let the Prince go, looking at the guard. "Bring me my daughter." The guard walked out the room. The other kings and princes were shivering, possibly praying. There was a young prince in their midst possibly just turned 18. He was terrified with tears on his cheeks. Nakhamula cried on the floor in pain. Nkosi was staring him down, he was definitely flipping through his thoughts and memories. Amahle walked in.

Ama: "Father."

King: "Thembisa believe there's either a witch in the room, or a spell to be activated upon the death of the first Nakhamula prince. Is that true?"

Ama: "Yes."

King: "Which one is it?"

Ama: "Both." I looked at Nakhamula, he stood up but not before Amahle stood in front of Nkosi. He snapped his fingers, balls of flames erupted

from his hands. The council jumped to their feet. "Killing him is futile Nkosi. The witch is using his body as a zombie. Once you kill him, you still won't find her because she's only in his spirit."

King: "Kill him."

Ama: "Father!"

King: "He conspired against the throne. He will not give up her whereabouts. He is of no use to me. None of these families are of use to me. They are a bunch of traitors and I want them to die." He walked over to me, standing behind me. Nkosi looked at him, ready to attack. "You're now a part of our family. What punishment do these royals deserve for what they've done?" He asked softly. My whole body was shivering. These are heads of families and their next generations. I can't have them killed. I also don't want any punishment from this king. I wanted nothing to do with him at this point.

Me: "A King is a leader, not only of his family but of his nation. The council exists to guide him as leaders of different regions. Their first offense should earn a punishment but not one that obliterates their generation and lineage. A true royal does not conspire against another, they do not hide and consult dark forces. They face obstacles head on and discuss a way forward with everyone included. The leaders should be stripped off their royal status." He walked over to the head of the table, standing behind his chair where Samu still sat, dead. He lifted his hands, his eyes turning ice blue. I stepped back, my heart skipping several beats and silently praying. He snapped his fingers, igniting his lightening. The live electricity flowed in big balls from his elbows to his hands. He laughed hysterically.

King: "From this moment going forward. Bathonga, Mpondo, Mufhuwalo, Phakamisa, Nakhamula. Your royal status has been revoked. Your palaces, and region rulings will be destroyed. From this moment forward each and every one of you and blood relation is no royal. I wish to have the opportunity to remind you once more who I am, so test me." He switched off his lightening. "And I will find that witch. Her body will hang on the highest pole I can mount until she rots to nothing but bones, just like this one." He looked at Samu's body, before he turned and walked out.

PRINCE POV\_

All the way to the mountain Thembisa was very quiet. She stared out of the car window. I didn't know the next step from here. Do I hold her hand, ask how she is? But I know she's not okay. She cried, she threw up, she was shaking throughout, absolutely terrified. Her fear was mostly because she believes my father still wants to harm her. I wish I could comfort her but royal court is not the place for that, weakness wasn't allowed inside. Suddenly, the free flowing knowledge of love has flushed out of me. We parked and she didn't even wait for Mthunzi to open her door before she jumped out. She walked into the villa, straight into her father's arms crying. Fuck. He stared daggers at me, as I walked in slowly.

Xolani: "What happened?" A part of me was relieved. We went from "what did you do to my daughter" to "what happened". I can build from this.

Nkosi: "My father had to punish the other roya- well, they're no longer royals now. The former royals. Thembisa begged for their lives and offered a ban on their status as royals instead." It wasn't a lie but I wouldn't admit the two deaths until I'm asked. He took his daughter to the family suite. My heart ached at the mere fact that she wanted to be held by her dad and not me. Not even acknowledging me. My father walked in, going straight to his suite. I followed him with Amahle.

King: "Your precious princess ran to her daddy?" He poured himself a whiskey. "I told you ordinary humans cannot handle being a Sikhosana royal." He threw the drink down his throat.

Nkosi: "Surely you're not talking about the same precious princess that just saved your life. If she hadn't noticed the stench in that room and figured out Nakhamula, you'd be dead or worse. WEAK." He stared at me and poured a other drink.

King: "Amahle, do you have a plan on finding this witch?"

Ama: "If she was an ordinary witch, I'd have found her already. She truly is a treasure blood. I can't trace her. Only Thembisa can."

King: "So now we have to wait until she stops crying? Dear God, you've cursed me, surely. Not even a speck of patience yet this is what you gift me with." He drank his second glass.

Nkosi: "I think you should leave."

King: "I beg your pardon?"

Nkosi: "I didn't stutter." He stared at me trying to read my face. "You went out of your way to break my wife today. If I have to accept that you'll never recognize her and her worth then you have to accept you're not welcome in my home."

King: "Mehluli, what are you saying?"

Nkosi: "Again. I did not stutter."

King: "Do you not realize I am trying to protect our throne and dignity? I accepted this girl and I invited her to the highest meeting in society. She had the chance to make a ruling. Something that not even you have done. That is the grooming of a strong queen. One that you clearly need!"

Nkosi: "No, you threatened her. That is what you did. You scared her into a corner. Flexing your power and using her to get your message across. That is not grooming, that is fear mongering and I will not allow it." He stared at me, with ice cold eyes.

King: "I won't leave until she tells me to." He sat down. "So what will you do, Sikhosana? You're going to turn and rip me limb for limb? You obviously won't because you're already scared that you've lost her. Killing me will give you no chance in hell with her, ever again." He poured another drink. "I told you before. Love makes one weak. Right now, you're at her mercy. Tell her to ask me to leave." ....

heRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 80

SIBONELO POV\_

This morning was extremely stressful. After the Sikhosana's left suddenly. I monitored the other royals. Since we were banned from council, we couldn't go. I needed to speak to Zwe so I dialed his number.

Zwe: "Brother."

Sibo: "Zwe. Since we're not going to council, should I be listening in? To make notes?"

Zwe: "You won't be able to Sboni. You know it's not allowed even as we are working with Sikhosana. Let's rather not. I'll ask Mthunzi to be sure, he'll let us know."

Sibo: "Okay. They just left. Something is wrong. Not sure what."

Zwe: "What do you mean?"

Sibo: "Well, we were listening to a call between Nakhamula and Bathonga. They mentioned a witch and treasure blood things. The minute that was said they freaked out." He sighed.

Zwe: "I don't know. Maybe it's something to do with their abilities. Sboni, for now, let's just be on standby."

Sibo: "Alright. I'll be doing some work for Bi-connect and then heading over to Mnqobi for the launch of the app."

Zwe: "Good idea. I'm interviewing a nurse for Bhekokwakhe, he's going home this afternoon. We'll talk later."

Sibo: "Sure." I hung up.

Khaya: "Prince Sibonelo." He only calls me that when he's scared.

Sibo: "Yes bug."

Khaya: "What's going on? What was happening? It was like a live wire had been cut and it was sparking. What was that?"

Sibo: "I honestly don't know what to tell you bug." I couldn't. I'm glad he didn't see it. I suspected that King Sikhosana had his own super power but I was not expecting live electricity. So each and every member of that family? Wow. "Just know, we're safe. That's all I can tell you. We're on the right side. Let's not interfere. Some things you have to pretend you can't see or hear."

Khaya: "Okay."

Sibo: "Do you want to go to your twin for a bit?"

Khaya: "No, I'll sit with you here. What can I help with?"

Sibo: "Okay, please go through this document for me." I gave him the second laptop.

We left Mehluli's office after an hour. I wanted to launch the app officially at my office in Bi-Connect so that's where we headed. I received a message from Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: <Hi Sibonelo. The Prince and King are now in royal court. After it's conclusion, I'll call you for a meeting to discuss it's events. Please do record, the prince has given a go ahead for your listen in. Only you.>

Sibo: <Noted. Thanks Mthunzi.> So I had to be online, listening in. Not gonna lie, that seemed like an important thing to do. I connected my headset to my laptop. We arrived at the office and I walked in carrying my open laptop, wearing my headset. Mngqobi and Zimmy were waiting in the boardroom.

Sibo: "Please keep it low, I'm doing a listen in. We're still a few hours from launch. Are the back ups set Mngqobi?"

Mngqobi: "Yes bhuti." I sat down, increasing the volume on my headset.

[King: "It has come to my attention that you lot want me off my throne." A brief silence took over. "Did I pardon you to look at me?"] This was going to go downhill for sure. Everyone had a level of fear of Sikhosana.

[King: "Is there anything you want to say to my face now that I'm here?" Silence. "Nakhamula?" No response. "That's disappointing because it seemed to me you headed this take over. Bathonga, do we have a problem?"

Bathonga: "No my King."

King: "Yet, here we are."] I took my notepad, making notes. The meeting went on, Nakhamula being the one having a back and forth with King Sikhosana. What a dumb person, Nakhamula was. This is their second offense and it's not looking good for them. I heard the door opening, who was coming in or out? I waited only for a bit before the King spoke again.

[King: "Bathonga, is this not your daughter?"

Bathonga: "Yes my king."

King: "Are you still voting with Nakhamula?"

Bathonga: "No, my King."

King: "Interesting."] I heard trigger of electricity going off and sudden movement, falling of chairs and gasps. Did he just show his powers? Clearly.

[King: "No, no. Sit back in your places. You want me off the throne, don't you?] I was grateful to the gods my family wasn't here. This didn't look good.

[Bathonga: "Please. My King, I am pleading for my child's life, take mine instead?"

King: "Why can't I take both?"] Oh my God. He's about to kill her. Mngqobi looked at me concerned.

Mngqobi: "Everything okay?" He whispered. I shook my head. Nothing will ever be okay.

What happened in royal court had given me a splitting headache that by the time the King walked out, I threw those headsets on the desk. Zwe walked in.

Sibo: "I've got a migraine. Do you have anything on you?"

Zwe: "In my car, come." I pressed on my laptop, letting it record but locked it. I know these ones won't touch anything, my brothers were not disrespectful but I still had to protect the information. I walked out with Zwe.

Zwe: "It didn't go well?"

Sibo: "Samu may be dead. And there's only two royal families left in the nation." He stopped walking.

Zwe: "What do you mean?" I looked around the empty passage.

Sibo: "I think the King shocked her with his power. He stripped the other royals off their status. Their palaces and region rulings will be destroyed. They'll be completely cut off from the economy."

Zwe: "Where does that leave us?"

Sibo: "He only called the five families when he made the declaration. We're still safe for now. Phakamisa's saving grace is that he has companies apart from the throne contracts. But we have an alliance with them. Our brothers engagement."

Zwe : "Fuck." He started walking again, pulling my arm. We got to his car and he took out a bottle of pills from his bag. "Here, it'll work in 3 minutes. Finish this bottle of water because the pill dehydrates you." He gave me a litre of water, I drank the small pill and the whole bottle of water.

Sibo: "What do we do?"

Zwe: "For now, nothing. We need to wait for the meeting with Nkosi and his father before we announce anything or even tell our family. So this stays between us. We're 30 minutes from launch. Let's focus on that for now."

Sibo: "Okay."

Zwe: "Are you okay?"

Sibo: "I'm good. Just needed to get a grip. Headache is subsiding, thank you."

Zwe: "Look at me."

Sibo: "Zwe, I'm fine."

Zwe: "Look at me, Sibonelo." I looked at him. "Are you okay?" I shook my head.

Sibo: "I'm finding it difficult to grasp that we're living in a world with people that have these powers. I'm trying to adjust but it's difficult because I'm wondering, what if one day they turn on me?"

Zwe: "That's never going to happen. Nkosi will never hurt you and will never let anything harm you. You're working with him, on his side. He believes in loyalty and friendship. Trust him. Okay?"

Sibo: "Okay." We walked back inside. I checked activity on the royal court. It sounded a mess. Someone was crying painfully, I had no doubt Bathonga. If I remember correctly, the King said before he walked out her body will be hung up to rot so Bathonga couldn't even touch it. I stopped listening in and just focused on the screen in the boardroom. Everyone else was looking at it. Mngqobi had done a great job with fine tuning this app. He can be stupid when he wants to but his focus and work ethic is never shaken. I can always rely on him.

Khaya: "Almost time."

Sibo: "How long is the waiting line?" People had already started queueing on the website.

Mnqobi: "374 and counting. We might hit 1000 by launch."

Sibo: "Can we accommodate that?"

Mnqobi: "No, waiting period for each order is 30 minutes and even then ..." He shook his head. "I managed to rent in 20 more scooters, so we've got 30 now."

Sibo: "Good." We waited until the very minute. "Launch." Mnqobi gave the tablet to Zimmy.

Mnqobi: "Go ahead. This is yours." She clicked the button. The orders rushed in instantly.

Sibo: "Congratulations team. We did it." I wish I could drink but because of the delivery plan, I couldn't since I'll be driving around.

## PETU'S POV\_

The morning was going well. The kids were quiet, after an hour I'd given them snacks from the basket Mnqobi sent me. I hate how I was still feeling about him. I definitely wouldn't betray Nothando but I could at least still think about him, right? Maybe it wasn't a good idea. I had to get over him and to do that, I can't keep day dreaming. He was not making it any easy by being this sweet. Every few hours he sent a message when he was thinking about me. At midday, the nanny took the kids for their nap. I'd finished my lecture and I could just relax and go over my notes later. I went to the kitchen to wash the dishes. Siza walked in the door. She looked still in pain but handling it well.

Petu: "Hey, I thought they were supposed to drive you home."

Siza: "A friend did. Since the lockdown, there was no cabs available in the morning."

Petu: "How are you feeling?"

Siza: "I'm okay. Just a bit woozy. The pain killer helps. It wasn't a complicated procedure."

Petu: "Okay."

Siza: "How was school today?"

Petu: "Good. We weren't too overwhelmed with work. Mngqobi sent some snacks as well."

Siza: "So you're back together? You don't look too happy."

Petu: "No we're not together. A friend of mine launched an app, her first business. I wasn't too nice the last time we spoke."

Siza: "So? Congratulate her still. Friends argue all the time Petunia, asifani as people, we're wired differently. A person must introspect and see where they went wrong then apologize. You're a human being."

Petu: "You're right."

Siza: "Did you at least support her business?"

Petu: "Not directly. Mngqobi sent the snacks with it though. I'll post about the package and the app congratulating her."

Siza: "Good. I need to lie down for a bit. Have you heard from the police?"

Petu: "No. Mngqobi said he'll also help. Since he's a royal maybe he'll get more information."

Siza: "I don't know why you two don't just get back together because it's clear you love each other. Any other man would mind his business and focus on his other woman."

Petu: "Except his other woman is my best friend Siza. I can't do that to her."

Siza: "If you say so." She went to check on the babies and went to bed. After washing the dishes, I sent Jimmy a congratulations message then went to post the picture to advertise her business. It was already trending. There was a Royal Delivery promo where a few parcels would be delivered by a prince. My heart ached at the possibility of Mngqobi riding around town meeting hundreds of women. Oh, it says Sibonelo. Thank God. I placed my phone down, starting on supper. My phone beeped again. Probably Mngqobi. I checked it and saw a message from my father. My heart stopped. <Hi Petunia, your father is resting at home.> That's it? Why would he send me that? Was it really him? Was it a trap from one of his comrades? I wanted to find out but I can't go there

alone or with Siza and her husband definitely doesn't care. I dialed Mngqobi.

Mngqobi: "Butterfly." He answered almost immediately.

Petu: "Hey. Can I borrow a guard?" He chuckled.

Mngqobi: "Why do you want to borrow a guard baby?"

Petu: "I just got a message from my father's number. It says he's home but it's like he didn't send it. I'm scared that someone is trying to trap me."

Mngqobi: "I'm coming." He hung up. Should I wake up Siza? But why? She's just had a procedure and she's in pain. Maybe I should check if this is real then come back for her later.

Mngqobi arrived in 30 minutes. I notified the nanny, switching off the stove and went to him, getting in the car. His guard drove off.

Mngqobi: "Let's see this message." I gave him my phone.

Petu: "Why would he send a message like that and if not him then who?"

Mngqobi: "Yeah, this is strange but don't worry. Nothing will happen to you."

Petu: "Thank you. You didn't have to come with."

Mngqobi: "I wanted an excuse to see you."

Petu: "Oh? That's a first. You can be honest?" He sighed.

Mngqobi: "Petunia, I never lied. I kept this secret but I didn't lie. When I met you, I didn't think I'd feel like this about you. I just wanted to hit and move on. You also wanted that. It just happened that we grew feelings for each other. It's fucking confusing for me because as I said, I do love Nothando, but I love you too and I don't want to choose."

Petu: "Your engagement and family has chosen for you already Mngqobi. I'm not going to be your whore. I refuse it no matter how much I love you."

Mngqobi: "You know Nothando isn't speaking to me? She warned me. She asked me to be honest with you and make sure you don't leave me. Now that you have, she wants nothing to do with me." This is confusing.

Petu: "Why would she want me to be with you?"

Mnqobi: "I don't know. I never asked." This was too confusing for me to process and I already had stress about my father. "At least talk to her. I think she's a bit lonely."

Petu: "I'll text her tonight."

Mnqobi: "Thank you." We parked in front of my father's house. "The guard will go in first." His guard got out, walking to the front door. A lady opened the door and spoke to him, allowing him in. We waited a few minutes before he came back out.

Guard: "All is clear my Prince. It's only the nurse and the old man."

Mnqobi: "Thanks." We got out the car. "I can't go in your father's house for no valid reason. It's disrespect. I trust my guard to have checked thoroughly for any signs of danger. Please call if something is wrong."

Petu: "Thank you Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "I'll do anything for you, butterfly. This, I promise." He got in the car. I walked into the house. My father was on the couch, resting.

Petu: "Dad!!" I rushed over to him, giving him a hug. He stared at me coldly. "What happened? Siza and I even reported you missing! Tata we were so worried!"

Bheko: "You know exactly where I was."

Petu: "Haibo? Dad, if I knew, I obviously would've come to you."

Bheko: "Yazi. I thought about it and it only became clear two minutes ago. It was you. You told those royals about the protest. That's why he came to fetch me. Now, you have the audacity to bring him to my house? You have his guard rummage through MY house for you? Do you have any idea what I've been through? And you side with them? You sleep with them? You report to them? You have disappointed me more than anything in my life. Your mother must be turning in her grave watching her child share a bed with the same people who killed her. I want you to take all of your things and leave my house. This is no longer your home. Leave." ....

## SASA POV\_

I woke up finally. I'd fallen asleep in my father's arms. I knew I'd have to deal with life after my nap. Today was horrifying. If I didn't fear the king before? I definitely did now. It would be stressful seeing him again and I have a feeling he's still here. His existence is just to make me uncomfortable. How the hell do you kill someone and laugh? How do you watch another suffer a heart attack and die then carry on with your meeting like he isn't laying there, fucking dead?? The thought made my spine cold. I sat up.

Xolani: "My angel. How are you feeling?" Mama was sitting on the chair staring fresh sharp daggers at me.

Me: "I'm okay tata."

Xolani: "I know you're not allowed to talk about council but are you hurt?" My spirit? Yes.

Me: "No tata."

Xolani: "Okay. Was the witch found?" I shook my head. "Alright." He rubbed my back and hugging me. I felt so safe in his arms. Good God, what was I thinking falling in love with a powerful royal? "Mntanam. This is never going to be easy. You sat in the highest room of the nation. I can imagine the the decisions made in there are extremely difficult but for you to be respected and heard, you have to be strong. I know you love Nkosinhle and will never let him go. So you have to toughen up and be his equal."

Me: "I'm scared of his dad. He's not like you."

Xolani: "And he is scared of me but he's here every half hour, knocking on that door to check on you. I'm not even a king." He kissed my head. "It's going to get easier. The good thing is, you have him and he cares. Let me get you something to drink." He got out of bed, walking out the suite. I sighed.

Mama: "Why unje?"

Me: "Ma?"

Mama: "Why are you always seeking attention Thembisa? Everyone must attend to you. The king, the prince, your father. For what? Why must you always be begged? Is it not enough that man loves you? Why ungoneli?" (Why aren't you satisfied?)

Me: "Mama I'm not seeking attention."

Mama: "You're about to be married. To a future king Thembisa. You were given an opportunity to be in a very important meeting and the first thing you do is run to your father crying like a child?"

Me: "Mama, please don't be like this right now, I can't-"

Mama: "Hewena Thembisa. Don't irritate me. This is the one chance you have to give something back to us. We are important people here and you want to ruin that for attention!? You will not ruin this for me, Thembisa. I will never forgive you. Imagine? Every 30 minutes that man is at the door begging? A King? No don't be stupid man!! Nxa! What the hell is wrong with you!? Yoh, sundonyanyisa man. Don't do that. You will never in your life find someone who will beg and love you like that man, dont be stupid." My father walked in carrying juice. I held back my tears because I didn't want another argument. My heart was torn because I thought I was getting somewhere with my mother but this was clearly all for her.

Me: "Thank you tata." I had a sip of my juice.

Mama: "Nawe Xolani stop coddling this child because she's going to be a weak wife!"

Xolani: "Ntombenhle, don't start your nonsense."

Mama: "What nonsense Xolani? We've had to sit here for hours while she slept in your arms all because of what? Why can't she toughen up? What would be so horrible at a meeting that she must cry in your arms? Will you be here everyday for her to cry?"

Xolani: "She's my child and she will cry as much as she wants in my arms. If you have a problem with that then go sit elsewhere."

Mama: "The country must come to a standstill because she's crying? This one won't last on that throne. You just watch. In ONE year, that king will marry again."

Xolani: "That will not happen while I still live. Thembisa only needed some time to get herself together. The country won't standstill for any reason. Why can't she have a moment?"

Mama: "Moment of what, Xolani? Hehe. You just watch. Uzoshiywa lo."(she will be left). I got up, going to the bathroom. I washed my face and let it dry. I changed my dress to a more casual light blue maxi dress.

Me: "I need to speak to the prince tata."

Xolani: "Okay, should I come wit-"

Mama: "NO! Thembisa is grown, she must deal with her husband by herself."

Me: "I'll be fine tata." I walked out the family room with my heart in my knees. I walked to the restaurant. The king was sitting at a table eating. Nkosi was sitting far from him on a couch, staring at him with a dark look. He stood up when I walked in.

Me: "Good afternoon, Your Majesty." The King looked at me, wiping the corners of his mouth with a napkin.

King: "Done crying? I thought you were strong enough for council, clearly I was wrong. You're just an ordinary little girl."

Me: "I am done crying and it will be the last time because you're not going to kill people again." He laughed.

King: "Little girl, are we friends?" He stood up. Nkosi pulled my arm, I grabbed it back.

Me: "No. You're my king."

King: "I thought as much. Don't forget that please." He looked at Nkosi. "Well, have you asked her to tell me to leave?" He laughed. "Nakhamula could have just taken this throne because how the hell will you run a country if you have to ask for permission from a person this weak? Pathetic." He walked out.

Nkosi: "Are you okay?"

Me: "No. I'm sorry Nkosi."

Nkosi: "For what, love?"

Me: "I don't want you to be weak. I don't want your father to talk like that to you. I won't cry again. I'm sorry."

Nkosi: "My father is a horrible person. He's always talked like that. It's to cause a reaction. It has nothing to do with you. I know I'm not weak, I have you. You're the most courageous person I know. You can't not cry again, Thembisa. I don't want you to turn into my family that is cold and has absolutely no emotion."

Me: "No Nkosi. If you're going to be King, I can't run scared all the time."

Nkosi: "It's your first time. You've never experienced any royal training. I don't expect you to not be scared. At least you held it together until you got home."

Me: "I cried inside royal court and threw up outside."

Nkosi: "You're a kind loving person that has never watched someone die. You watched TWO then made a sober, fair ruling right after. I would've been worried if you didn't react." He hugged me tight. "It's going to get better and I promise what happened today won't happen again."

Me: "Okay. So what's next, an announcement right? You still have to address the nation about the protesters shooting first?"

Nkosi: "Yes. What do you think I should say?"

Me: "Let's not do it." He let go of me, sitting down on the couch. I sat on top of him, cuddling in his arms.

Nkosi: "You don't want me to leave?"

Me: "No. Not that. I don't think you should address the protestors shooting. It gives them dignity, it gives them your attention and empathy. The truth is, they conspired against the throne and that is illegal. If today taught me anything, it's to not feel compassion for people who go out of their way to disrespect you. You've done your bit, you gave them a chance, you warned them. They don't deserve a thing more. This will also send a message to anyone else who tries the stunt again that they will not be honoured. They will be no address, their names won't be counted, no commemoration, no remembrance. Nothing."

Nkosi: "Love."

Me: "Hm?"

Nkosi: "I don't want you to turn into my father. I fell in love with you because you were kind and loving. I love the Thembisa that cries when"

she misses me. I hate seeing you cry but I love that it can happen. I love feeling. Don't make my father change that, please."

Me: "I just want you to be great. I don't like hearing him talk like that with you."

Nkosi: "I can handle my father. Nothing he says touches me in any way." I kissed his lips. "Do you want to have a little picnic together before I leave for my last meeting?"

Me: "A picnic Nkosi? You want your father to explode?"

Nkosi: "Yes." He laughed. "I know it will piss him off to no end and I can't see past it. I'll get the blanket baby."

Me: "Hayi Nkosi. Let's not. Yoh, I can't annoy him more than I have today. I don't like the way he speaks to you. Let's focus on you working, he'll disappear soon."

Nkosi: "He doesn't want to leave because he knows you won't kick him out."

Me: "Trust me, he'll get bored. This is a happy house and that's not his scene." He laughed.

Nkosi: "I love you so much. I can't wait to come home."

Me: "I also can't wait until you're home. Let me walk you out." We got up, walking out to the entrance. "Will you be home for dinner?"

Nkosi: "Yes my love. Always." He stole a quick kiss before someone came by.

Me: "Okay." The king walked out the passage to us.

King: "Do we have the permission to conclude our business now? Her Royal Majesty? Since you're in charge."

Nkosi: "Father." He warned. The king walked out to his car. "Don't listen to him. I love you." He kissed me, walking out.

PRINCE POV\_

I rode back to my office with Mthunzi. If I had to be in a car with my father I'd probably strangle him to death.

Mthunzi: "Things seem tense."

Nkosi: "As usual when my father is around. His favourite activity is pissing me off."

Mthunzi: "What did he do this time?"

Nkosi: "He's trying to turn my soft, loving wife into him. He is manipulating her by talking down to me so that she toughens up and does what he says. The fucked up shit is that Thembisa won't throw him out because she's too nice and he's playing that to his advantage."

Mthunzi: "Thembisa is way too smart to fall into his trap. Yes, she's scared now but she will adjust and find a way to fit in your world. Your father will get bored eventually. You know him. Don't pay him any mind."

Nkosi: "That's difficult because he might just move in. He has no boundaries."

Mthunzi: "Good, let him. Maybe then Thembisa will get sick of him and tell him to leave." I sighed.

Nkosi: "I might kill him before that happens." I looked out the window. My mind drifted off to Thembisa. She would be waiting for me to have supper with her and honestly I can't wait. Nothing makes going to work more worth it than knowing she'll be right there waiting for me.

Mthunzi: "Smiles already? What were you promised?" He chuckled.

Nkosi: "Thank you Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "For what now?"

Nkosi: "You kept pushing me to her. I would've messed everything up if I didn't have you."

Mthunzi: "No, you would've kept staring at her forever and you would've caught a stalker case." He laughed. I smiled. "Put your face back on, we're at work Nkosihle." I laughed. The car parked and we walked in the building. My father was ahead of us with his own guards. We walked into the office. Sibonelo was here with Zwelethu, Khaya and Mngqobi.

Nkosi: "Good afternoon royals." The greeted back. "I wanted us to discuss today's events. Sibonelo, you did record as I instructed?"

Sibo: "Yes Your Highness." He looked uncomfortable.

Nkosi: "Great, where is King Biyela? I need him here."

King: "Why?"

Nkosi: "He's a King, the only one left other than you and I want him on my council. Please notify him Zwelethu, we'll start when he arrives."

King: "I must WAIT?"

Nkosi: "Father, if you want to leave then go ahead. I am building council for my reign. Who I want on it, will be on it. We're going to wait for King Biyela." He sat down, folding his arms. He is such a baby.

King Biyela arrived in less than 30 minutes. He walked in the office, acknowledging the king.

Biyela: "My Prince, you called for me."

Nkosi: "Yes King Biyela. First I want to thank you all for standing by me and showing great loyalty. We've had a difficult week, and we managed to weave through it together. As I said before, you are who I choose for my council. I need reliable, trustworthy people around me that have the same vision for this nation as I do. Today, we had royal council. A few things have transpired and we have to discuss them today. Sibonelo, please play back the recording." We listened to the recording. Everyone was quiet throughout until the very end.

Nkosi: "Samukelisiwe has died, as well Mpondo. Royal status has been revoked from all royals. Except the Biyela family. All other palaces and region rulings will be destroyed. Business contracts will be redistributed or awarded to private companies that will be selected on competence. Are there any questions so far?" Mngqobi put up his hand. "Yes?"

Mngqobi: "We have a business arrangement with the Phakamisa family. We've merged our venture and I have an engagement with their daughter on the premise of this venture. Do we have to cut ties with them?"

King: "Yes."

Nkosi: "What do you want to do Mngqobi?"

King: "I think I made the decision for him."

Nkosi: "Mngqobi?"

Mnqobi: "I don't want to disrespect the throne, Your Highness. I will break the engagement." That's the last thing he wants to do. I can hear the crack in his voice.

Nkosi: "Keeping your wife will not be disrespecting the throne. I am not asking you to send her home. However, her loyalty needs to be evaluated and you can make your decision from there. I trust you."

Mnqobi: "Thank you Your Highness. I promise I will put the throne first in determining whether I continue with the marriage."

Nkosi: "Thank you."

King: "No, not thank you. We need to discuss this in length. What is the basis of this business Biyela?"

Nkosi: "There's no need for that."

Biyela: "It's okay, Your Highness. The business is the vineyard on Fourth. It's currently the biggest in the nation. It is on our soil, we approached the Phakamisa's offering them 50% after we secured the farm in exchange for their daughter."

King: "So the farm belongs to both of you. I don't want Phakamisa on my soil, buy him out."

Nkosi: "First of all, this entire nation is our soil. Phakamisa has various businesses, farms and mines in it. There is no need to disable proper business relations especially because this venture isn't contracted by the throne."

King: "Has today's exercise not taught you anything? You give royals a chance to fuck you over and they will!!!"

Nkosi: "These royals haven't. They will not be punished for the mistakes of others. You yourself have business with Phakamisa, will you cut that off?" He stared at me. "King Biyela, please review the terms of your agreement and as I mentioned before evaluate the loyalty of the partnership. I do trust you to do what's best for the throne."

Biyela: "Thank you my Prince. I'll sort it out before I retire for bed this evening."

Nkosi: "Next in the agenda?"

Khaya: "The protesters shooting, Your Highness. You were to give a statement."

Nkosi: "I've changed my mind. I will not be dignifying the protesters. They were warned fairly even when they breaking the law. They're not getting any more attention on my time. In fact, have the bodies been returned to the families?"

Khaya: "Yes, Your Highness."

Nkosi: "Pity. Burning them would've sent a clearer message. I do all I can in my power to better this nation and give citizens equal and fair opportunities. There is not a thing that they do not ask for and I do not provide. As you've seen, there's not a single person living on the streets. The homeless have shelters and get donated to, provided with skill and later employment. If they want to spit in my face, I will burn theirs."

King: "For once, I fully support that."

Nkosi: "Your precious princess taught me that so you can thank her." He hissed in frustration. I was struggling to keep a straight face. "I will need to make an announcement at 6pm. This announcement will need to go in detail about the royals and the royal status that have been revoked. I want to address what this will mean for their kingdoms and regions. Khaya, please start drafting."

Khaya: "Yes, My prince."

Nkosi: "We also need to ease the lock down throughout this month. We'll start slow. The threat is not completely gone but we have removed the power it had. I'm expecting the five families to leave by morning."

Zwe: "What's going to happen to their armies, their guards and servants?"

Nkosi: "They'll be entered into the system to find other employment, however, I need their names flagged. I don't want any of us to hire them in our own homes and businesses. As we know, some of our people are very loyal and I expect the same with them. We are not to hire their employees anywhere near us. They can be placed in employment in private sectors."

Zwe: "I have a few interns that I had booked for the hospital later this week. This was concluded four months ago. Their contracts have already been signed. It's about five of them."

Nkosi: "Since their contracts were already signed prior last week, you can do a final evaluation and conclude from there." He nodded. "Have you started, Khaya?"

Khaya: "Yes Your Highness, I've got down several points, I think it's important that we let the public know the other ro- families committed treason."

Mnqobi: "Won't that be like we're painting them in bad light to justify removing them?"

Khaya: "No, it will be the truth. Perhaps, Your Highness can also send a formal document to them to sign and accept the terms of having their status revoked. In that way, they will be admitting to have committed a crime. This also shows the throne in a good light, that they are not intending to harm, they are forgiving but this is the official last warning. Any illegal act against the throne after this, is a death warrant. No one will touch you again."

Nkosi: "I love that. Sibonelo, you can draft this document?"

Sibo: "Easily, my Prince. It will take about two hours. Mnqobi, contact the head media house for a 6pm slot for this announcement. Highlight the urgency and importance of it. I want everyone talking about it."

Mnqobi: "On it."

Zwe: "I'll start the memo on the easing of the lockdown so long. Mthunzi?"

Mthunzi: "Sure." They sat together.

Biyela: "Seems like an efficient team. The future is in capable hands isn't it, My King?" He chuckled. My father stared at each and everyone silently.

King: "It seems." I got up, checking my phone as I left the office. <Business might be concluded early today, I miss you. Can we try to sneak off together for a few hours after dinner?> I sent it. She replied almost instantly: <I'd love that baby. I can't wait. I've never snuck out before so this is bound to be funny.> I laughed. <Don't lie baby, the first time we spoke you snuck out the guest house.> I sent it, looking up at my father.

King: "So you leave the country in other people's hands while you make love faces at your phone?"

Nkosi: "What is your issue with love? Why does it bother you so much?"

King: "It is distracting you!"

Nkosi: "I'm about sick of you now. I don't want to fight you father, but if come what may, you continue to poke at me or Thembisa I will fight back and you will not enjoy it."

King: "Are you threatening me Mehluli?"

Nkosi: "I'm daring you to start. We'll see who finishes." He stared at me, I looked back at him.

King: "You forget, I put you in that power and I can take you off it."

Nkosi: "Try." He snapped his finger, his lightening sparking up. I stared into his eyes. (Switch off.) I whispered. His hands switched off. He snapped again and it didn't light. "You can ask Thembisa, to ask me to give it back." ...

## Chapter 82

### PETU'S POV\_

My sister had to come fetch me. I tried begging my dad but he was adamant and threatening to call the police. Siza parked in her driveway.

Siza: "Do you want to tell me what happened?" I wiped my tears.

Petu: "I don't even know where to start."

Siza: "The beginning maybe? Why did he throw you out?"

Petu: "Dad was planning the protest. I overheard him on the phone, talking about it the day before it happened. I didn't want him to get hurt. I don't know what I was thinking. I told Mnqobi about it."

Siza: "Petu!! Why would you do that?"

Petu: "Siza you saw what happened! I had to stop him. I thought they would just warn them or something. I just wanted dad to be safe."

Siza: "So how did he end up surviving?"

Petu: "I think they got him out of there when it happened because he's injured. He says they came to fetch him. I don't know. When I got the message today, I thought someone was setting a trap so I asked Mngqobi to borrow me a guard to check the house. We went there and he looked through the house to make sure it's safe. Dad didn't take kindly to it. He hates them so much. Siza, he says they killed mom, is that true?"

Siza: "No it's not. Yoh Petu. Why didn't you just let this go! Why did you meddle?"

Petu: "We would've lost our father!!"

Siza: "We've lost him NOW. He may still be alive but he's disowned you!"

Petu: "Siza what happened to mum? I was too young when she died but I know you guys are hiding what happened to her."

Siza: "Let's go inside so I can check the children and find us something to drink." We got out of the car, taking my bags inside to the guestroom. Siza went to check on her kids and came back with a bottle of vodka. She poured a shot for herself and drank it. "I killed mum." I stared at her, confused.

Petu: "What do you mean?"

Siza: "Remember I left the house? I went to university in Golden Crown. You were about 9 years old at the time. I started my first year and I lost control. I started partying and neglecting my books. I regret it alot but by some miracle I passed first year. I hated going back home. With the way dad treated mum, I was just tired of it all. Petu, our father wasn't always the person you know. I kept quiet all these years because he's all we had. Our mother maintained our home. She was working as a nurse. Father got part time jobs here and there but nothing stable. Apart from that, he would beat her. That's why I didn't want to come home. I wish I made better decisions. I wish I was as smart as you Petu." She drank another shot. "In second year. I began failing and eventually stopped going to school. The school sent mom a letter about my non attendance and she left work, driving up to Golden Crown to fetch me." She chuckled. "You should've seen her, she was livid Petu. I was in a student commune. I had a hangover that day, we hadn't cleaned. She came in shouting at me, grabbing all of my clothes. She took almost everything and threatened me to get in the car. We drove back, coming home. The whole way she was shouting and shouting. When we were almost here,

dad called. He shouted at her about leaving work to come attend to a useless person. He berated her about leaving you, a child and running after me, an adult. Mama argued that I was still her child and she'd run after me wherever I was." She started crying. "The arguing went on for a bit before she hung up. She turned to me and told me I'm always starting trouble and that I had to be responsible for myself. I can never forgive myself for what I said to her." She held her face, crying in her hands. "I said to my mother she should be responsible for me instead she kept me in an abusive home and I had no home training only survival." She sobbed. The tears I held back started rolling down my face. "She looked at me, and that's when she lost control of the car. The hand that was about to slap me, held me back as that car skidded off the road and rolled over. She protected me and I'd hurt her. I killed our mother Petu."

....

We stayed in bed crying for over an hour. All the memories of my mother came rushing back. I remember Siza coming home in a wheelchair. I remember the funeral. I remember my father crying every night. I remember realizing how much he despised Siza. I'd had to help her everyday because she could barely do anything for herself. Eventually learning to walk again and getting back to doing things months after the accident.

Siza: "I'm sorry Petu. I'm sorry I stole our mother."

Petu: "Siza you didn't kill our mother. It was an accident. I know you didn't want her to be hurt."

Siza: "Dad still hasn't forgiven me really."

Petu: "Is that why you refused to come home?"

Siza: "Partly. Remember you went to boarding school when you turned 14?"

Petu: "Yes. You applied for me."

Siza: "Yes. And you got a bursary. So it was either a public school or that. Mum's life insurance was finished because I fought the lawyer to pay off our house bond with it. Dad didn't have a proper job, I couldn't risk us being homeless too. You didn't deserve that."

Petu: "What did you do? That bursary is difficult to get."

Siza: "The sob story didn't work, so I slept with the chairman of the school. I stalked his night places and approached him." I felt so horrible, I sat up uncomfortably. "I had to do it, I wanted to Petu. Please don't feel bad. I was never a good girl, let's not pretend I was a saint. How do you think I met Jackson? He's 15 years older than me. I knew what I was doing, I had to set you up. I knew a good school will give you higher chances to get a scholarship for tertiary. You had a better chance of passing and making something out of yourself." I know that my sister loved me, she's always looked out for me. Especially after our mother died. She played the role as best she can. She never complained.

Petu: "All these years Siza. All this time, I praised our father for your work. When did he start at the company?"

Siza: "For you to get the bursary, he had to be employed by royals. So he got entered into the system and they employed him for the servicing of cars. Honestly, he did work hard, he did climb the ladder himself."

Petu: "Why won't you give yourself credit?"

Siza: "For what Petu? I put us in that situation. If I'd just been a good child and listened to my mother, focused on school, I could've gotten her out of that situation but I killed her instead-"

Petu: "Stop saying that!! Just stop." I took a shot of vodka too. The bitterness burnt my throat and chest. "Why does he say the Biyela's killed mother?"

Siza: "The night of the accident, there was a royal parade. I'm not sure what was happening but there was so much chaos and traffic into the city. The ambulance delayed because of that. She died on the way to hospital. The royals didn't intentionally do something. Father just...he doesn't like them-"

Petu: "No. He hates them because they took away his slave. He hates them because they put a rule in place that gave him responsibility that he didn't want. He wanted our mother to work for him and take care of him and us while he free loaded."

Siza: "Petu, this is why I kept all this from you. I don't want you to hate him, he's our father."

Petu: "That's the problem Siza. He's conditioned you to believe it's okay to marry him. The only difference here is that Jackson actually provides

but he is still abusive to you. That's why you won't leave. You think you deserve this as some sort of punishment."

Siza: "Please stop this. Drop this topic right now."

Petu: "As long as you heard me." ...

SASA POV\_

The chef's were preparing supper for us as they usually did. I wasn't allowed in that kitchen, all I could do was request a certain meal or hand over a recipe so I asked for the meal we had on our first date. I went to my father in the lounge area where he looked at his tablet, no doubt watching his goats.

Me: "Tata." I sat next to him.

Xolani: "Hi my angel." He put the tablet aside.

Me: "Uhm. I don't want to disrespect you Tata. So I thought I'd rather ask for permission first."

Xolani: "For what, my child?" I looked at my hands, nervously unable to look in his face.

Me: "So... I haven't spent alot of time alone with Nkosi and I was thinking that maybe, if it was okay to spend some time with him after supper."

Xolani: "Oh?" I would probably die of embarrassment one day. This is was so shameful. I should've just snuck out like a normal child. What kind of disrespect.

Me: "We'll just play board games Tata. And watch a movie."

Xolani: "A movie?" Oh Bawo.

Me: "Yes Tata."

Xolani: "You know when I was his age uNkosi, I had two children." Earth, open please, quickly. Send me to the basement of hell.

Me: "Hayi Tata, we won't do that." I was so ashamed.

Xolani: "I would expect you not to disrespect me like that. So when will you come back after watching a movie?" I'd never ask for the whole night, I'm not that brave.

Me: "I don't know Tata, maybe a bit late."

Xolani: "A bit late?"

Me: "Yes Tata."

Xolani: "Are you using condoms-"

Me: "Tata." I wanted to throw up immediately. Why were my parents so comfortable with talking about sex? At any moment. "We're not doing that please."

Xolani: "Good because before him I know you as a virgin. I was promised a marriage first."

Me: "Yes sir."

Xolani: "Alright then. You can spend some time with your prince and watch a movie."

Me: "Thank you Tata. I need to get ready."

Xolani: "For a movie?"

Me: "Tata please. I just need to freshen up." He chuckled. I walked out, embarrassed like hell. This will be an uncomfortable dinner, I can just say that now. In our family room, mama was watching TV and snacking on peanuts. I took a very quick shower and changed into a brown backless maxi dress, puffing the last bits of my perfume. I combed my hair out, wearing a gold headband. I left the room to the garden where Amahle and Nele were chilling. They were laying on the grass listening to music. I thought Amahle didn't like music? She looked very comfortable.

Me: "Hey loves."

Nele: "Hey, you look gorgeous."

Ama: "You always do this to him when you're ovulating, my poor brother Thembisa."

Me: "Not you too tshomi please. I've had enough embarrassing sex talk for the week. I asked dad for permission to spend some time with Nkosi and he all but asked if we'll be having sex." They laughed.

Ama: "That's funny. What did he say?"

Me: "Apparently he had two children already when he was Nkosi's age." They laughed again. "This will be an awkward dinner."

Ama: "Yeah, no doubt. Have you spoken to Petu?"

Me: "Not today. I haven't even called Zimmy. Her app launched earlier today right? I was still in hell then." She giggled.

Ama: "Yeah."

Me: "I'll call them later. How is Nothando?"

Ama: "I haven't spoken to her today. She was fine yesterday when we spoke." I wonder how she's going to take the news that she's no longer a princess.

Me: "Petu's birthday is coming up this week. Maybe we should organise something. A sleep over. We haven't done young girls having fun things in weeks. It's been adult things all through out. No, we need a break."

Ama: "I agree. Maybe our original plan. Asking Mngqobi to borrow us a house in Stellars."

Me: "With his breakup with Petu? I don't know Amahle. She has to decide."

Ama: "I don't know why she's fighting this but fine, she'll decide. Let's go in. Dad and Nkosi are home." ...

Dinner was indeed awkward as I expected. Why was the king here? He hasn't said a word. I don't know if he's angry or that's just his face. Nkosi didn't seem to pay him any attention. Just ate his food happily.

Nkosi: "This was the meal we had on our first date." He looked at me, smiling.

Me: "Yes it is. I asked them to make it, just to have something nice after a difficult day. I know how you place memory to sense. You had a good evening then, so...I wanted you to remember that."

Nkosi: "That's sweet of you. I also got you something."

Me: "Really?"

Nkosi: "Hmm." He reached in his pocket, pulling out a purple velvet little bag. "Remember when you broke up with me? I had this hope that maybe, we'd find our way back to each other one day. I got this to remind me to keep faith for that day. I went to the new house today and remembered it. I hope you like it, I had it made for you. It's the only one that exists." He took out the bracelet. It was beaded in soft purple and cotton pink with a gold charm in the shape of a tiger.

Me: "It's so pretty! I love it."

Nkosi: "It's going to keep you safe. The beads come from the mountain, anything that breaks it will fall at your feet."

Me: "It's got pink beads!"

Nkosi: "I know baby. They're very difficult to find."

Me: "I love it so much. Thank you. They're so pretty."

King: "For heaven's sake." He muttered.

Nkosi: "What was that, father?"

King: "We get it, it's pink."

Nkosi: "Yes. It's her favourite colour and it looks beautiful." We continued eating quietly.

Mama: "Very tragic thing that happened today, hm? Who would've thought there would be people who work against the throne. It's a good ruling you did, my king."

King: "Finally, a proper conversation." He sighed. "It wasn't tragic enough to be honest. Those families deserve to be hung." We're eating??

Nkosi: "Please not at dinner."

King: "Where else can I discuss my day?"

Nkosi: "Anywhere but the dinner table, father. Mr Ntaka, how is the farm doing?"

Xolani: "Very well, Your Highness. The workers are doing a good job and listen to instruction well. We had a blockage at the chicken coop, it took a while for us to figure it out."

King: "Why must we talk about chickens if we can't talk about my work? You see how you disrespect me Mehluli?"

Nkosi: "Chickens don't hurt anyone. Can we please have a peaceful conversation?"

Ama: "Let's rather discuss the wedding. Since the war is coming to an end, we have a good reason to celebrate."

King: "We haven't had a proper royal wedding since these two's mother." He beamed. "The country will shut down. I can imagine." He chuckled. "The first, will of course be the negotiations."

Mama: "My King, I was first thinking maybe a ceremony where she is tested for virginity and was celebrated. This way, the throne will be respected for having welcomed a girl with honour."

Me: "But mama we already had the virginity testing at the reed dance a few weeks ago."

Mama: "It's no harm doing it again."

King: "That's a great idea." He smiled. My heart started racing at how he smiled as if he planned something. Surely I'm just imagining it.

## PRINCE POV\_

We eventually left the family at the restaurant, for mt suite. My father was still talking about his wedding day. Amahle, Sasa's mother and Zanele, entertained him. He didn't even notice us leaving. I held my loves hand, walking into our room.

Nkosi: "What is all this?" There was a set up of snacks and games in the lounge area. I looked at her.

Sasa: "I was getting us ready for movie night baby." I pulled her into my arms, a sudden urge and desire stirring in me.

Nkosi: "I want to make my own movie." I kissed her lips, holding her body.

Sasa: "Love, you heard the conversation right? They want to test me again."

Nkosi: "I'll talk him out of it." I led her to bed, taking off her dress.

Sasa: "Babe."

Nkosi: "You'll be my wife Thembisa, you already are." I was already shivering in heat, my erection beginning to ache.

Sasa: "Love, look at me." I pulled away with difficulty. Her face making it worse, I just wanted to drink her. "What's wrong? Is it my ovulating?" My sense started ticking, slowly but surely.

Nkosi: "Fuck."

Sasa: "What?"

Nkosi: "Did my father touch my drink?"

Sasa: "Yes, he poured you one and brought it to you before you sat down for dinner." That's why the uncontrollable urge.

Nkosi: "He drugged me." I laughed. My father is so childish.

Sasa: "Are you serious?"

Nkosi: "This is gonna hurt." I sat down trying to think. It was already dark outside, it would be difficult to find the reversal for this.

Sasa: "Why would he do that?"

Nkosi: "Because I took away his lightening earlier today."

Sasa: "So he drugged you so you sleep with me? Why?"

Nkosi: "No I think he's banking on the fact that it won't happen so it will be a very uncomfortable and painful night for me." I looked at the door. Amahle knocked on it. "Enter." She walked in, looking at me holding back a laugh.

Ama: "I'm sorry. Here."

Nkosi: "Your father is sick, you know that?" I took the small packet from her and poured it in my mouth.

Ama: "He is. And he's very funny." She laughed.

Nkosi: "I'm not giving his lightening back for exactly this." She couldn't stop laughing.

Ama: "He's going to keep poking. Just give it back, you know he has pride."

Nkosi: "I'm not giving it back until he knows how to act."

Ama: "Fine. This is just hilarious for me. Goodnight love birds." She walked out. I looked at Thembisa, she was sitting on the bed, upset.

Nkosi: "Love. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you or make you uncomfortable."

Sasa: "No baby, you didn't make me uncomfortable at all. Let's choose a movie. I want to tell you how I asked dad if I can spend time with you." She giggled, walking to the lounge. I don't know if this woman thinks I don't know her but I know something is wrong and I can't relax without knowing what it is.

Nkosi: "Please tell me why you're upset." I followed her into the lounge.

Sasa: "I'm not upset, love."

Nkosi: "What did I ask you about lying to me?"

Sasa: "Nkosi can we please focus on the movie? And enjoying each others time. We can't be discussing feelings all the time we need to have fun."

Nkosi: "How am I supposed to have fun if I can feel the heaviness of your heart? Do you see why I didn't want my father near you? Now you're closed up and don't want to express yourself. No, he has to go." I walked to the door. She grabbed my arm and quickly let go before my hands caught flames. I looked at her "How did you know that was going to happen?"

Sasa: "Please, let's just watch our movie. I promise I'm okay. I just want to be in your arms." My heart was in conflict. With all my might I wanted to toss my father off that cliff but with Thembisa begging me, I have to sit with her and give her the time she's asking for.

Nkosi: "Fine." May the gods drive him away and home before that sunrise because if I have to see him, I will not be kind.

Chapter 83

KHAYA'S POV \_

After the Prince's formal TV address about the former royals, media was abuzz. The news spread country wide and trended in mere seconds. The formal document they had signed sealed their fates. The media slaughter was horrific. The most that the public was upset about is them sending war aircrafts into the city for no reason but to harm and destroy. It seems like majority of the public was fully in support of the Prince. That was a good thing and also a bit bad for anyone who tried to attack him. Hint hint, his own father. I felt the tension between them as much as I minded my business. All I'm saying is, the king will come short if he ever tried. I doubt he will though. After the address, Mngqobi and I headed to Zimmy in my apartment. I hate that we left her alone to deal with her business but we did sort everything out before we left and she has me on dial. I dont think she has many problems.

Khaya: "You good?"

Mngqobi: "Just worried."

Khaya: "Nothando?"

Mngqobi: "Yes and Petu." Yoh, Mngqobi will never give up on his two wives shame. I do admire him though, his attention to them is stable.

Khaya: "Okay, what about Petu?"

Mngqobi: "I took her home. She hasn't responded to me since."

Khaya: "Maybe she's spending time with her dad?"

Mngqobi: "To not even send a short message?"

Khaya: "Don't you think maybe Petu is no longer interested?"

Mngqobi: "Petu loves me and I'm not letting her go."

Khaya: "And Nothando?"

Mngqobi: "I doubt Nothando will stay. I love her but this is the out she's always wanted. Yes, she's been a princess all her life but that won't change much because her family has money. She will now be able to travel overseas, transfer and study there with no obligations to marry anyone she doesn't like. Aka, me." He looked out the window.

Khaya: "Won't you try to convince her?"

Mngqobi: "No Khaya. I work for the throne and it comes first. If Nothando's loyalty remains with her family or she she doesn't want to be

with me then I'm not going to convince her. I won't force my way like I did before."

Khaya: "Good." Loyalty to the throne is easy because the person about to rule was actually good. He prioritizes the people and respects us all. I'm not even a prince and my opinion matters to him. His father on the other hand? Yikes. It's uncomfortable being in the same room as him because all he does is stares or argue. We arrived at my apartment, going up. Jimmy was sitting on the dining table eating crisps.

Khaya: "Hey you."

Jimmy: "Hi."

Khaya: "What are you doing?"

Jimmy: "I was monitoring the orders and reviews."

Khaya: "Okay. How was your day?"

Jimmy: "Fantastic. Even though you left me by myself."

Khaya: "You wanted to meet the king?" She laughed.

Jimmy: "Absolutely not. I'm joking with you. How was that by the way?"

Mnqobi: "Terrifying. Did you hear the announcement? We're the only royals left with Sikhosana."

Jimmy: "What does that mean?"

Khaya: "It means all other royals had their status revoked. Only two in the nation left." She gasped.

Jimmy: "I haven't even checked the news. That's crazy."

Mnqobi: "Indeed. Do you have any feedback so far?"

Jimmy: "Oh sure." She handed him her laptop. "Uhm, the promo worked. People loved seeing Prince Sibonelo." A tinge of jealousy was in her tone. Why couldn't she just admit that she likes him? He's hard not to like, no one would judge her.

Khaya: "Yeah he was a hit. He said a few girls snuck him their numbers." I teased.

Mnqobi: "A few gave him lingerie too." He laughed.

Jimmy: "Oh. Wouldn't that be illegal."

Mnqobi: "Yes but who's complaining? I miss varsity." He chuckled.

Khaya: "Say that again, brother. At least he'll be able to blow off some steam, he's been working hard shame."

Mnqobi: "Ah, you know him. He's picky." I chuckled, taking out my ringing phone. Everytime this one gets bored he finds time to call and insult me. I blocked his number immediately. I wasn't going to allow my father to dictate and abuse me anymore.

Khaya: "Anyway, Zim. We came to check if you're fine. We still have one more meeting at home so we have to go."

Zimmy: "It means alot to me that you're here guys. Thank you." ...

We got back to the palace, the family had just gathered so we weren't late. We had our dinner first at the table and King Biyela invited us all to the lounge. By now, everyone had seen the TV address.

Biyela: "In our family, we talk things through, together. We wanted to be open about this and have a conversation with you Nothando. In regards to the new law, you're no longer a princess. This, to me and this family is no matter. What we are working around, however, is what happens next. I have reviewed my partnership with your father and have concluded that the business is quite beneficial and lucrative to us both, therefore we will keep it as is. The agreement of course is that, it will be conducted by a mutual lawyer, contracted by the throne. I will not have direct dealings with your family, none of us will. In light of this ruling, our initial agreement, that being your engagement is now fully your choice. You can choose, if you want to stay with us that would mean of course, being loyal to us and the throne. Or going back home to be with your family. No one here, will influence your decision. You can decide by tomorrow. Do you have any questions?"

Nothando: "Just...does that mean, I don't have to marry, tata?"

Biyela: "Yes, my angel. You won't have to marry Mnqobi if you go home." She looked at Mnqobi. He stared at his hands, clenching his jaws. He was so hurt and hiding it well.

Nothando: "Thank you tata. For considering my feelings and giving me a chance to decide." Ouch.

Biyela: "You are welcome my child."

Notha: "May I please be excused?"

Biyela: "Yes." She walked away to her room.

Queen: "This is terrible. Being a princess is all she knows. She was raised to be one. To have that stripped from her? That's horrifying. Now she has to discover herself all from start."

Biyela: "Yes, that's very terrible."

Zinhle: "Yoh, I'm just glad this has nothing to do with me."

Queen: "How so? All your friends were princesses and now they're not. Also, you're not allowed to speak to them ever again. So even you, you're affected."

Zinhle: "Why am I not allowed to speak to them? Who will I speak to if there's no other princess?"

Zwe: "There's three left. You can try your luck there."

Sibo: "The Sikhosana princesses?" He chuckled. "Good luck. You do realize those twins only speak to each other right? And the last princess doesn't even speak? This will be hilarious. I told you baby sis, expand your friendship circle and stop classing people by status. Now look?"

Zinhle: "At least I'm still royal Bhut Sbo. I would actually die if I ever had to give up being a princess. There's nothing gracious about being a commoner."

Biyela: "Zinhle Biyela!! Wash that foul mouth this instance! There's nothing gracious about looking down on other human beings! Don't let me hear that kind of talk from you ever again. Are we clear?"

Zinhle: "Yebo baba."

Khaya: "I'll check up on Notha." I got up, walking to her room. We weren't really friends or close but I knew exactly how it felt to be an outcast. Well, not here obviously but the internal conflict can really fuck with your mind. At times, I really do feel like a Biyela prince. A lot of the times actually. But sometimes? There's that stupid voice that keeps telling me I don't belong. That I'm not one of them. That I need to focus on building myself and my name apart from their empire just in case, one day, they tell me to go. They obviously never would but I just can't shut that stupid voice up. I knocked on her door. She opened, letting me in.

Notha: "Honestly Khaya, I get that Mngqobi loves me but he's really suffocating me now, I need space."

Khaya: "I'm not here for him. I came because I thought you needed someone to talk to. Maybe not now, maybe when it's 3 in the morning, weeks from now and it's actually starting to sink in. You can call or come to me, I'll listen. I know we're not friends. I've never even been a royal but I've spent enough of my life around it to understand the rough emotions that sometimes take over."

Notha: "Why?"

Khaya: "Why I am here? I wish I had someone who I could talk to sometimes when I felt overwhelmed."

Notha: "Thanks for that but why did they revoke our royalty?" She didn't watch the news? Obviously not, she's a princess nothing ever affects her. Was.

Khaya: "The five families conspired against the throne. They were planning to dethrone the king."

Notha: "Don't understand why my dad would do that, seeing that he was friends with the king."

Khaya: "Between you and me, I don't think the king is friends with anyone and he's not shy to let people know that." She smiled faintly.

Notha: "Who would you choose?"

Khaya: "That would be unfair. My brother is in love with you, always has been. I'd obviously beg you to choose him. At the same time, if you don't feel the same, I'd encourage you to follow your heart and go home, study, maybe one day you'll find someone you love. I can't choose for you Notha. No one can. There's no right or wrong path here. You win either way."

Notha: "I don't win Khaya. The one time I start making worthy friends, building a proper life, it's pulled out from under me. The one time I feel." I know that all too well...

SIBONELO'S POV \_

Zwe took Mngqobi to the boys lounge, I followed them, Khaya joining us as well.

Sibo: "Is she okay, bug?"

Khaya: "Not really." There was not much we could do here. My phone buzzed. I checked the message from Zimmy: <Good evening Prince Sibonelo, I've sent a report regarding the first day of business. I also have a few questions I need clarification on. Thank you.> I checked her email and responded.

Zwe: "Mnqo, how are you?"

Mngqobi: "I'm fine Bhut Zwe. I'll be good." He definitely won't be. Mngqobi would probably cry himself to sleep. This time I couldn't fix it. I couldn't manipulate Nothando's choice because it would affect the throne.

Zwe: "Okay. I'm sorry this has to happen. You understand though, right?"

Mngqobi: "I do understand, fully." I received another message. < Can I see you?> Finally.

Zwe: "Sibonelo? Do you have anything to say?"

Sibo: "Yeah. Tough luck buddy."

Zwe: "Sibonelo!"

Sibo: "I'm kidding. Nothando knows how you feel Mngqobi but you can't force her to love you. At least, you still have Petunia who is in love with you. Now I'd love to sit here with you and help you get drunk but I have a more urgent situation I need to take care of. I'll check on you tomorrow young prince." I got up walking out. I know I promised Zwe a hang out but it was his turn to babysit. I drove to the apartment, going up the elevator and walked in. She stood in the kitchen in a spicy red silk gown. Just that tingled me.

Sibo: "I only have a few minutes to spare. What is the issue?" She poured a drink for us both and handed me a glass. Suddenly now she was shy. I was getting bored with these games. She needs to decide if she wants to be assertive or shy. "I've had a very long day Zimasa." She looked up at me.

Zimmy: "How do you know my full name?"

Sibo: "We have business together, why wouldn't I?" She drank up her alcohol and sauntered towards me, standing in front of me. "Are you trying to seduce me?"

Zimmy: "Yes. There's no reason for you to get out there something that's already inside this house." I'm done playing. I placed the glass on the table, picking her up. Her legs wrapped around my waist. I pulled off her gown, finding her breasts bare and full. My mouth found her nipple, hardening my dick immediately. I took off my shirt with one hand, walking her to the bedroom. I placed her on the bed, taking off my pants. Her eyes roamed over my whole body while I rolled the condom on. I kissed her stomach all the way down to her nub. I sucked on her clit, slipping one finger in. She was so wet, moaning softly. I placed myself in her entrance, watching her face as I entered. Her eyes rolled to the back of her head.

Sibo: "Fucck..." Her walls tightened around me while I pumped inside her. Her beautiful breasts bouncing happily with my pace. Her screams filled the room. I quickly pulled out. She's not about to disrespect me, I know I wouldn't last long but not this quick. Hell fucking no. I went down on my knees, slithering my tongue on her, pushing it inside, slurping up to her clit on sucking. She shivered.

Zimmy: "Again, exactly like that." She moaned. I munched on her lips, frustrating her first. My finger pushed inside, rubbing the inner. She squirmed, pulling away. I pulled her back, softly rubbing the same spot until her body starts freezing, I pulled out, kissing and licking her clit. She was so close to coming and with that, I can finally redeem myself. I sucked on her slowly, and stood back up to penetrate her gently. I held her hips up to me, as I grind on her, stroking the very spot that had her freezing.

Sibo: "You feel so fucking good." I groaned, my stroke pacing faster. Her whole body shook while she came, squirting and freezing. "oh fuckkk.." tightened my grip, looking down at her beautiful face, her breasts and I spiraled. "Zimasa..." My body seized as I came hard, vision blurring into her face, pushing deep inside her. I felt the tire wear out my body immediately. It was so difficult pulling out of her but I did, taking off the condom.

Sibo: "Are you on contraceptives?" I went to the bathroom to flush it.

Zimmy: "No." I climbed on top of her, kissing her face.

Sibo: "Do you mind being on them for me? I won't be able to have the patience of finding a condom." She smiled.

Zimmy: "Okay, I can get on one."

Sibo: "Thank you. I'll call the doctor in the morning. How are you feeling?"

Zimmy: "I feel so good. I've never cum so hard in my life." She blushed.

Sibo: "You're lying baby because I've fucked you before."

Zimmy: "Not like this." I kissed her lips.

Sibo: "You're gorgeous. I feel like I have to explain why I finished too quick." She laughed.

Zimmy: "You got the job done. That's the only important thing." I smiled, laying next to her on the bed. I could feel the sleep creeping in, my body feeling so free. I pulled this one onto my chest and closed my eyes. Her finger traced on my chest writing only what is known to her. "Are you allowed to have a tattoo?" I chuckled.

Sibo: "Yes baby. As long as it's not visible. Not on my face, neck or hands."

Zimmy: "How old is this one?"

Sibo: "A couple of years. Maybe 7."

Zimmy: "What does it mean?" I wish I hated these stupid questions girls always ask but I really missed them. These people don't like peace.

Sibo: "It's a dragon love, it doesn't mean anything."

Zimmy: "Oh. Would you get another one?"

Sibo: "Probably." I kissed her head, trying to get a nap. Hoping she gets the hint. Tomorrow shouldn't be a difficult day. Our council will only meet in the evening to discuss the easing of restrictions. I was behind on my Bi-connect work but I'd catch up in the morning.

Zimmy: "Prince Sibonelo-"

Sibo: "Hm.hm, why my whole name now?"

Zimmy: "That's what you told me to call you."

Sibo: "Call me what you want as long as it's not disrespectful. Let me catch a quick nap love." She looked up at me. "Yini manje?"

Zimmy: "Nothing." I'll deal with this later.

I woke up to faint sounds of a TV playing. Zimmy was next to me watching it, the volume a bit low. She was listening to the news. I pulled her close.

Sibo: "What time is it?"

Zimmy: "it's 7am. Good morning."

Sibo: "Morning? I slept through the night???"

Zimmy: "Yep." Fuck. Zwe must be pissed. I tried getting out of bed but she held me back.

Sibo: "Babe, my brother might barge in here."

Zimmy: "Shhh." She lay me back in bed, disappearing under the covers. She obviously doesn't know Zwelethu. If he can't reach me all night, he's chewing my head all morning. I felt her hot tongue on my tip. Her mouth kissing it, and sucking it in. Turning me on instantly. I pulled off the covers, to watch her mouth working on me. Her hand held my base, gently twisting.

Sibo: "Baby.." I groaned. She sucked deeper into her mouth touching the back of her throat, and choking. She stopped sucking and massaged my dick slowly, kissing my balls, sucking them in. I pulled her by her hair back to my tip. Her tongue twirled on it while her hand twisting. "OH YEESSS." She went faster on me, I pulled her up onto me, taking a condom from the night stand. I rolled it over my hardness. She put it at her entrance, slowly sitting on it. I held her thighs, absorbing into her tightness. She sat up and back down again, over and over. Her hands holding my chest, panting and moaning.

Sibo: "Ride it baby. Fuck me." I whispered. Her nails dug on my skin. "Oh fuck." I watched her face melt into a state of pleasure and near climax.

Zimmy: "Sibonelo." She cried, throbbing tightly on me. She finally climaxed, staring into my eyes in shame. I sat up flipping her over, underneath me. I kissed her lips, stroking deeply into her. She held on

tight. My waist working easily, to reach inside her spot. Faster, faster and her moans became inaudible, mumbling and panting. I lifted my body up to look at her better, I reached for her throat, stroking it. She opened her legs wider.

Sibo: "Babbbby." I groaned. Her nails kept digging into my arms. I was almost there, feeling her soft spot trembling into another orgasm. She crumbled under me, climaxing again and choking. I pushed deep inside her watching breasts flopping up and down. My orgasm waved through my from the tip of my head, shaking my whole body, to my toes. I pushed deep inside her and came. "Shit..." She gasped when I let go of her neck. I flopped next to her, still shaking. "Fuck..."

Zimmy: "You almost killed me." She giggled.

Sibo: "I'm so sorry." She kissed my lips. I took off the condom. "I need to get my phone. Zwe is honestly going to kill-" a knock on the door disrupted me. I knew it. I went to flush the condom and took a towel to the lounge. I opened the door. Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "What is your issue!? Why aren't you answering your phone?"

Sibo: "I fell asleep. Did something happen?" He stared at me, and smiled.

Zwe: "You dog."

Sibo: "Please leave."

Zwe: "Your mother is asking for you. I have a meeting with Nkosi today. The young ones need to focus on school today. They're virtual learning, I need them near you so you can monitor that they're not playing video games. Can they work at Bi-connect, I assume you're going to work?"

Sibo: "I am now." He looked down the passage and back at me.

Zwe: "Go see your mother before work. You and I are going to have a very lengthy conversation tonight."

Sibo: "Before that, I need one of your interns to do blood tests and insert a thing for prevention." Might as well get all of it out now. He inhaled and exhaled, walking out. I went back to the bedroom. She was making the bed. I stood behind her, hugging her.

Sibo: "I have to go to work. Please get ready, I'll send a car in an hour to pick you up. You can work at my office."

Zimmy: "Why? I'm fine right here."

Sibo: "Don't you want to be outside for a bit?"

Zimmy: "No thank you Prince Sibonelo. I'm absolutely okay and comfortable being here."

Sibo: "Maybe it's for the best, you might distract me." She chuckled. "I'll send a doctor some time during the day for your blood tests and such. I'll have mine done in the office."

Zimmy: "Okay." She turned to look at me. "You're going to be late."

Sibo: "Hm..." I kissed her and got dressed. I'd shower at home and dress there. Honestly, I don't know where this was going but I needed a bit of comfort and hers was perfect. I don't know if I was ready for a relationship with anyone. Maybe the conversation with Zwe is exactly what I needed. He always carries a few of my brain cells in his pockets.

## NOTHANDO'S POV\_

Tuesday morning, I got out of bed. Having been unable to sleep all night. I bathed and got dressed quickly. My intention was to go see my father. Surely now, since the engagement was off, I could go home and focus on finding myself. Royalty was all I was taught and now I had the chance to explore. The good thing was that my family was comfortable and not much adjusting would be needed other than security. A sudden wave of sadness came again. For years, I had planned her life with what was dictated to me by my father. I had studied what he chose, and would've married who he chose. Mngqobi wasn't a bad person or even average. He was definitely good looking as all Biyela's, he was soft towards me and very respectful. Someone knocked on her door.

Notha: "Come in." The door opened and he walked in. For once, looking his age in casual clothes. I guess he won't be working today.

Mngqobi: "Hi love."

Notha: "Hello Conqueror." He smiled.

Mngqobi: "How are you?"

Notha: "I'm fine." He nodded.

Mnqobi: "That's good." He looked at my bags. "I guess this is goodbye?"

Notha: "I guess." I sighed. "Mnqobi, your family has treated me so well. I felt more at home here. You would make a good husband."

Mnqobi: "Thanks."

Notha: "So goodbye."

Mnqobi: "Nothando, if you want to, if you get home and decide you don't want to be there, please come back. There's always a space for you in my heart and in my home."

Notha: "That's sweet Mnqobi. Thank you." He walked out the room. I went downstairs where the family had gathered and I greeted the parents.

Biyela: "My angel, your father hasn't yet sent a car for you and I believe they're leaving this morning. Perhaps he thinks you'll join them in a day or two, wrapping up your school things. How about you go over to him and let him know? Mnqobi will drive you."

Notha: "Thank you tata, I'd appreciate that." I followed Mnqobi out to his guard and car. He opened my door and I got in. We drove in silence to my father's former house I guess. Since he was now leaving, he wouldn't return here. The Biyela's rented this house out to my family everytime they came to town. We parked in the driveway.

Mnqobi: "I'll wait here." I nodded, walking out to the front door. Instead of knocking, I walked in. My parents were in the lounge, their guards taking out their suitcases.

Notha: "Good morning."

Phakamisa: "Nothando. What are you doing here?"

Notha: "Were you going to just leave me behind Tata?"

Phakamisa: "Nothando, where am I taking you?"

Notha: "Home! I'm not longer engaged to Mnqobi. I can come home now."

Phakamisa: "What gave you that idea Nothando?"

Notha: "Tata, what's going on?" He sighed.

Phakamisa: "You're a Biyela bride Nothando. I can't take you back. You are the reason I own 50% of the biggest vineyard. If I take you back, I lose that. I don't want to lose that. Besides You've got the chance to be a royal wife, a Biyela, you can't do better than that. I can assure you right now."

Notha: "How could you say that tata? Am I just business to you?"

Phakamisa: "Nothando I'm only doing this because I care about you. Mnqobi Biyela is in the high ranking now. Don't be stupid."

Notha: "I am a human being!"

Phakamisa: "That is useless without a powerful name!"

Notha: "Don't you think you should be grooming me to run your businesses like the Biyela's are doing with all their children?" He laughed.

Phakamisa: "You're a girl. One that I raised as a high rank princess. You know nothing about business and you'll definitely never touch any of mine."

Notha: "Mama."

Mama: "Your father is right, my child. You belong to Biyela. Coming back home will drown the last bit of dignity you have. You will have a good life with them, baby. The Biyela's are good people, they'll take care of you." I felt sick to my stomach.

Notha: "Do you not understand that if I marry Mnqobi, I can never speak to you again?"

Phakamisa: "It's for your own good. You only know how to be a princess, a wife. Marry him and live the life you've always known. There's nothing I can give to you now." ....

## Chapter 84

A few days later...

SASA POV\_

It was Friday, I'd had a very busy week throwing myself into my school work. Mostly because I was avoiding my family. I had realized something on Monday when Nkosi's father had drugged him. The king will do everything in his power to make me uncomfortable. For probably all of my life, I'll be fighting to prove to him I'm worthy. Just as I did with my mother and continue to do. I was just so tired of it all. I'd made sure to catch up on all my school work and start assignments. The family was probably at the restaurant about to have dinner. I sighed walking out to join them. Tomorrow was Petu's birthday. She too was in a bad space. Apparently her father had disowned her, so did Nothando's parents do to her. Zimmy's parents were getting a divorce and she had to deal with her father's new girlfriend. My problems were tiny compared to each ones. I checked the group chat we had created. Calling each person individually had seemed to disconnect us all.

Zimmy: <What we doing for Petu's bday?>

Petu: <Not celebrating this year. I'm not in the mood.>

Me: <Please Petu. I need this. I know it's your day but I need to get out of here.> They sent laughing faces.

Notha: <I can get a house here, we won't do much. Just cry and drink.>

Zimmy: <perfect for me.> I entered the restaurant. The family was seated. The king was still here. Yes he has officially moved in.

Me: "Good evening family." I mumbled, sitting next to Nkosi. He too was busy these days and sort of avoiding me. I knew it was because he wanted to know what was making me upset. I can't be crying to him all the time, he needs to let this go, I'll process it and deal with it. Eventually it won't even be a factor. He held my hand.

Nkosi: "I had ordered for you. I thought you were still busy with your assignment."

Me: "I got as far as my target today. Thought I should join the family for dinner. Thank you." I smiled. "Where is Amahle?"

Nkosi: "She went to the palace today. It's mother's birthday tomorrow." He looked at his father.

King: "What?"

Nkosi: "Nothing."

King: "It's definitely something, you're staring at me."

Nkosi: "I just find it strange that you refuse to go back to your house. It's your first wife's birthday and you're in my house."

King: "Is it a crime to spend time with my son and his new family? I thought we were getting to know each other. In fact, I think maybe the Ntaka family can join us tomorrow for the celebration." He smiled.

Nkosi: "I think not."

King: "Oh come on. It's the perfect time. The palace hasn't had visitors in a while. Your mothers probably want to meet your future wife." Nkosi looked at me.

Nkosi: "Are you ready?"

Me: "Yes I am. It would be lovely to meet your mothers."

King: "Great."

Nkosi: "Mr Ntaka, are you okay with coming to the palace as a family for this celebration?"

Xolani: "Yes, sure. Will you be canceling your sleep over Thembisa?" My heart broke.

King: "What's a sleep over now?"

Me: "Yes tata. I'll cancel. My King, a sleep over is being invited to a friend's house to have a hang out over night. We were planning to celebrate my friend's birthday."

King: "A queen doesn't do that type of stuff. That's just disgraceful."

Nkosi: "Thembisa is still a single woman, she can do what makes her happy."

King: "I don't know maybe it's me but you live together. That makes her your wife. She's not allowed to be in people's houses. Sleeping over in people's beds. That's loose."

Me: "I agree, my King. It will take some adjusting as I wasn't entirely informed about these things. Maybe meeting the queens tomorrow will be great. They can teach me all about how to be a queen and how to act." Nkosi's hand was warm in mine. I squeezed it, reminding him to calm down. It didn't help. He was going to snap.

King: "Something is happening." I smiled, receiving my juice. We had our dinner quietly. I don't know why it was still so awkward but King Sizwe could make things very uncomfortable. Just like now, he was staring at Nkosi waiting for his reaction. Nkosi ignored him flat out, eating his food. I wish Amahle was around to bring a topic to the table.

King: "Are you angry at me?" He asked Nkosi. No response. I looked at Nkosi. He was not going to bother. I just don't know anymore. It's like I can't do anything right. "Nkosihle?" Silence. "Wow." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "Please excuse me, family. I think I'll retire to bed now. Tomorrow will be a very long day." He got up and walked out. My heart ached after him. He stood by the door for a second but continued walking out. The King looked at me. I ate my dessert quietly. I'm not going to say anything.

Xolani: "How is school so far Thembisa?"

Me: "It's okay tata."

Xolani: "You were struggling with your assignment earlier."

Me: "Yes tata, I sent an email to the lecturer and she explained it better. I also spoke to Khaya, he gave me a few pointers."

Xolani: "Oh because he's also doing law? That's good. How is your friend?" My dad was my best friend and so I obviously told him everything. I stole a glance at the King, no he was still staring at me.

Me: "She's okay. They're all fine." I smiled. Time for me to leave. "I'm gonna check on Nkosi. I'll be in the room a little late tata."

Xolani: "Alright then my child." I got up, bowing at the king and walked out. I knocked on his door and walked in. He was dressing in his hiking gear. At night?

Me: "Love?" I hugged him, feeling the heat of his body. "What's wrong?"

Nkosi: "Nothing."

Me: "Something is obviously wrong Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Oh? You can tell how?"

Me: "Uhm, you're Abit irritated with me." His eyes softened.

Nkosi: "I'm not irritated with you."

Me: "Why were you ignoring your dad?"

Nkosi: "I'm talking to him right now."

Me: "Uhm, I'm confused?" He sighed.

Nkosi: "You accept everything he says. You're abandoning your life, interests and friends because he says so. He's turning you into him. Into me!! Something I didn't want to happen for you!"

Me: "Haibo Nkosinhle. I can't disrespect your father or your family. I have to abide by their rules-"

Nkosi: "Rules that are meant to oppress you!?"

Me: "You can't be serious. Your father is right. It's a dignity concern. A future queen can't be sleeping out with friends-"

Nkosi: "Why not!? It's not like you'll be cheating on me Thembisa, there's plenty of security to guard you. Why can't you be with your friends? Why can't you live?"

Me: "I am living, I have the family and you."

Nkosi: "So do my mothers. They have my father and me. Where are we right now? I told you when I met you I don't ever want you to feel the numbness I felt when I had to leave my life behind. I don't want you to be base your entire existence on me."

Me: "I don't know what you expect of me Nkosinhle-"

Nkosi: "Let me fight for you Thembisa!! Allow me to put my foot down. Everytime you stop me I have to listen to you because I respect you so damn much. I love you way too much to disregard what you say even though your heart is sore. Do you think it's nice to feel your heart aching and hearing your mouth saying something completely different?"

Me: "Nkosi, this is difficult, yes but I have to be strong and resilient. You can't have a weak soft person next to you as your queen."

Nkosi: "Why not? Tell me why my wife can't be soft and happy? What weakness is that? Being a human being?"

Me: "For your reign to be respected, I need to be your equal."

Nkosi: "Do you think my mother is my father's equal?" I looked at my feet.

Me: "You're not your father-"

Nkosi: "You're contradicting yourself. You know I'm not my father, yet you want to be like his wives. All I'm asking you, is to allow me to be your husband and protect you. Yes, life won't be the same but I can't allow you to lose all you know just for the sake of being with me. Please work with me Thembisa."

Me: "Do you have any idea how much your father scares me Nkosi? This is someone who tried to kill me and everytime he's faced with anything, I'm his first suspect. You're saying I must defy this person?"

Nkosi: "This is exactly why I have to fight. Right now he's in your house, living happily while you're trembling in a corner. I've begged you everyday to allow me to throw him out and you refuse. If I start not listening to you that's going to cause problems in our relationship. Do you not see this is a game to him?" I can't say to him it's not just his father. My mother too is on my neck on being a good wife and respecting my in laws especially because I'm lucky to be chosen by a future king. This was the best I could get. Ever. And she reminds me everyday.

Me: "I need a bit of space. I have alot to process." I hugged him, kissing his chin before walking out. I went to the family suite, my father was already here.

Xolani: "I thought you'd be a while."

Me: "Yes tata, I came to fetch a torch, I want to go to the meditation huts."

Xolani: "in the dark? Hayi Thembisa."

Me: "Please walk with me Tata." Honestly? I was scared because I don't know what the king would do. If he found me alone outside at night. Even without his lightening that man was dangerous.

Xolani: "Thembisa what's going on?" My mother walked in.

Me: "Nothing tata. I need to do some praying and meditation before I sleep. Scho was difficult this week."

Xolani: "Okay, let's go."

Mama: "Niyaphi ngoku?" (Where are you going?)

Xolani: "I'm taking her to the meditation huts for prayer."

Mama: "I can take her Xolani. I'm her mother after all, I'm the person who is church dedicated in our family. OoThembisa think they're smart. Ndiyamazi mna, uyokhala kwakhona lo and ufuna umfekethisa wena njengesqhelo. (I know her, she wants to cry again and you want to coddle her as usual.)

Xolani: "Yintoni ingxaki yakho, Ntombenhle!!" (What is your problem, Ntombenhle?) He shouted. My father never shouts.

Me: "Tata please. It's okay. Mama can walk with me. Masambe mama." (Let's go mama.) I took the torch, candles, matches and we walked out. Zanele came with us. I led the way, there was a dimly lit pathway already but the torch helped to see ahead.

Mama: "Tshin. You think I'm stupid nina notatakho. You want to come cry here alone and complain! A person in your position shouldn't be entertaining friends and sleep overs Thembisa! You're a future queen. Where is the respect? If you don't have some for yourself, at least for your husband! Sies! Did you see how disgusted he was? Hayi man Thembisa, you're embarrassing!" I held on my tears as best I can. Fortunately we were in the dark. We reached the huts. I switched off the torch, walking in. I took the small blanket, covering my shoulders. I placed the candle on its holder and it caught a light without flame. Shining bright and bold. The thunder flashed in sky, rains pouring almost instantly.

## PRINCE POV\_

I ran up the mountain, in the dark night. A lot of thoughts were going through my mind. I was so conflicted. Thembisa was too good of a person to throw my father out or at least respectfully ask him to leave. I know she was scared of him but she kept telling me not to ask him to leave. She's trying so hard to be civil, to include him, to love him and all he does is chastise her. I had to make the decision to go against her wishes or just let it happen. I was failing to let it happen any longer. My resentment for him was growing by the day and I'm afraid one of these days, he'll push me not ready for what comes next. I got to the alter letting out a snarl from the deep pits of my soul. My body was shaking violently at the thought of tomorrow. It won't just be my father then, it will be my mothers and sisters. My hands caught their flames, igniting

brighter and bigger than they ever have. Both my arms covered in fire. I roared out of my soul, my body changing, morphing into my animal. A pack of wild tigers crawled out of the woods, standing below the throne. I chuffed in greeting. They sat down, bowing their heads.

## MTHUNZI'S POV\_

I walked into my house. Busi was hanging our paintings that we did.

Mthunzi: "My love." I placed my bag down, walking over to her.

Busi: "Hi baby. Look!" She pointed at a box.

Mthunzi: "What is that." I helped her off the ladder, kissing her.

Busi: "Our new couch. It was delivered today. I haven't opened it yet. Maybe we can do it together?"

Mthunzi: "Right now baby? What about dinner?"

Busi: "I've already cooked. We can do it after you get some rest."

Mthunzi: "So where do I sit in the meantime?"

Busi: "You're serious right now? I had to move a very heavy piece of furniture to outside." She laughed.

Mthunzi: "There's guards outside baby, why would you do that?"

Busi: "I was bored." She looked at me, nervously.

Mthunzi: "What's wrong?"

Busi: "Nothing is wrong."

Mthunzi: "Okay, what do you want to tell me?"

Busi: "I found a website. It's an organization in Golden Crown but they have branches all over the country."

Mthunzi: "A website for what baby?"

Busi: "You asked me to look for someone to carry your child, remember?"

Mthunzi: "Oh yes. Did you find her?"

Busi: "No. I think it would be better if we looked through the candidates together baby. It turns out, this isn't unheard of. The organization specializes in connecting people like us. There are women interested in having children but need a baby father who raises the child equally with her. There are also guys who want to be fathers, there are same sex families, surrogates. Counseling is offered extensively and is compulsory for all parties involved. I think it will be good, that we do it together."

Mthunzi: "Are you sure about this Busi? This is a big step even though it's only the first. After we pick this person, it's doctors appointments then fertilization and I'm a father."

Busi: "Mthunzi, I want you to be happy. That's all. I'm sure about this arrangement because I'm sure you love me. I'm sure about our life. I don't want you to miss out on your dream because it isn't the same as mine." I couldn't love this woman more than this moment but I was having cold feet now.

Mthunzi: "Okay my love. We can look into it. Let's not make a decision yet." She smiled happily. I kissed her lips. I wanted a child, badly. This I was still very sure of. The problem is, I didn't want to have it with some random woman. No matter how contractual our co-parenting is. I wanted my child to be mothered by this woman in front of me. Maybe if the baby was already in her belly, she would accept it. Just maybe.

Mthunzi: "Love, don't you need me to go fetch your vitamins this week? Seeing that the hospital is under construction and minimal movement is allowed. I can imagine how full the clinics and pharmacies are."

Busi: "Oh that would be so sweet, my love. I'll give you my prescription. You are amazing. And I love you." She kissed my lips.

Mthunzi: "I love you much more." ....

TheRoyalsbyTinaKing

Chapter 85

SIBONELO'S POV\_

I woke up from a really satisfying dream. I reached over the nightstand to check the time. It was just after 7am. I looked on my chest, Zimmy was fast asleep still. I guess I could take another nap. It was Saturday after all, our off days. I would spend my afternoon with my mother, I didn't stay over last night so I know she's suspicious. My phone buzzed. I checked the message from Zwe: <Nkosi is inviting us to the palace for a birthday celebration. Please be home by 10, brother.> It read. A good day, I guess. The Sikhosana's knew how to host. Except this time, there's only our two families. Zimmy stirred in her sleep eventually waking up.

Sibo: "Good morning love."

Zimmy: "hey." She stretched. I know she wasn't a morning person. Always so moody when she woke up until she climbed on my dick then all that attitude flies out the window.

Sibo: "What do you have planned for the day?"

Zimmy: "I need to see Petu. So much is happening. Today is her birthday and we wanted to do a sleep over thing. Notha asked Mngqobi to borrow us a house. I'm in charge of food, snacks and drinks. Sasa was supposed to do decor but she's suddenly gone quiet, I can't get through to her so maybe she's busy. I'll have to take over that and yell at her later."

Sibo: "Sasa might not come, baby. She's probably at the palace, there's an event there today."

Zimmy: "Oh? Will you also be going?"

Sibo: "Yes, my family was invited."

Zimmy: "Okay ke." She sighed. "Should I make you some breakfast?"

Sibo: "Yes please but first." I kissed her soft lips. She giggled.

Zimmy: "You're insane. My pussy is now swollen from last night. You're not getting anything more." She got up walking to the bathroom. I chuckled, picking up my phone.

Sibo: "Baby, how much is this thing you're doing today?"

Zimmy: "What thing?" She was brushing her teeth.

Sibo: "You're buying snacks and decor. How much is it all?"

Zimmy: "I don't know babe. Snacks alone can't be more than 500. I'm going to discuss with Petu if we buy food for cooking or just order take aways instead but that also won't be more than 1000 for us all. Then drinks for maybe 2000. I don't even know how much decor is. We'll figure it out during the day." She rinsed her mouth, wearing her gown, walking to the kitchen. I made the transfer from my bank and switched on the TV. There was a broadcast message sending happy birthday to the queen. I watched the news.

Sibo: "Baby?" I yelled. No response. It would probably be impossible for her to hear me from my kitchen. My house was a lot bigger than the apartment. We came here last night because Khaya might've wanted his space. We got back the test results too, we were both clear and she had her injection. She came back with a tray, after some time. "I tried calling you."

Zimmy: "I couldn't hear you, why didn't you come to the kitchen?" I took my tray. "What do you need?"

Sibo: "What do you think I could get a queen as a present?" She beamed in delight, sitting on the bed. I drank my coffee, perfectly made like I taught her.

Zimmy: "I don't know, what is allowed first?"

Sibo: "Well, What is not allowed is jewellery. Queens only wear jewellery from the throne or her husband. Anything else is fair."

Zimmy: "I would've suggested a custom purse but the queens hardly leave the palace. It's so hard to think of something because I don't know what she likes. How about a piece of furniture? Or perhaps a limited edition dinner set."

Sibo: "Perfect. I think I remember seeing a design from Grohö, in his last projects there was a dinner set. This is more of Zwe and Khaya's things." I dialed Zwe's number.

Zwe: "Sboni."

Sibo: "Brother Zwe. So what is that website for Grohö again? Where do you buy his things?"

Zwe: "He's dead."

Sibo: "I know but his work is still sold, right? How long will it take to deliver?"

Zwe: "I can organize it here in a week."

Sibo: "I wanted to gift the queen on behalf of the family Zwe." I rubbed Jimmy's thigh, while she munched on my toast.

Zwe: "Jesus, that might be impossible. What were you thinking of getting?"

Sibo: "Remember that dinner set that was gold and black? The one you said took 17 million years to design and went on and on about what inspired him to hand paint it as if I cared?"

Zwe: "It was 7 years. Yes. That's the only one in existence, it costs half a million Sibonelo."

Sibo: "It's a family gift Zwe, what can we do? Wena what were you thinking?"

Zwe: "I wasn't thinking of anything. Mum got her some custom pieces from her boutique."

Sibo: "That gift will be from the women of our family. Let's get the set, Zwe."

Zwe: "Alright. I'll have to do a bit of fighting then. I'll contact the company and see if I can't send a plane to fetch it today."

Sibo: "Alright. Sharp." I hung up. "thank you love but why are you finishing my food?" I ate.

Zimmy: "You already finished your food." She giggled, kissing my cheek. I watched her roll over and get her phone. "I'll start getting ready at about-" she stared at her phone, quietly.

Sibo: "What?"

Zimmy: "Did you send me something?"

Sibo: "Oh yeah, for the snacks and stuff."

Zimmy: "This is too much Sibonelo."

Sibo: "That's not even an 8th of what I'm about to spend today. Zwe will make me feel it. I can only get him back on the King's birthday." She smiled.

Zimmy: "Thank you baby." I finished breakfast and put the tray aside.  
"Since Amahle is also the princess she won't be coming to our sleepover as well, so it will only be Petu, Notha and I."

Sibo: "Why don't you invite me? I'm very fun."

Zimmy: "It's girls only love. I know you're fun."

Sibo: "I can be a girl, I'll just put on your wig." She laughed.

Zimmy: "You're something else. Can we watch something other than the news today?" I gave her the remote.

Sibo: "You can watch what you want baby, I'm not even going to lie to you mina. I want to suck on your left boob and a take a nap." I pulled her close to me. "Please wake me in an hour." She took off her gown, so her boob could be in my face.

Zimmy: "I'll set an alarm for you." She kissed my head, letting me sleep.

SASA POV\_

I woke up in the morning, feeling not a bit better but it was a new day and I'd make the most of it. My meditation in the huts was okay but I didn't get any visit. I wasn't really affected by that because that hour of peace actually felt good. I got out of bed. Nele and mama were choosing outfits to wear.

Me: "Good morning."

Mama: "Hello Sisi. Which dress should I wear?"

Me: "Uhm... The lilac one with your matching headscarf mama."

Mama: "Are you sure?"

Me: "Yes. The white dress won't be in good taste."

Mama: "Okay. What will you wear?"

Me: "My pink dress."

Mama: "What pink dress Thembisa?"

Me: "My pink dress with a belt mama. Today is about the queen. I haven't yet been introduced as a bride and I'm not royal. All I have to look is respectable, nothing else."

Mama: "Fine, go bath. We're done. Your father is outside in the garden." I took a bath and got dressed in my light pink shirt dress. It was petite upper and A line skirt, with a brown belt on the waist. I wore my sandals, combing out my hair and putting on small gold earrings. I left the suite, going to find my father. He was in the garden, on his tablet as usual.

Me: "Good morning tata."

Xolani: "Hello my child. You look beautiful."

Me: "Thank you. You look good yourself."

Xolani: "I try. Come I want to talk to you." We took a walk through the garden, holding hands. "This is a beautiful place."

Me: "It really is, tata."

Xolani: "Nkosi is promising to take good care of you. He expressed that he wants to begin the negotiations soon. I agree."

Me: "Okay tata."

Xolani: "Are you still happy to marry him?"

Me: "Yes tata."

Xolani: "Okay. I want to remind you that if you ever change your mind at any stage. You can call me and I'll come take you home. You don't have to suffer out there, you have me."

Me: "I know tata. I won't suffer though. Nkosi will never let that happen."

Xolani: "Yes I know but you also have to let him do his job, let him protect you as a husband should. You can't and never will be the king's favourite. Stop trying, only Nkosi can handle his father. All you have to do is let him."

Me: "Okay tata."

Xolani: "I know I raised you to be loving, respectful and welcoming of all people. In those teachings, I forgot to remind you to fight. I always assumed I'd be there to fight for you every time. Never in a million years did I think, you'd meet and marry a future king. If I knew it would happen,

I'd have sent you elsewhere to study. However, I'm glad it's him. He's a good young man."

Me: "Thank you tata."

Xolani: "I've decided, that since the restrictions have been eased a bit. We can now go home. You're better now and doing your school work. You're well protected. I've spoken to the prince, he did ask I stay another week but I don't think I can. I need to take your mother home now. Zanele has to go back to school. So we leave tomorrow." I hated that he had to leave. I hugged him.

Me: "I'm going to miss you."

Xolani: "Me too. You're going to visit during the holidays?"

Me: "Yes tata."

Xolani: "Good. Come, let's go meet your in laws."

On the way to the palace, I'd sent Petu a message, wishing her a very happy birthday. I also let her know, I won't be able to make it and apologized for it. She understood. I was in the car with Zanele. She held my hand.

Nele: "Don't be nervous mntase. They're going to love you." I don't think they will but I didn't care anymore honestly. I was glad that I had Amahle and Nkosi in that family. If the others didn't like me then there was nothing I could do but focus on my people.

Me: "Thank you sis."

Nele: "Have you ever been here before?"

Me: "Nope. It's my first time." We drove into a gate, with very high walls. The driveway was a good 800 meters long before we arrived at the entrance. A huge statue, in a glorious fountain was in the middle. The car parked, our doors opened. I got out and stared at the magnificence of the palace. The house itself looked like a castle. An enormous castle. The front door was up a flight of stairs. I stared, with my mouth wide open. We went up those stairs, Nkosi held my hand.

Me: "Hey baby." I smiled.

Nkosi: "You look so beautiful. Hi." I blushed. We walked through the two large glass doors.

Me: "You didn't tell me it was this huge." I whispered.

Nkosi: "Yeah, it's enormous. Also very suffocating." In the lobby area, there were two staircases on each side. "Do you want to see my room?" He whispered in my ear. I giggled.

Me: "Yes but where will we say we're going?"

Nkosi: "My room, obviously." He chuckled. We walked into the ballroom hall, it was decorated beautifully. The queen, I assumed it was her, was sitting on the plush couch reading a book. Very relaxed. "Mother."

She: "Mehluli." She looked at me then behind me. "Who's this?"

Nkosi: "This is Thembisa, my girlfriend. This is her family. Her mother, father and little sister. Family, this is my mother. Queen Nobantu."

Me: "Good morning my Queen." I bowed.

Mama: "Good morning my queen. It is an honour to meet you and of course, wishing you a happy birthday."

Nobantu: "Mehluli, what's going on? Where is your father?"

Nkosi: "I don't know where he is."

Nobantu: "How can you not know? He's been with you all week."

Nkosi: "I'm not talking to him." she sighed, rolling her eyes.

Nobantu: "Just try not to fight today. I'm having a peaceful day and I don't need stress."

Nkosi: "Are you going to say hello to my future wife's family?" She looked at him.

Nobantu: "Good morning." She said to my parents. The King walked in, looking jolly. I moved closer to Nkosi.

King: "Good morning all. It's a lovely day isn't it? My wife." He kissed her.

Nkosi: "Let me give you a tour of the palace grounds. Mr Ntaka, remember I was telling you about the herb garden yesterday morning on our walk? Let me show you." He led us out the room.

## PRINCE POV\_

It was taking all of me, to hold back. All of. We walked out into the court yard where the party will take place. The workers were setting up the tables and chairs. I invited the Biyela's because I knew I needed people to shame me into being decent to my family.

Mama: "YOH. Is that a band setting up on stage?"

Nkosi: "Yes ma. It's the Balunga brothers. My mother's favourite."

Nele: "OMG!"

Sasa: "Do you have any animals?"

Nkosi: "No I don't. Amahle does have a cat somewhere around here, it's usually in her bed though." We walked through the garden.

Sasa: "where does the water in this pathway go to?"

Nkosi: "There's a lake down there."

Mama: "a LAKE?" I chuckled.

Nkosi: "It's not as dangerous as the one I had drained eMthinomkhulu ma. There's also someone always patrolling." We reached the herb garden, having taken the scenic route to drag time, walking around and then going back to the court yard. The setting was almost complete but my family was in the ball room hall, having a drink, as they usually did before events. We walked in again. This time, both my mothers were here. Along with my father and sisters.

Nolwazi: "Mehluli. You're home, finally. Who is this now?"

Nkosi: "My girlfriend Thembisa. This is her family. Mama, Tata please take a seat over here, someone will come take your drink order."

Nolwazi: "Wait, your what?"

Nkwe: "He said girlfriend mama."

Nhlanhla: "How shocking. Shame, did he kidnap her and her whole family? She looks scared. I wouldn't put it past him."

Nkosi: "Nhlanhla."

Nhla: "Bhuti, why didn't you at least buy her a proper dress. I thought you had the most money after daddy. What is she wearing?"

Nkwe: "A tragedy. That's what." Thembisa giggled. I don't know why she found this funny but she did.

Nkosi: "I'm trying here. What you're not going to do is disrespect Thembisa or her family. I'm really really trying. Can you do your bit and be decent, for once? Or do I have to be drastic?"

King: "Mehluli." I led Thembisa to couch, ignoring this one. "You're still angry? We're celebrating Mehluli, can't you get over it?" Amahle walked in and hugged Thembisa.

Ama: "Hey."

Sasa: "Hi." She smiled. Amahle went to greet my parents and Zanele.

Nkwe: "What's happening."

Nhla: "She can speak?"

Nkwe: "You live with her." She laughed. I looked at my mothers.

Nkosi: "Are you going to reprimand your children or should I?"

Nolwazi: "Mehluli, you can't speak to us like that."

King: "At least he speaks to you."

Nolwazi: "No, that's not going to happen here. If this girl is going to make you disrespect us then she isn't a good fit for our family. Such disrespect so early in the morning?" This is my last day here. I'm not coming to this house again.

Nobantu: "Okay!! Can we all please calm down? I want to enjoy my day. I went into great detail planning it. We are sorting this now, because when we walk out of here into that court yard, I want nothing but smiles. My son, what is your problem with your father?" I looked at him.  
"Nkosinhle, please."

Nkosi: "Father is doing what he always has done but now not to me, he's doing it to Thembisa. He is the reason she ended up in hospital because he sent assassins to kill her. Then he has the audacity to come into my home and make himself comfortable thus making his victim uncomfortable. He speaks down to her, he threatens her at will and does all he can to provoke me in the process because he knows, she will take

his side in respect of him. He is using her, turning her into another version of himself as if he didn't do it enough to me, those two bumble bees and to Amahle. I've warned him multiple times but he refuses to listen. So no, I'm not going to talk to him."

Nkwe: "We're the bumble bees?" She whispered.

Nhla: "Bzzzz sis." They giggled.

Nobantu: "My King, you tried to kill her?"

King: "Aren't we over this? I thought I'd apologized? Must I beg on my knees? No, rather shoot me dead."

Nobantu: "Oh, My King. Not like this. You cannot pick one part and defend it aggressively. There is a lot that Mehluli said, aren't you going to at least acknowledge it?"

King: "All I ever do, is for the good of the throne. I told you once that love will make you weak. I've proven it to you this week alone time and again. How am I the villain?"

Nkosi: "If love makes one weak, then what do you feel for my mothers?"

Nhla: "Yoh. Bring back hidings, father."

Nkwe: "Wohlule."

Nobantu: "All I asked for, was peace." She got up, walking out. My father stared at me. I know he won't respond. I hate that I hurt my mother on her birthday because of him. He's the one who should be disgraced, not her.

Nkosi: "Please excuse me." I walked out after her, the very least to apologize. I was uncomfortable leaving Thembisa with my family but I had to speak to my mother. I found her in her room. "Mother."

Nobantu: "Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you in any way."

Nobantu: "You have alot more to say these days."

Nkosi: "I don't know what that means."

Nobantu: "You don't remember that you barely ever said a word in this house? I don't know you to express yourself at any stage. The Nkosinhle I know, doesn't say more than 10 words a day. You don't smile, you

don't touch anyone. You've been in this house less than an hour and we've never spoken this much. You stood there and expressed yourself in detail, defending your girlfriend, holding on to her."

Nkosi: "Is there something wrong with that?" She looked at me.

Nobantu: "You're in love."

Nkosi: "Yes I'm in love with Thembisa."

Nobantu: "Your father will not make it easy for you. Ever. You know that no one can stand up to him so you'll have to do it. Constantly."

Nkosi: "And I will." She nodded.

Nobantu: "I'm taking a nap, please wake me when the celebration starts." She took a headache pill and drank water.

Nkosi: "I just want him to say it. To admit it. He has to feel something, I know he does." She chuckled.

Nobantu: "Focus on your future and family Nkosinhle." ...

## Chapter 86

### SASA'S POV\_

We sat in the comfortable chairs on the courtyard. The band played a lovely melody in the background.

Me: "Everything is so beautiful."

Nkosi: "Hm.. how are you feeling? Being here?"

Me: "Nervous. I don't want to make a mistake-"

Nkosi: "My love, nobody ever wants to make a mistake. It's not something a human being can help. Allow yourself a little grace." He kissed my hand.

Me: "You're so perfect for me. I love you Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I love you more than life itself. Let's take a walk."

Me: "Aren't they starting?"

Nkosi: "Not yet. It's still a warm up." He stood up, holding my hand. We walked out to the garden. This one was much bigger, on different levels that needed stairs on some.

Me: "Where is your favorite place in the palace?"

Nkosi: "Outside of it." I looked at him.

Me: "Outside where?"

Nkosi: "Out the gate, a short running distance from here, in the forest."

Me: "Okay, and inside the palace?"

Nkosi: "I don't like this place. I grew up inside it but it's so cold. The most I could like is the garden but I can't touch it because I'm a king. My father had a fit the first time I did." He chuckled.

Me: "So you built yourself one in your own home."

Nkosi: "Yes. Which part of the garden do you like?"

Me: "The part that grows fruit. I find it so fascinating."

Nkosi: "Baby you grew up on a farm. How does fruit fascinate you?"

Me: "Yes, we sell some but we get it from the market. I've never seen it fall out of the tree."

Nkosi: "Come, they're right here." We took a different path. "This is the oranges side. It's not many. I think it's only 14 trees."

Me: "Where's your phone?"

Nkosi: "In my pocket, why?" I took it out of his pocket.

Me: "Look." I took a picture of him standing next to the tree. "Your eyes blend in so perfectly." He smiled.

Nkosi: "I never thought of that. Come, your favorite apples are this side." We walked another direction to the apples.

Me: "Oh my God. They're so red. Are they polished daily?" He laughed.

Nkosi: "I think so, yes." He hugged me, picking me up. I reached up the nearest branch, picking the apple. "How does it taste?" I took a bite.

Me: "Sweet. Taste." I gave him a bite.

Nkosi: "Not bad. The Biyela's are here. Let's say hello." He placed me on the ground, taking the apple then kissed me. We turned to walk out, his mother stood there looking at us. "Mother."

Nobantu: "I came to let you know, we're starting." Her eyes were stuck on me.

Nkosi: "We were making our way down mother, thank you." She turned to walk in front of us. We made it to the courtyard in silence. Everyone was staring. I hated it. Another thing I have to get used to.

Nkosi: "King Biyela and family. Thank you for joining us."

Biyela: "Thank you for having us Your Highness." I was excited to see Nothando. She sat next to Amahle. How are they not jumping up and down, hugging? It's like they live together and saw each other at breakfast.

Nkosi: "Do you want to sit with your friends?" He whispered in my ear.

Me: "Can I?"

Nkosi: "Yes. But before that, let me formally introduce you to the Biyela family." He walked me to their area. "King Biyela, I want to officially introduce you to Thembisa, my future wife. Thembisa, this is King Biyela, This is Queen Biyela." I curtsied, holding my skirt.

Me: "It's a pleasure to meet you, King and Queen." I could already feel the burning stare of King Sikhosana from his throne seat. My spine shivered at just the thought.

Biyela: "It is an honour to meet the future queen, hello." I bowed.

Queen Biyela: "You are so sweet, and beautiful too. It's a pleasure to meet you, sisi."

Me: "Thank you, my queen."

Nkosi: "You know Zwe, Sibonelo and Mngqobi. This is their younger sister. Where is Khaya?" He asked Zwe.

Zwe: "He went to his father."

Nkosi: "Why?"

Zwe: "I'll fetch him." He walked out.

Nkosi: "Come, love." He walked me to the girls.

Sikhosana: "Are we ever going to eat?"

Nkwe: "I agree, fathe-" Nkosi stared at her. She instantly kept quiet.

Nhla: "Bhuti, can you also please introduce me?" Her twin giggled. I sat with Amahle and Nothando.

Me: "Finally." I whispered.

Ama: "How is it so far?"

Me: "Not bad."

Ama: "Not bad? My sister made fun of your dress."

Me: "I love my dress, it's pretty."

Notha: "It really is. How are you?"

Me: "Good. How are you?" I hugged her, holding on to her.

Notha: "Good. Okay that's enough Thembisa, thank you." I giggled. I can't believe I missed her. Zinhle Biyela was sitting with her brothers looking bored.

Me: "Why is your sister not talking to you?" I asked Nothando.

Notha: "I don't want to talk to her."

Ama: "It's a shame she no longer has friends."

Me: "Amahle-"

Ama: "Don't even think about it Thembisa. We might as well sit with the twins."

Me: "Fine."

Ama: "Stop it."

Me: "I said fine."

Ama: "I know you're thinking of a trick." I giggled. The waiter brought us drinks in cocktail glasses.

Me: "Are we allowed to?"

Ama: "No. But they're virgins. Like us." She sighed. We giggled. I really missed my friends.

Me: "I'm really glad you guys are here. I think I needed even these few minutes."

Ama: "Yeah, you've been adulting at high speed. I don't wish to be you but it gets better from here. How are you Notha?"

Notha: "Horrible. I feel so lost."

Ama: "I'm sorry."

Notha: "No. You shouldn't be the sorry one, my dad should be. Can you believe he actually sold me? Imagine if the Biyela's didn't want me either?"

Me: "I am so sorry, Nothando."

Notha: "Also, not your fault."

Me: "The Biyela's seem really nice. Are they treating you well?"

Notha: "Very. They make me feel like I'm one of them."

Ama: "Well...I did tell you Nothando."

Notha: "Please don't start."

Ama: "I'm not starting anything."

Notha: "I don't have a choice anymore anyway, so I will marry him."

Me: "Isn't there anything we can do?" I asked Amahle.

Ama: "No. She must marry him."

Me: "Amy??"

Ama: "She knows why. Leave her, she'll be fine."

Notha: "Mxim." I held her hand. "Thembisa what is your issue?" I giggled.

Me: "I missed you, you idiot."

Notha: "Okay, but I'm here now. Let go of my hand."

Me: "Petu says you cried for me." She smiled.

Notha: "Petu is lying."

Me: "She says you tried to pray for me but you didn't know the words." We laughed, silently, trying not to draw attention. I hid my face, because this family might blame me for being a disruption. The whole family was focused on the band. The Speaker got on stage as the band phased out the melody.

Speaker: "Good morning royal families. My King His Royal Majesty Sikhosana, Queen Nobantu, Queen Nolwazi, King Biyela, Queen Biyela. His Royal Highness Prince Sikhosana, princes and princesses, royal guests. We are here to celebrate our first queen. The Royal Throne wishes you a birthday as peaceful as you. May the gods bless and fulfill your wishes." She bowed. The queen sat next to the king without so much as a reaction. Her face was void of any emotion as she stared at the speaker. If anything she looked incredibly bored. Maybe she was still upset from earlier.

## KHAYA'S POV\_

I entered my father's house. He had summoned me actually. It was to do with my mother's will, since I'd turned 21, he'd been refusing to release my inheritance. The only thing that I had access to was my apartment and he couldn't interfere with it. All these years, I endured his abuse solely to keep that place. I'd waited patiently until I was of age. He was the best lawyer in our province, yet he missed the small details regarding the property. Either that or he couldn't change it.

Khaya: "Morning Tata." His girlfriend was sitting on the couch, playing with her phone.

Solinga: "Who do you think you are?"

Khaya: "What do you mean tata?"

Solinga: "How dare you embarrass me to my business acquaintances? Don't you have a home? You have that bloody apartment but you're sponging off the Biyela's!! How dare you embarrass me like that!!" He shouted.

Khaya: "The Biyela's asked me to stay with them Tata."

Solinga: "Asked you? Knowing what about you? You think I'm stupid, boy?"

Khaya: "Why did you call me here?" He threw papers at me.

Solinga: "Sign those."

Khaya: "What are these?" I looked at the papers. "This is my inheritance from the trust."

Solingo: "Sign it."

Khaya: "No." I tore them up. "You're a millionaire. I'm not giving you a cent."

Solingo: "What did you say?"

Khaya: "I said I'm not giving you a cent, tata. You're so greedy! I know you don't need this money, you just want to disable me financially so you can control me."

Solingo: "Khaya, who the fuck do you think you're talking to?? Who do you think was taking care of you while your mother was whoring around!? Now suddenly I'm greedy? Hee ungangideleli Khaya."

Khaya: "You're a lying, useless father, Solingo-" he slapped me. I stumbled back, spitting blood.

Solingo: "You think she's an angel because she died like the whore she was? Let me remind you, since you're stupid. Your mother was sleeping with another man who was married. She would leave you in day care, run to her lover and forget you fucking exist. I've left multiple meetings running to fetch you when you were the last kid on the day care door or school gate. Your so called perfect mother couldn't even be bothered to spend weekends with you. Her boyfriend was more important than you. You're nothing. Never have been anything. Especially to her. You think Biyela wants you around? He feels sorry for you because the whole town knew who your mother was whoring with. The inheritance she left you was from her boyfriend paying her to leave you with me to start a new life with him. You want evidence right? What do I start with? The sex tape? The emails? What?" My whole world shut down.

Khaya: "You're lying." I whispered.

Solingo: "Very well. Sit." His girlfriend stood up.

She: "Hayi hayi!!! Haibo. You're now going to show umntana amanyala to prove your point?"

Solingo: "Stay out of this wena, I don't even know why you're here."

She: "Yuh, uzintloni." (You're shameful) She wore her shoes leaving the house.

Solinga: "You want the evidence, don't you?" He opened the locked cabinet that no one was allowed to touch. He can't... He can't have that type of evidence. He took out a CD, inserting it in his laptop.

Khaya: "Stop it!!"

Solinga: "I'm lying?? We'll see." I walked toward the door, leaving. I bumped into Zwe at the door.

Zwe: "Hey. I came to fetch- what did he do?"

Khaya: "Get me out of here, please."

Zwe: "Get in the car. I'm coming." He walked into the house.

Solinga: "Prince Biyel-" a punch landed on his face. Zwe picked him back up.

Zwe: "You feel like fighting? Let's fight."

Solinga: "I can't fight you, my princ-" another punch dislocated his jaw. Solinga fell to the floor.

Zwe: "Fuck the royalty shit. We're men. Men don't run from a fight Solinga and you damn sure won't pick today to start running. Get up." He folded up his sleeves. "No?" He kicked him repeatedly, punching his face flat until he stopped moving. He took the fleece on the couch and wiped his fists, walking out.

We arrived at the Sikhosana palace in silence. We first had to change before we came here.

Khaya: "Thank you Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "I thought I told you to stay away from that man."

Khaya: "Bhut Zwe he's my father-"

Zwe: "Not anymore he's not."

Khaya: "Then what am I Zwe? It's already hard enough for me. I know you treat me like family but the fact is, I'm not. I don't know where I belong. For example, look where we are. I'm not allowed in this place because I'm not royal. It's just difficult okay?"

Zwe: "I know it's difficult. It has been for years. You've run away from us a few times too. And every time you do, mum and dad ask about you."

We look out for you. Bug, we can show you in so many different ways that we love you but you need to accept that you're worthy of being loved too. You need to accept now, that you're part of us. I have never disappointed you and never will. There is no trash bin in this planet I would throw you in. Now I have to put a guard on you because I know you're soft, you'll go back to hear him out again. You're not going back there Khaya. Do you hear me?" I nodded.

Khaya: "Yes Bhut Zwe." He turned my face to him.

Zwe: "It's not as visible at least. You see now, father will be pissed off that I let this happen to you. Let's go in." We walked into the palace, this place was so intimidating but beautiful. I stared in awe at the art on the high ceilings. A dream. "Perfect, isn't it?"

Khaya: "Yeah. They love art?"

Zwe: "King Sikhosana is a collector. His collection has its own three guards." He whispered. I chuckled. I imagine it must be worth hundreds of millions. We walked into the courtyard. Everyone was occupied with the performance on stage so they didn't notice me sneak in. I sat next to Sboni, looking around. Thembisa was with Amahle and Nothando. King Sikhosana was staring at her, I just know he was staring at her and not his daughter. Why did he hate her so much? At the next table sat the princesses. One of them stared at me, my heart jumped when I noticed. And then?

Sibo: "You okay?"

Khaya: "Yeah, I'm good." I whispered back. He handed me a shot of whiskey. Zwe took it and drank it.

Sibo: "Just one?"

Zwe: "Stop it."

Sibo: "Boring." The speaker came on the stage.

Speaker: "That was beautiful. We have our starters now, my royals. We will commence with a sweet melody while we enjoy our Queen's signature meal." She got off the stage. Conversation started again. At our table, it was Mnqo, Sboni, Zwe, Mthunzi and Nkosi. We had our starters delivered.

Zwe: "So... Sibonelo, when will you introduce us to your new girlfriend?"

Mthunzi: "Girlfriend??"

Zwe: "Yes, he hasn't been home in a week."

Sibo: "Why are you hanging my laundry Zwe?"

Zwe: "Tell everyone. I'm not keeping your secret anymore."

Sibo: "We're eating."

Khaya: "You're dating Zimmy?"

Nkosi: "Isn't that your girlfriend?"

Khaya: "No, My prince."

Sibo: "Fine. Yes, I'm dating. Can we drop it now? Mnqobi is getting married. Let's focus on that."

Mnqo: "Please don't use me to get out of this one."

Sibo: "Why is this a big deal?"

Zwe: "Maybe because it's been 3 years since you've been in a serious relationship."

Sibo: "Hebana, when did we get to serious relationship? I said dating."

Khaya: "She really likes you Bhut Sbo. Don't do her like that."

Sibo: "There's someone who also really likes you and I think you need to attend to it." He smiled.

Zwe: "Who?" I stared at Sbo.

Khaya: "Why are trying to get me killed?" I chuckled.

Mthunzi: "Nobody will kill you, come sit next to me. Tell me." Everyone laughed. I looked up again, she was still looking at me. I looked at Nkosi. He stared right back at me, swirling his whiskey in his glass.

Khaya: "Nope. No sir. I'm good."

PRINCE POV\_

The celebration was going really well so far. Thembisa seemed so happy. Her smile was contagious. Whatever conversation she was

having with Amahle was entertaining. Every few minutes, they burst in silent giggles. Making my heart smile. I put my glass down.

Mthunzi: "Don't you dare. Leave her alone." Zwe laughed.

Zwe: "You can even anticipate his next move?"

Mthunzi: "If he stares this long, I always know he's zoning out and running after her. You have to watch him. Let her enjoy her friend's company."

Nkosi: "I just wanted to say hi."

Mthunzi: "Wave then."

Nkosi: "Mxim. I need to speak to the sound manager."

Mthunzi: "For what now?"

Nkosi: "Just call him." He sighed, getting up. He brought him to me. He knelt down. "Okay, that's dramatic. Look, can your band play any melody?"

Him: "Most melodies, My Prince, which one would you like if I may ask?"

Nkosi: "The Only Reason. JP Cooper."

Him: "With singing?"

Nkosi: "No singing. Just the melody."

Him: "Yes Your Highness." He stood up, hurrying over to the band. I looked at Thembisa, wondering if she will notice it.

Mthunzi: "You're a menace." The guitar started playing. I smiled, satisfied.

Nkosi: "I'm sure I knew, the only reason God gave me eyes was to see you. The only reason God gave me ears was to hear your voice. Say, I will all, I will always love you. And when the wind gets cold. I'll wrap my arms around you." I whispered. She looked at and smiled. Her heart fluttered, I wanted to hold her in my arms immediately.

Sasa: "We shared our dreams, endeavors and many things. We never could tell a soul before. I saw you smile through the tears that fell to the floor. I'm sure I knew, The only reason God gave me hands was to hold you. And he finely tuned the drums of my ears just to hear your voice." She whispered back, blowing a kiss to me.

Nkosi: "I love you."

Mthunzi: "Nkosi will make you want to fall in love immediately."

Zwe: "And deeply futhi. Ngicel' soulmate nami Nkulunkulu. Nkosi, what was in your prayer?" I chuckled. The music cut off. You didn't have to tell me who. Why my father was on a stage was obvious. This man's toxicity could poison a person to death instantly and without effort.

King: "I thought I would take this exact moment, to wish my first wife, a happy birthday." He stared at me with ice in his eyes. "A King's best companion, is a strong woman by his side. Ruling a country isn't an easy job and definitely isn't for the faint hearted. One thing my wife knows and understands, her role in my life is as important as the good work I do. She has helped me not only grow a kingdom but a family too. I hope my son is taking lessons from his parents so that he lives a life as long as fruitful as I." How did this become about him?? And what good work? He went to his seat, obviously satisfied with himself.

Zwe: "How about drinks tonight? Mthunzi?"

Mthunzi: "Sure, why not."

Nkosi: "Why aren't you asking me also?"

Zwe: "Do you want to have drinks later, Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "No thank you. I'll be with my wife." They laughed.

Zwe: "You're working on your sense of humor now."

Mthunzi: "I hate it so much." He chuckled.

Zwe: "Sboni, you'll also be with your woman?"

Sibo: "I know you just want to drag me so yes Zwe, I'll come have drinks with you. Yoh."

Zwe: "Good. Mnqo? Khaya?"

Mnqobi: "Yeah, it would be good Bhut Zwe." A guard came to the table, speaking to Mthunzi. He got up, following him out.

Nkosi: "Zwe. I need to talk to you."

Zwe: "Sure. What's up?" We got up, walking away from the table into the garden.

Nkosi: "Something is happening with Thembisa and I can't fix it."

Zwe: "What is happening?"

Nkosi: "Well... I think she needs therapy for one. It's something that she said that's tugging at me. Yesterday, we had a disagreement about my father. She asked me how I expect her to defy him when he tried to kill her and threatens her on suspicion."

Zwe: "He threatened her again?"

Nkosi: "Yes, Monday. You know with the witch hunt nonsense. Turns out this witch comes from the same soil as Thembisa. Problem is, the village burnt down. It's a long story and besides the point, we'll talk about it another time. Right now, my concern is this discomfort. I can feel her tremble when he looks at her. I can hear her heart race. I played that song because he was staring at her and she was trying to ignore but she was still shaking. She's traumatized. Problem is, I don't feel my father. I can't feel ill intent from his demeanor, it's just him being mean as usual. What do you think?"

Zwe: "You're right about her needing therapy. She did wake up from a coma and live with the person who wanted to kill her. Maybe it's PTSD, only starting to register now, triggered by his threat." I sighed.

Nkosi: "Can you do it?"

Zwe: "Nkosi, I'm a neurosurgeon. Not a therapist."

Nkosi: "It's the same thing."

Zwe: "Definitely not and never will be, my friend."

Nkosi: "it's both brain work."

Zwe: "Nkosi, Thembisa needs someone who is an actual therapist. Not me."

Nkosi: "I only trust you."

Zwe: "But Nkosi, even if I do speak to her, I won't be able to tell you. I can't break her confidence."

Nkosi: "I'm fine with that." He sighed.

Zwe: "Fine, we can try. I'm not promising to fix it. If I don't see progress or sense any discomfort then I'm referring a psychiatrist, a good one."

Nkosi: "I'll interview them first, but thank you." We walked back to the courtyard. "Why do you smell like blood?"

Zwe: "I forget about your senses sometimes. Just a minor thing I needed to fix a long time ago."

Nkosi: "Did you fight with Khaya? He also has a bruise."

Zwe: "No, his father."

Nkosi: "Oh." I looked over at Thembisa. She seemed to be in a good space still. I needed to speak to her father. Maybe a few hours this evening, away from the villa and my family would be perfect. Just a stress free evening. I smiled.

Nkosi: "Mthunzi, please organize me security for the evening" ...

Chapter 87

KHAYA'S POV \_

The Sikhosana's knew how to entertain. The band they hired was electrifying but the singers were on another level. I was really enjoying myself. A few times I'd looked over at the princess table and she still looked at me, this time with her twin and that made me even more uncomfortable. I didn't want any problems.

Sibo: "Will you be introducing the gift Zwe?"

Zwe: "Why me? You bought it."

Sibo: "For the family. Please go, you're the oldest."

Zwe: "Mxim." He got up on the stage, acknowledging the king and queens. "I don't want to stand too long, the entertainment has been amazing so far. I only wanted to give gratitude to the Royal Sikhosana family for inviting us to such a prestigious event, celebrating the First Lady's birthday. We wish you a happy birthday, my queen. On behalf of the Biyela family, we brought this gift in your honour. Thank you." The beautifully wrapped box came in, rolled on a tray. The only Grohö dinner set. The queen had a slight grin on her face. Or the corner of her mouth lifted for a second. She definitely loves it. That's so sweet. This guy has to visit hell for making his entire family like this. I thought it was just Nkosi but nope, it's the whole clan. To them, it's normal I guess.

Khaya: "Bobo, where can I find a bathroom."

Sibo: "Hold on." he called a guard and instructed him. "He'll show you, bug. Go ahead." I followed the guard, who pointed to the nearest bathroom which was a normal whole next door to someone else. This place was huge. I entered the bathroom, marveling at the elegance. The taps were obviously Sikhosana gold. Everything else, Pure Black. I had a pee, then flushed washing my hands. I heard the door close. My heart stopped. Please be the guard. Please. I turned around to look and she stood there, locking the door behind her. What the fuck was going on.

Khaya: "Princess Sikhosana. Uhm, I was told this was the visitors bathroom. Am I in the wrong place?"

Princess: "Yes." My blood pressure started to spike. I can't be locked in a bathroom with a princess. I'd be hung.

Khaya: "My apologies. I..I will make my way out." I swallowed. She folded her arms still blocking the door. Do I shout for help? Who would hear me? Surely the guard saw her come in here and he's loyal to her, he'll take her side. I was stuck. "Please, I don't want trouble."

Princess: "Then why are you here?"

Khaya: "I needed to pee."

Princess: "In a palace? That's bold."

Khaya: "I was invited to the palace, my princess. May I please pass throu-"

Princess: "No." That's it, I'm dead.

Khaya: "I haven't done anything wrong. Please let me pass. I don't want trouble."

Princess: "You already are in trouble, commoner." I took out my phone to call Sboni. She grabbed it out of my hand.

Khaya: "What do you want?"

Princess: "What's your name?"

Khaya: "I'm Khaya."

Princess: "Khaya who? You're not a Biyela."

Khaya: "Solinga."

Princess: "Thought as much. A commoner." I clenched my teeth, hoping someone, anyone comes to rescue me. "Are you offended?"

Khaya: "I'm not offended. I know I'm not royal, I just don't know why I'm locked in a bathroom against my will."

Princess: "Well, let's figure that out, Khaya Solinga." She stepped closer to me, closing the space between us. I looked around the bathroom. "No cameras. Kiss me."

Khaya: "Absolutely no. That's illegal. Please let me go."

Princess: "Okay." She stepped aside, giving me a way to pass. My heart hammered in my chest.

Khaya: "Can I have my phone back?"

Princess: "No. Leave." I walked out before anymore trouble ensued. I cannot believe I just got robbed of my phone. In a palace, still. I sat in my seat, shaking. The guys were having a conversation, just laughing and drinking. I felt so sick. How would I tell them this? What if she lies? I looked over at her table as she sat down and scrolled through my phone. A million thoughts a second went through my mind. What is she looking at? What was in my messages? Just work stuff and girls I've ghosted. A very disgusting number of them. Nudes. Oh fuck.

Mnqobi: "Kay, You good?"

Khaya: "Yeah." I looked at Nkosi. He stared at me with a gaze I couldn't quite figure out. I'm about to have a heart attack. "Bobo."

Sibo: "Again? What were you drinking bug? Haibo." I whispered in his ear.

Khaya: "She took my phone."

Sibo: "Who?"

Khaya: "The princess. She followed me to the bathroom, locked me in and took my phone when I wanted to call for help." He held back a laugh.

Sibo: "Does she say why?"

Khaya: "Will I get back my phone?"

Sibo: "Probably not." I sighed, incredibly stressed. Besides this being my third phone in less than five months, I'm scared of what this girl is doing to my phone. It was unlocked. She has full access to everything.

Nkosi: "Is there a problem?"

Khaya: "No sir."

Sibo: "Khaya-" I glared at him.

Nkosi: "What's wrong?"

Sibo: "The princess took his phone, Your Highness." Nkosi sighed, getting up from his seat. He walked to her table and grabbed it out of her hand. She smiled. The psychopath. Nkosi gave me back my phone and sat down.

Nkosi: "Did she threaten you?"

Khaya: "No, my prince." I checked my phone, she'd gone through my pictures and messages. What was she looking for? I locked my phone and put it in my pocket. Just then, a message came on my phone. I looked at it, not knowing the number. <You're not as protected as you think you are. I will get what I want.> I'm not going to the bathroom again. Honestly I'd rather pee myself in this chair.

SASA POV\_

I was having an amazing time. It was now early evening, we'd just had dinner. Overall, it's been a good day. Nkosi came to our table, bending down to kiss me cheek.

Nkosi: "My love."

Me: "Hey baby." I blushed.

Nkosi: "Come, I want to properly kiss you without the stares." He whispered. He held my hand, helping me up. We walked into the house, climbing up the staircase.

Me: "Babe!"

Nkosi: "You said you wanted to see my room." He chuckled.

Me: "Now Nkosi? Your family will think I'm disrespectful. We must hide these things."

Nkosi: "I'm not hiding my wife." We reached the top of the stairs, he enveloped me in his arms, walking behind me while holding me. "I've wanted to hold you for hours. Mthunzi wouldn't let me."

Me: "Why did you listen to him baby? You must come to me when you want me. Mthunzi is jelaous." He laughed.

Nkosi: "I won't listen to him again."

"Nkosihle." We stopped walking, turning around to his mother. I looked at my feet in shame. This was embarrassing. Why did she always catch us?

Nkosi: "Mother."

Nobantu: "If you don't mind, can I speak to your wife for a short minute."

Nkosi: "About what?"

Me: "Nkosi." I nudged him.

Nobantu: "I'll wait in my lounge." She walked to a door, walking in.

Nkosi: "Are you sure about this?"

Me: "Yes. I did expect to speak to her at some point."

Nkosi: "Okay. I'll wait here."

Me: "Bab-"

Nkosi: "You don't know where my room is, so I'll have to wait for you. Unless you want to ask my mother?"

Me: "Absolutely not." He kissed me. I walked to the queens lounge, into the door.

Nobantu: "Close the door." I closed the door, standing with my head bowed. "You may take a seat." I sat down.

Me: "Good evening, my queen."

Nobantu: "What are you doing?" I was confused.

Me: "I am not sure I follow my queen."

Nobantu: "With your life, I mean."

Me: "Oh. I'm a student. I'm doing my LLB."

Nobantu: "Are you ready to be a King's wife?"

Me: "Yes my queen."

Nobantu: "Are you ready to carry his children?" I don't think that would happen so soon.

Me: "Uhm, we had an agreement to wait my queen."

Nobantu: "It's not up to you."

Me: "I think it is."

Nobantu: "It isn't. Nkosinhle is a Sikhosana King. His first child will be a boy, and will be conceived as the ancestors desire. If you sleep with him today, you will be pregnant by morning. It's not up to you or anyone else." I swallowed the lump in my throat. "Are you ready to carry his child?"

Me: "No."

Nobantu: "Then why are you here?"

Me: "I love him. Our relationship and marriage will not be dependent on expanding our family. We want to be together, to build together, to explore our love." She stared at me, coldly.

Nobantu: "You do realize, being here, makes a lot of things not your choice? Once you marry, you belong in this palace. You do as the occupants of it, do. Your love and excitement won't matter."

Me: "Yes my queen."

Nobantu: "Tell me about yourself." I don't know why.

Me: "I'm from eMthinomkhulu village, I was born and raised there by my mother and father. I'm the first of two children. I moved to Mountain Peak last year, to start my degree. I had dreams of becoming a lawyer. I've since made friends. Last year I only had one, Zimmy, she was my roommate. Then this year, I shared a room with Amy, she introduced me to Notha. Then Zimmy introduced me to Petu. Now we're all friends." I blabbed.

Nobantu: "Who is Amy?"

Me: "Oh, Amy is Amahle." I smiled. "Notha being Nothando, Zimmy's name is Zimasa and Petu is Petunia."

Nobantu: "Why not just call them that?"

Me: "Oh it's their nicknames. It's a way to show...affection."

Nobantu: "Hm.. they're also studying with you?"

Me: "In the same school yes. Zimmy is doing Economics, she just launched an app that offers delivery of groceries straight to your home. You don't even have to leave the house. Since it's lockdown and all. It's a hit, honestly." I know I was babbling but I was so nervous and I needed her to stop staring at me like that. "Petu is doing agricultural sciences. She's really smart. Also it's her birthday too today."

Nobantu: "Interesting." She still stared. I was also running out of talking bundles. "You do realize that you'll have to let go of them, right?"

Me: "Why do I have to let go of them?" A flicker of confusion crossed her face. Only for a second.

Nobantu: "You're not allowed to befriend commoners."

Me: "I'm a commoner."

Nobantu: "You'll be married to a king."

Me: "I don't know, my queen. How will being married affect my friendship? I think it will be healthy in fact. Sometimes, a tea party can heal a stressful day. Bake some scones and gossip about celebrities. I can't expect Nkosi to do that with me." Not that he'd say no but still. That's friend stuff.

Nobantu: "That's what you do with your friends?"

Me: "Not yet. For now, we gather in our rooms and have a glass of wine. I imagine as a queen maybe I'll need to be a bit more classy, so a tea party or wine and cheese tasting would do. We'll figure it out."

Nobantu: "Hm.. one more thing. What do you know about my family? Has Nkosinhle explained how he's different?"

Me: "Yes. He told me about the abilities."

Nobantu: "And that doesn't scare you?"

Me: "At first I fainted. Scared to the bone but I got over it very quickly."  
She held back a smile.

Nobantu: "His father has it, and so will your child."

Me: "Yes, his one terrifies me still. I'm hoping that you will be able to guide me. Apart from being a Queen, also being a mother. To a child with magical abilities."

Nobantu: "You think it's magical?" She taunted. The door opened, Nkosi walking in. She looked at him.

Nkosi: "Are you done, mother?" She looked at me.

Nobantu: "Yes." He held my hand, letting me stand.

Me: "It's a pleasure to meet you my queen, I'm glad we spoke." She didn't respond, taking the book on her stand and opening it to read. I guess that's it.

I walked into Nkosi's room, after him. As I expected, it was enormous. His bed had all black silk sheets and pillows, with a black duvet. The room was majority black with hints of white. Definitely the opposite of what I'm used to from him.

Me: "This is...alot." he picked me up, placing me on the bed and climbing on top.

Nkosi: "hi."

Me: "Hello my love."

Nkosi: "I was worried. What did my mother say?"

Me: "We had a conversation actually. About a few things. My friends, what I'm studying, when you and I are planning to have children."

Nkosi: "Children? Thats strange."

Me: "Yes, apparently, only the ancestors can decide when we have them."

Nkosi: "She didn't scare you?"

Me: "No. She's not scary. I was very nervous though." He kissed my chin.

Nkosi: "Okay. Can I kiss you now?"

Me: "Please do." His lips softly touched mine, I held his face letting his embrace touch my soul. He sucked on my lower lip, I let out a little moan. A grumble crawl out his throat, quickening my heart beat. I stopped and looked at him.

Nkosi: "Sorry." He avoided my eyes, with a shy smile.

Me: "The tiger wants to play now?" He smiled.

Nkosi: "I don't know where that comes from, I'm sorry."

Me: "Do you think you will, change? During the sex."

Nkosi: "I hope not. That would be embarrassing." He kissed my lips again.

Me: "I want to see you change." He stopped and looked at me.

Nkosi: "That's never going to happen."

Me: "Not during sex, just in general."

Nkosi: "That sounds scary. I'm not usually kind when I've changed, love. I'm not really in a good mood when it happens."

Me: "But it's you. It's who you are. I want to see all of you. I love you already and I know you'll never hurt me. What happens one day when you change and I don't know how to handle you?"

Nkosi: "Okay but we'll practice with Mthunzi and Zwe. They're the only other people apart from my father that have seen me. They can handle it too." I kissed him again, losing myself in his mouth. He turned over onto his back, pulling me on top of him, holding my ass and squeezing. I could feel the warmth in between my legs, tingling to my belly. He stopped, looking at me.

Me: "We should probably stop?"

Nkosi: "Hmm.." he groaned, his eyes lazy and sexy. "Amahle will come knocking soon. You know how much she hates me." I giggled. "I spoke to your father. I'll speak to mine to set a date for two weeks from today. I want to marry you."

Me: "I'm happy with that."

Nkosi: "Good. Let's go before I get you pregnant too soon. I already feel like locking that door."

Me: "Would two weeks even make a difference?"

Nkosi: "Yes it will because I promised to respect your father. Come my love, I have a surprise for you."

Me: "Can't we stay a little longer?"

Nkosi: "We will baby, later. Right now you need something else." What could I possibly need but him? He walked me out of the bedroom while I sulked. "My love."

Me: "How am I your love? You're trying to avoid me." He chuckled, picking me up in his arms, he walked me down the stairs.

Nkosi: "I love you. I'm not trying to avoid you. We'll be together baby. Right now, this is what I had planned and exactly what you need."

Me: "Okay, I trust you. You always give the best gifts."

Nkosi: "This one will be your favorite." He kissed me reaching the end of the stairs and placed me on the ground. He looked up at the top of the staircase where his mother stood, glaring down at us. We walked out the palace to the courtyard. Zanele came running to me, excited. She bowed to Nkosi.

Nele: "Your Highness. Sasa!"

Me: "What's wrong?"

Nele: "Nothing. The King has asked us to stay the night in the palace."

Nkosi: "Nx." He walked to him.

Me: "I don't know Nele. It's up to Tata and Nkosi."

Nele: "Please Sasa? I'll never have the chance to sleep in a palace. The princesses even said I had beautiful hair. Imagine?"

Me: "What princess?"

Nele: "One of the twins."

Me: "I don't trust them yet to let you be in their presence Nele. I know my angel, this place is beautiful but we need to be careful." I looked at the king. What was he trying to do?

Nele: "Okay then. Can I go to Amahle?"

Me: "Yes." She skipped over to her. I wanted to hear what my father thought of this, I know my mother was too delighted and obviously wanted to. I sat next to him. "Tata. How are you? How was your day."

Xolani: "Lovely. I had a good time." He smiled.

Me: "Apparently the King wants you to stay over."

Xolani: "Yes, I respectfully declined. I am not comfortable with it yet."

Me: "He didn't make things difficult?"

Xolani: "No. He can't force me to sleep in his house."

Me: "What does mama think?" He looked over at my mother, she was sitting with Queen Biyela.

Xolani: "Don't worry about your mother, I'll handle her. When are you leaving?"

Me: "I'm leaving with you and Nele tata."

Xolani: "Nkosi said he wanted to take you out. I agreed on the condition that you go with your sister. She'll be bored by herself."

Me: "Oh. I don't mind taking her with me. Thank you tata." I hugged him, kissing his cheek. "We'll be back before midnight."

Xolani: "That's not the memorandum I was given. Nkosi will tell you what he has planned."

Me: "Oh. Also, I spoke to Queen mother. She seems...nice."

Xolani: "They spoke well about her today. I'm glad you feel comfortable with her. Hopefully, she will teach you about royalty kindly."

Me: "Yes Tata. I hope so too." Nkosi came to us.

Nkosi: "Are we ready to go Tata?"

Xolani: "Yes, Your Highness."

We had started at the villa, apparently I needed to change. I wasn't given a dress code, I was told only a comfortable dress and pajamas. I changed into a striped body fitting dress with a drawstring ruched slit detail on my thigh. I didn't pull it to show my thigh, my father would freak

out so I'd do it in the car. I wore white sneakers and took my bag. Nele just wore her denim shorts, all stars and a crop top.

Me: "We're ready tata."

Xolani: "Okay my child. I trust you not to disappoint me. The very least by breakfast." The embarrassment, my God.

Me: "Yes tata. Where's mum?"

Xolani: "The prince organized a salon to come get her pampered. She's currently enjoying herself."

Me: "Oh that's sweet. I'll see her in the morning then."

Nele: "Bye tata."

Xolani: "Please behave mntanam. Sasa look out for her. Please."

Me: "I will tata." We walked out the villa, getting in the car. She screamed, jumping up and down.

Nele: "Can you believe it? He let us go out???" I laughed.

Me: "Let's go before he changes his mind please." The car drove off.

## Chapter 88: BONUS

### PETU POV\_

Zimmy and I had met up at the shops earlier. We bought alot of stuff for my birthday.

Petu: "I see you're going all out. Business is good?" She giggled.

Zimmy: "Yes it is."

Petu: "Out with it. What was that giggle?"

Zimmy: "What giggle." She blushed.

Petu: "Zimmy do you have a man???"

Zimmy: "Yes." She smiled silly.

Petu: "Omg! Who?" Her smile disappeared.

Zimmy: "Please don't judge." Oh no. Who could this be?

Petu: "I'll try not to because I'm not an angel either."

Zimmy: "So, for the past week I've been seeing Sibonelo."

Petu: "Which Sibonelo? Not the Prince right? It's a different one?"

Zimmy: "No, the prince." I stared at her.

Petu: "Zimasa."

Zimmy: "But Petu, what's so wrong about him?"

Petu: "He was lusting for your friend weeks ago. Harassing her very publicly so. Don't you remember we had to pay people for a petition to keep him away from her? You go and date him?? I'm definitely judging you, friend. Sorry."

Zimmy: "He's not that guy...anymore. He also apologized to her. He told me. Yes, Sibonelo is a bit shady but I like him Petu. He's so gentle and sweet."

Petu: "Zimmy, I'm worried. I would understand if maybe he did it once, but he was very consistent. Whatever his agenda was, he knew he was making her uncomfortable and he enjoyed it. That's the scary part. He would block the residence gate just so that he doesn't leave without her promising to see and speak to him. He would walk in and go to her room, the laundry. He even almost hurt his own brother uKhaya just to get her rattled. Yoh. I just don't want you getting hurt because that doesn't seem like a sweet guy to me." She kept quiet, obviously upset. "Tshomi, you really like him?"

Zimmy: "It doesn't matter anymore Petunia. I heard you."

Petu: "Zimmy please don't be like that. There's never a time, I would fool you. Like I said, I'm also not an angel and I would expect you to judge me for my scandal too. Please don't be upset, friend." My phone rang. "Hi Siza." I answered.

Siza: "Hey, where are you? I got the nanny for a few hours so I can spend some time with you."

Petu: "We're leaving the shops now. We're going to the apartment. We'll wait for the girls there."

Siza: "Okay, message me then."

Petu: "Okay." I hung up. "My sister will join us for a few hours. Zimmy, please lighten up. Okay ke, I'll give him a chance."

Zimmy: "A real chance?"

Petu: "A real chance. Have you told Sasa?"

Zimmy: "Not yet."

Petu: "I'm sure she won't have a problem. He does work with His Highness so maybe they've spoken." We got out the mall entrance. A car was waiting. "Oh?" She smiled, getting in the back. The guard put our bags in the boot. We drove to the apartment.

After an hour of getting ready, we made our way to the house Nothando had organized. She was still at the Sikhosana palace, only will be joining us around 6pm. It was early evening. Mngqobi had sent a few birthday messages, delivering a bouquet of flowers very early in the morning. I had so many wishes from plenty of people except my dad. As much as I was hurt, I wasn't going to let it ruin my day. I would celebrate it with the people who loved me.

Siza: "Wow. This is beautiful." We arrived at the house in Stellars. Nothando went all out on her promise. Since she had asked Mngqobi. This situation with them, really confused me. Maybe tonight, Notha and I could talk about it.

Petu: "It's bigger than I expected. I just wanted a 3 bedroom house."

Zimmy: "In Stellars? Be realistic Petu." She chuckled. We walked in the house, the lounge had floating balloons all over and roses everywhere. A banner hung on the wall written "Enjoy Your Birthday Butterfly" My heart melted. "This is so sweet!" Why was he doing this to me?

Siza: "Did you see the champagne? No, Petu what did you feed this man?"

Petu: "I trust you to focus on the alcohol." We laughed. I picked up one of many champagne bottles. The label was Birthday Butterfly. Okay, I couldn't hold back anymore. I took my phone sending him a message. <Thank you. The house is beautiful. You are so sweet.> I sent it. He replied: <Can't wait till you see your gift. See you tonight baby.> My cheeks were burning pink, because of my smile. I wonder what my present is. Zimmy was taking a video of the set up and me.

Zimmy: "I want to send this to Sasa later."

Petu: "I really wish she can make it."

Zimmy: "Me too. For now, let's drink. Champagne or shots??" I laughed.

Siza: "That's my language. I need to be carried home, wasted out my head. In fact, let me pay my nanny her double rate for the night."

Petu: "Do it, sis. You deserve to get wasted today. Let's do shots ladies."

...

## SASA POV\_

The drive with Nele went a route I've never seen. Then again, I barely know this city. We drove into a private forest-like area. Eventually coming out of an opening where a breathtakingly gorgeous house was situated. I instantly fell in love, I jumped out that car and stared at it. Nkosi walked out the door.

Me: "baby!" I ran to him, jumping into his arms.

Nkosi: "Do you love your new house?"

Me: "This is the house???"

Nkosi: "Yes my love."

Me: "Oh Nkosi, it's stunning."

Nkosi: "I told you you'd love it." We all walked in. "I haven't furnished it yet, that will be up to you."

Even though the house was bare, I was still in love with it. The energy in it was so peaceful. I hugged him.

Me: "Thank you."

Nkosi: "You'll thank me when you see the back yard. It's quite dark now so you'll see it in the morning. Anyway, I wanted to take you somewhere else."

Me: "Where are you taking us love?"

Nkosi: "It's a surprise, come." He led us to the 7 seater instead. Nele climbed in the back, we sat in the middle seats. He held my hand, looking at me. "Are your parents fine? With you being out?"

Me: "Yes, what did you promise my dad?"

Nkosi: "My soul." I giggled. "I'm happy. You make me happy."

Me: "I can see. Look how you're always smiling these days."

Nkosi: "Yes, my mother is very worried." We laughed. Our drive was joyful, we had a bit of chatting all the way into a gated community. I've heard alot about Stellars. Even in the dark the energy gave off wealthy.

Me: "Who lives here?"

Nkosi: "The Biyela's. Their palace is here. Sibonelo, Zwe and Mngqobi also have their own houses. The other houses are rented out. Then also Reynard Smith has a house here. He's a property billionaire, a very very old man. Most of his family is all over the world. Only two of his relatives live here with him."

Me: "You never thought of buying here?"

Nkosi: "Baby, look at both my houses. One is in a forest, the other is on a mountain. I wouldn't survive neighbors." I giggled. The car parked in front of one particular house, it had two cars parked outside and guards all around it.

Me: "Are we visiting Zwe?" We got out the car. He smiled.

Nkosi: "No. Go inside, my love. I'll see you soon." He didn't.

Me: "Babe!" He looked so satisfied with himself. I kissed his lips. " I love you."

Nkosi: "Have fun." I pulled Nele's arm to the door of the house.

Nele: "I thought you even forgot me." I laughed. We walked in the house. The girls looked at me and we screamed, running to each other, hugging tight. They suddenly stopped.

Petu: "Your Highness." They bowed. I looked behind me.

Nkosi: "You screamed." I giggled.

Me: "Oh sthandwa sam. I'm sorry. I was excited." I hugged him. "it's girls only, love."

Nkosi: "I'm not far, I'll be at Zwe's house just around the corner."

Me: "Okay baby." I whispered. He didn't move. I kissed him. "I'll call you." He walked out. I looked at the girls, we squealed a lot more quietly, dancing around.

Zimmy: "So it's true? You sneaky girl!!" I giggled.

Me: "I'm sorry I couldn't tell you yet."

Zimmy: "No wonder the secrecy. Yoh, Sasa you are brave." I giggled.

Me: "Happy Birthday baby girl." I hugged Petu.

Petu: "I'm so glad you could make it. Meet my sister, this is Siza. Sis, this is Thembisa. Our future queen."

Siza: "Your Highness, I'm so honoured to meet you. I'm still in shock." We laughed.

Me: "It's a pleasure to meet you Siza. When did you two get here? I can't believe you snuck out." Amahle smiled.

Ama: "I had to."

Petu: "Ladies, I want to make a small toast. I just want to say thank you sooo much. You guys being here means a whole lot to me. This week has been alot. I'm right at that moment where I feel I'm going to cry." She breathed. "I first want to thank my sister. My rock. The one person who has made so many sacrifices for me to be where I am today. I love you so much Siza. I know, how hard life is. Yet you still look after me. You still put me in your nest as your child. There is never a time I've felt lost because you always taught me you're home. Thank you so much sis." She hugged her sister. I held Zanele's hand squeezing it. "I also want to thank Zimmy. You're a sweet caring soul. Can you guys believe, I met Zimmy on a night out. This girl always made sure I'm good, safe and having a wild time. I know we've fought and disagreed alot but I'm glad you're in my life Zim." Zimmy smiled. "Next I met Sasa. It was through Zimmy actually. With her too, I connected immediately. She made me feel safe and always welcome, she is so kind. Through her, I met my Amy and then Notha. Two of the most different people I've ever come across and I wouldn't trade them for the world. I never want to lose you girls. I love you all sooo much. Just thank you for being amazing people and friends."

Zimmy: "Hear hear." We raised our glasses.

Me: "My baby needs a non alcoholic champagne guys, do we have?"

Zimmy: "I think there is in the fridge, let me check." ...

## PETU'S POV\_

The girls and I were having a good time. I was a bit tipsy by now. Sasa was singing karaoke with her sister and Zimmy. Zanele was wiping the floor with them. Amahle sat on the couch with her legs folded, she stared at Siza. Had been for a minute. I know my friend can be weird but Siza really didn't mind. She knew who she was, being the last princess of the throne. The staring was strange for me because normally Amy doesn't bother herself with people.

Notha: "Hey." I was mixing some cocktails in the kitchen, making a mess. This was Zimmy's specialty.

Petu: "Hey love."

Notha: "Can we talk?" I nodded.

Petu: "Sure. Do you want a drink?" She nodded. I've never seen her drink before tonight but she was more free than her usual cold self. I gave her the first cocktail, taking a sip of mine.

Notha: "I'm sorry. That I didn't tell you about Mnqobi. First of all, I hoped he would do it. I pushed him multiple times because I thought it was his job as the man to be honest about his marriage." She took a long sip of her drink again. "I didn't want to marry Mnqobi. I don't hate him. I don't love him either. Not like you do. You're borderline the Sasa leagues." We burst out laughing.

Petu: "Shame, she's trying."

Notha: "Trying what? She's sending selfie videos." I giggled, shaking my head. "Anyway, for my own selfish reasons, I really hoped you would be in love with him like you are. That way you wouldn't let go of him."

Petu: "But Nothando, you'd still have to marry him."

Notha: "Yes, but he'd have you for the things I can't give. The affection, the love making, the love stuff that bores the crap out of me."

Petu: "Is there someone else you're in love with? Or rather be with?"

Notha: "Not at all. I've never felt attracted to anyone. Ever. I doubt I ever will and I'm okay with that. I didn't have a choice with marrying Mnqobi but I knew with you as part of our marriage, I would be comfortable and happy."

Petu: "Won't it hurt you to see him with me?"

Notha: "It hasn't hurt me yet, why would it start?"

Petu: "What if you fall in love with him eventually?"

Notha: "That would be extreme but I'd still want you around." She took a long sip almost finishing her drink.

Petu: "I don't know Notha. It's weird."

Notha: "I know. So let's practice. We can try from tomorrow."

Petu: "What are we practicing?"

Notha: "Being married to him. First you have to take him back. Then we'll do a lunch date and spend time together." I don't know if I was getting drunk or what but I did want to try it.

Petu: "Okay. We can practice." She smiled.

Notha: "Perfect. I'm glad." She walked over to Amahle. I checked my phone. I had a new message. <Please come outside.> It was only 3 minutes old. I walked out the house. Mnqobi was leaning on the car in the driveway.

Petu: "Hey."

Mnqobi: "My butterfly." I looked up at him, my heart swooning over his beautiful face. I missed him so so much and I definitely still loved him. To be in a relationship with him and my best friend? I don't know how it would work but I wanted it to work because I wanted to be with him. "Can I please hold you?" I nodded. He pulled my arms and hugged me. "Are you enjoying your birthday?"

Petu: "Yes. Thank you." I lay my head on his chest, sniffing his amazing cologne.

Mnqobi: "I miss you Petu. So badly. Just holding you like this."

Petu: "I miss you too Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "Please forgive me?"

Petu: "I forgive you. I spoke to Nothando just now. She explained everything."

Mnqobi: "Oh... What's everything?"

Petu: "The reason why she wanted me to be with you."

Mnqobi: "I see." I looked up at him. "Do you still want to be with me?"

Petu: "Yes." He kissed my lips.

Mnqobi: "You don't know how happy you've made me right now." I giggled. He took out a remote and pressed on it. The garage door slowly opened. "Besides, the reason I came here was because I wanted to give you your gift. Then you can go back in. When you want me, you can call me back and we can celebrate together." He kissed me again. "I love you."

Petu: "I love you too."

Mnqobi: "Happy birthday my gorgeous butterfly." I looked at the garage and gasped.

Petu: "What the hell is that!!!"

Mnqobi: "Do you like it?" I was going to collapse with a heart attack. The brand new sports car was stunning in a crisp black matte finish.

Petu: "Mnqobi." I cried. He hugged me.

Mnqobi: "It's a Bi-motive Warrior RX Sport. First one of it's kind. You're the first owner."

Petu: "You can't do this."

Mnqobi: "I already did, baby. It's yours." ...

SASA POV\_

I finally sat down, so tired from dancing and singing. Zanele would go on the whole night, I know her. Jimmy sat down with me, also catching her breath.

Zimmy: "how have you been baby? I'm sorry I couldn't get to you in hospital."

Me: "I'm okay. I wasn't even there long. I'm still healing but I'm okay now. How are you?" She handed me a bottle of water, also taking hers. We drank it to hydrate.

Zimmy: "I don't know honestly. I'm confused about my dad. Andithi he pays for my schooling? Sends an allowance and all? Well, since I swore at him for being useless and evil to my mother, he stopped. Do you think I was harsh Sasa? I do feel like he's useless to my mother. He treats her like dirt and all she's ever done was love him. How do you do something like that to someone who loves you? How do you break their spirit every chance you get? No I had to swear at him because even my mother was being gracious to him. It's just I feel guilty now."

Me: "What did you say to him?"

Zimmy: "For one, he's a fool that is run down and needs his ego stroked by a worthless tramp who sees nothing in him but his money and because he's stupid, thinks it's love."

Me: "Hayi Zimmy."

Zimmy: "It's true."

Me: "It's not your place. Yes he hurt your mother but he's still your father."

Zimmy: "No, Thembisa! When it comes to abusers, they revel on the fact that their victim won't fight back. I love my mother mna and if she doesn't fight back, I'm fighting on her behalf. I'm not going to let him be. She's even asked me to apologize because of the school issue. I'm not doing that. Now that I have my business, I really don't need him anymore and my mother doesn't need him." I hugged her.

Me: "I'm sorry."

Zimmy: "it's okay babe. Anyway, how's things on your side. You look so happy."

Me: "I am. Things are great."

Zimmy: "Yeah? I'm so excited Sasa. That man is a big deal."

Me: "An entire King of a nation. Yes." I giggled. My heart ached at the thought of his father.

Zimmy: "Are you sure you're okay?"

Me: "Yeah, yeah. Uhm, let me get this one to eat because she looks like she's having a wild fun time."

Zimmy: "Before that, I wanted to tell you something."

Me: "Sure."

Zimmy: "Uhm, for the past week. I've been seeing someone. I really like him Sasa. If it makes you uncomfortable, please say so but I really hope we can fix it."

Me: "Is it Khaya?" I smiled.

Zimmy: "No babe. It's Sibonelo Biyela." I was shocked.

Me: "Oh?"

Zimmy: "I know you don't like him-"

Me: "No Zimmy. I don't have a problem with Sibonelo. He called to apologize, he's come over once to help me with something. We're fine."

Zimmy: "Really?"

Me: "Yes. Are you happy with him?"

Zimmy: "So happy. Yoh he's so sweet Sasa. And his stroke game... God." I giggled.

Me: "I'm going to need tips with those things. I'll need them soon."

Zimmy: "You haven't?? No Thembisa, why are you starving our King? No sisi. Sit here." I giggled. She went to make more cocktails. "Okay, I'm not teaching you everything because your husband will do that. Sex is fun when both of you explore each other, talk to each other and figure out what each one wants. Foreplay doesn't start in the bedroom baby, you need to be respectful, and loving. I know you won't disappoint me in this regard. Welcome your man in, and feed him. Once he's full, give him a massage and let him rest, small kisses all over his chest. Then lick his tip." I hid my face in shame.

Me: "This is embarrassing, what if I bite him?"

Zimmy: "It's trial and error, you won't be perfect on the first try, no one is."

Me: "Then what?" She took a pillow placing it on the floor.

Zimmy: "Well, you climb on him like this. Take your time to slide it in and ride."

Ama: "Why are we riding a pillow Zimmy?" She laughed.

Zimmy: "Stay out of this Amahle." I giggled.

Ama: "No I want to know. What if I'm missing something?"

Me: "Amahle!!!"

Ama: "I'm just saying."

Petu: "Amahle??" Amahle giggled. "Okay, who put alcohol in her drink?"

Notha: "I did." We laughed.

Siza: "Are you all dating royals?"

Us: "Yes." We laughed.

Siza: "That's sweet. Petu, you have to take your man back."

Petu: "I did.... And he bought me a car." We screamed, following her to the garage.

Zimmy: "Oh my God!!!"

Notha: "This is beautiful. Get in, let's see you inside!" Petu got in the driver, the inside looked like a spaceship with blue and black leather seats.

Me: "This is quite literally the most gorgeous car I've ever seen!"

Siza: "Congratulations baby sis. Now you can drive me around in a Bi-motive." We giggled.

Petu: "Thank you ladies." We went back inside the house. I checked my phone, finding a message from my man. <Can I please get a kiss?> I blushed. <Please come baby.> I sent back. He replied: <Walk out the house, turn right. I'll be right there.>

Me: "Ladies, I'm coming back." I gave Amy my phone.

Ama: "Please give him this." She gave me a small wallet like bag.

Me: "okay." I walked out the house. I turned right. four guards walked behind me. It was nearing midnight but the weather was so warm. My boyfriend stood by the corner, his guards behind him. I ran up to him, he caught me in his arms picking me up.

Nkosi: "I missed you. I couldn't wait any longer. Those ones are boring me." I giggled.

Me: "Well, my friends aren't boring me. We're having a jolly good time."

Nkosi: "Then maybe I should just join you." I laughed. "Yes, this is a good idea." He started walking. I couldn't stop giggling.

Me: "Nkosi stop."

Nkosi: "I also want to have a jolly good time." He chuckled, nibbling my neck.

Me: "You can't have it with the girls. You're a King."

Nkosi: "So Kings can't have fun?"

Me: "You must have it with the other kings, baby." We reached the house.

Nkosi: "You even have loud music? Is there a club in there?" He placed me on the ground.

Me: "One dance, then you have to go baby. Come here's a nice song." We stood in the driveway

Nkosi: "I can't dance." I held his hand, moving his body.

Me: "Now Mr, grab hold of my hand. And let's pretend the floor is ours. You say don't really dance? Don't worry bout it, we just one, two step, one two step. Now if the music is moving too fast, grab my hand a little tighter, don't be afraid to move a little closer, boy there's something about you that makes me wanna say ohhh." I sang. He laughed.

Nkosi: "Okay baby I think that would be enough." I giggled.

Me: "Before I forget. Here you go. From Amahle." I gave him the little bag. He stared at it and put it in his pocket.

Nkosi: "Thank you love."

Me: "Will you come back later?"

Nkosi: "Yes my love. When you want me, call me." He kissed me.

Me: "Okay, say hi to the guys."

Nkosi: "They must come say hello for themselves so I have an excuse to come back." I laughed. "Go in, love." I went back inside the house.

PRINCE POV\_

I walked into Zwe's house, sending a message to my love. I sat next to Zwe. The guys were playing pool having their own conversation.

Zwe: "How are they?"

Nkosi: "Having a jolly good time, she says."

Zwe: "That's good."

Nkosi: "I'm getting married in two weeks." He gasped.

Zwe: "Congratulations man! Why didn't you say anything?"

Nkosi: "I decided today. I'll tell my father sometime this week. Will you be able to come with us? You, Mthunzi and my father. To negotiate of course."

Zwe: "I'd be honoured." He smiled. "I'm proud of you. I knew one day you'd get married but I always assumed it would be out of obligation. Yet here you are, deeply in love. That's amazing."

Nkosi: "For someone who's never experienced it, I'm quite shocked myself really and sometimes confused."

Zwe: "What's confusing?"

Nkosi: "The way I feel for Thembisa is starting to become uncontrollable. I don't know how to explain it. Everyday, I feel like the love I have for her is growing bigger. I don't know if that's safe."

Zwe: "It's a good thing Nkosi, did something happen?"

Nkosi: "Earlier. Back in the palace. We were just laying and talking, kissing then out of nowhere, I ...."

Zwe: "You what?"

Nkosi: "It's embarrassing."

Zwe: "Tell me."

Nkosi: "I growled."

Zwe: "Oh?" He held back a laugh. "This has never happened before?"

Nkosi: "Never. I only growl when I'm about to change. What if it happens when we make love?"

Zwe: "What did she say?"

Nkosi: "She thought it was cute. I can assure you that it isn't."

Zwe: "Nkosi, your woman knows you and loves you. I'm pretty sure she won't mind."

Nkosi: "She asked to see it."

Zwe: "It being your tiger?"

Nkosi: "Yes. She wants to see me change."

Zwe: "Okay, but we'll have to find a way to control you. I can't let you harm your wife Nkosinhle. I know you wouldn't but I'd feel better being there."

Nkosi: "Yes, that's a good idea."

Zwe: "So I assume we'll be uncles by next year?"

Nkosi: "Uncles of who?"

Zwe: "Of your son Nkosinhle. You're going to be a dad soon."

Nkosi: "I don't know about that."

Zwe: "You don't want to be a dad yet?"

Nkosi: "No but I don't think I have a choice."

Zwe: "Why? Does Thembisa want a baby?"

Nkosi: "No. I think the forefathers want one and will do just about anything to have one. Through me, that is. Amahle said this weeks ago."

Zwe: "Oh man. Surely you can prolong it?"

Nkosi: "How? With contraceptives? They won't work."

Zwe: "Or pull out method."

Nkosi: "I don't think I'm strong enough but thank you for the suggestion."  
He laughed.

Zwe: "Mxim. Look Nkosi, sure, babies are alot of work but you have us. We can watch him sometimes when you need a break."

Nkosi: "Thank you. I want you to teach him to be like you."

Zwe: "Me?? Why me?"

Nkosi: "You're a good person. And you're good with people."

Zwe: "So are you."

Nkosi: "No, I don't want my child to be like me. If anything, I'm hoping it's a girl. So that she looks like Thembisa and has her kind heart and beautiful soul."

Zwe: "Hmm. Maybe on your next try my friend. Your people are very strict with their throne." He laughed.

Nkosi: "We can only dream." I chuckled.

Zwe: "I need to get more ice. Sboni, do you have ice in your house?"

Sibo: "Not that I know of."

Mnqobi: "The girls might have some." I stood up, ready to go.

Zwe: "Fine. Let's go."

Nkosi: "I'll drive."

Zwe: "Here you go." He handed me car keys. Just before we reached the door, a crackling of thunder hit the sky. "That's strange." Heavy rains poured immediately. "Do you think it's ..?"

Nkosi: "My dad? No. This isn't his doing. This is nature." I opened the door, finding a woman standing there. My blood curled at the sight of her. Zwe pulled me behind him.

Zwe: "Can I help you? How did you get in here?" She was barefoot, in a tattered dress with mud patches on her skin. "Hey!! Speak!!" Mthunzi stood next to him.

Mthunzi: "Who are you?"

She: "Nolanga. I need help."

Mthunzi: "How did you get into this community?"

She: "I live here."

Zwe: "Guards!!" I looked at this girl, she stared right back at me. I couldn't feel any aura around her. None at all.

Nkosi: "Don't touch her."

Zwe: "She's trespassing Nkosinhle!"

Nkosi: "Yes, but don't touch her. Close the door."

She: "Please let me in. Please help me."

Nkosi: "Close the door Zwelethu!!" He shut the door. I dialed Thembisa's number. "Call the girls, anyone who answers first!!" They all dialed at the same time.

Sibo: "No answer." He tried again.

Mnqobi: "Me too. Khaya?" Khaya shook his head.

Zwe: "What's happening Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I need to get hold of my wife. They can't open the door."

Sibo: "Don't need to open the door if they can't." He took his tablet.

Zwe: "What about the windows? The garage?"

Sibo: "The garage I can lock but the windows don't have burglars. We live in Stellars. There's never been a need to lock windows." Zwe looked at me. Finally, she answered.

Sasa: "Hi baby."

Nkosi: "Don't open the door."

Sasa: "What? Why?"

Nkosi: "If someone knocks, do not open. Do you understand me? Don't let anyone inside Thembisa. Tell everyone that."

Sasa: "Okay. Ladies." She switched off the music. "No one is allowed to open the door, not for any reason. No one is allowed in or not." I breathed a relief. "I've told them, love. What's wrong?"

Nkosi: "There's a girl who appeared on our doorstep. I know she's not one of you."

Sasa: "A girl? Yeah we're all here. None of us have gone outside and we're not waiting for anyone. What girl is this?" I heard a knock on the other end.

Nkosi: "Love, that girl is dead." ....

Chapter 89

## SASA POV\_

I was having some delicious chicken wings, listening to Petu and Zimmy.

Ama: "Sasa."

Me: "Hm?"

Ama: "Your phone." It was on the couch, I picked it up.

Me: "Hi baby."

Nkosi: "Don't open the door." Uhm okay.

Me: "What? Why?"

Nkosi: "If someone knocks, do not open. Do you understand me? Don't let anyone inside Thembisa. Tell everyone that." My heart started racing. Was there a threat outside? Where are the guards? I switched off the music peeping out the back yard. No sign of them.

Me: "Okay. Ladies. No one is allowed to open the door, not for any reason. No one is allowed in or out." They nodded. I wanted to check out the front window but at the same time I was scared. "I've told them, love. What's wrong?" The girls were now quiet.

Nkosi: "There's a girl who appeared on our doorstep. I know she's not one of you." I looked at my girls. We were all here. Siza was even napping on the couch. Nothando and Amahle were playing cards. Zanele had been fiddling with the music and dancing. Petu and Zimmy were on the floor chatting about celebrities.

Me: "A girl? Yeah we're all here. None of us have gone outside and we're not waiting for anyone. What girl is this?" Someone knocked on the front door.

Nkosi: "Love, that girl is dead." I froze. Staring at the door. Amahle stood up.

Petu: "Who is that?" She whispered.

Nkosi: "Baby? Don't open. Please."

Me: "I won't open."

Nkosi: " Give Amahle the phone." I gave Amahle the phone, still staring at the door.

Ama: "She started there? No she doesn't want Thembisa, she knows you'll come out if your wife is in her presence." She closed the windows, the sliding door had been closed already. "Yes. I know. The bag I gave you? Take out the Ntambo, at all your entrances put a pinch there. No, we're safe. I won't let her in Nkosi." She hung up.

Siza: "What's going on?" She woke up.

Petu: "Someone is outside." The knock persisted.

Me: "Amahle, who is this? What do they want?"

Ama: "No clue. I can't feel her aura. Don't worry. Sit down." I sat down, holding Zanele near me. The knock started again but this time at the sliding door. We all jumped. Amahle sighed.

Ama: "We might as well play the music because this will go on all night."

Siza: "Where are the guards? Why aren't they removing this person?"

Me: "That's a great question. When I looked out the window at first, there were none out the back."

Zimmy: "Ha.a Sasa, what does that mean?"

Me: "I don't know. They're just not there."

Zimmy: "Amahle, can't we call the police? Or the army? Someone? You're the last princess of the throne, you can't be in danger."

Ama: "I'm not in danger. I would call if I was. This threat isn't for me. We're safe, physically. Just don't look out the windows." I wish I heard her before I looked. The kitchen window was closed but transparent, a girl stood out in the dark staring in. I got such a shock and I tried not to scream but everyone looked and noticed the same exact thing. "Nevermind."

Siza: "Let's go upstairs. Let's take everything we need and lock ourselves in the master bedroom."

Notha: "I agree. Amy?"

Ama: "For the purposes of not getting a fright everytime you look at the window, let's go." We took the food and drinks plus all our phones and chargers running up to the bedroom. We locked the door behind us. The master bedroom was huge. The King sized bed would fit probably 5 of us if we lay strategically but I doubt we'd get any sleep tonight. There

was also a couch one more person could nap on. There was also a bathroom and a TV here. Amahle closed the windows, double checking the sliding door if it's locked and then closing the curtains. My phone rang in my hand.

Me: "Baby."

Nkosi: "Hey. Are you okay?"

Me: "I saw her. She appeared by the window. She looks like a horror movie. Nkosi who is that?" I whispered.

Nkosi: "I don't know my love. Are the doors locked and the windows?"

Me: "Yes. We're all in the master bedroom. Locked the door and windows and all."

Nkosi: "Okay, that's good. You have supplies to last until morning?" I giggled at supplies.

Me: "Yes baby, we brought the food and drinks."

Nkosi: "Why are you laughing at this very serious thing baby? I know you when you're hungry you become violent. You might just open that door and punch her in the face." I laughed.

Me: "Nkosi don't lie about my character. I've never been violent."

Nkosi: "It's a pity I'll never starve you so you'll never find out."

Me: "Because it's a lie sthandwa sam. Are you safe there? What if she comes back there?"

Nkosi: "Yes I'm safe. She might try again but I doubt it. I already closed the door in her face so she knows I won't change my mind."

Me: "And because we haven't open, she will keep trying."

Nkosi: "Yes." He sighed. I heard a faint sound that wasn't part of the chatter from my friends. I looked at them. They hadn't yet noticed. I looked at Amahle. She did. "Baby? What's that sound?"

Me: "I don't know. It sounds like singing."

Ama: "It's a call." The singer, the girl, had such a smooth voice and sung in soprano.

Me: "Amahle says it's a call."

Nkosi: "Witch's call. You need to ignore it, find a way to drown it."

Me: "If we play the tv?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Put the volume on loud." I switched on the TV increasing the volume. "I'll keep checking on you love. Nothing bad is going to happen. I promise."

Me: "Okay." We hung up. I sat on the bed, completely stressed. I could still hear the singing in the background as loud as the tv was.

Siza: "Can you guys still hear it? It's making me really uncomfortable. Is this house haunted?"

Petu: "I can hear her too."

Ama: "The house isn't haunted."

Zimmy: "Then what is happening Amahle? Why is there a lady singing outside?"

Ama: "She's sent by a witch."

Notha: "Amahle.."

Ama: "Don't pay her any mind." The knock sounded on the sliding door. We all jumped to the corner.

Me: "What can we do? To chase her away? Can't we pray?"

Ama: "Worth a try but this will happen all night." ....

PRINCE POV\_

Morning felt like it took eternity to emerge. I didn't sleep obviously. Checking up on Thembisa and keeping an eye on us as well.

Mthunzi: "It's about to be sunrise, we can go check them right?"

Nkosi: "Only at exact sunrise. I want to be sure she's gone." I dialed her number again. "Baby?"

Sasa: "Hey love."

Nkosi: "Did you manage to get some sleep?"

Sasa: "A little bit. I woke up just now. Everyone else is still sleeping."  
She yawned. "She sang the whole night, imagine."

Nkosi: "You kept the tv on right?" She kept quiet. "Thembisa?"

Sasa: "Uhm. Yes. It's just that...it's now off. If I remember correctly, we'd all agreed to leave it on."

Nkosi: "Where's Amahle."

Sasa: "She's sleeping. There's a cold breeze in the room but no open window."

Nkosi: "Wake her up."

Sasa: "Amahle." She whispered.

Ama: "Hey." She yawned.

Sasa: "did you switch off the TV?"

Ama: "No."

Nkosi: "I'm coming."

Ama: "You have to wai-"

Nkosi: "I'm coming NOW. I don't care who she thinks she is. If I dare find her in that house or even it's perimeter, she, Satan and all her ancestors will know of me." I hung up.

Mthunzi: "Nkosi-"

Nkosi: "No. Don't even."

Mthunzi: "It's only a few minutes. Just three. Please." I paced the floor trying to hurry up time. At the first peak of the sun, I stormed out the house running at full speed to other house. I arrived, looking around the yard. There was mud on the steps and windows. Seemed like there was no trace of her anymore. The guards were on the grass. Hopefully they're only sleeping and not dead. Zwe got there right then. I checked their pulses.

Nkosi: "Ice cold. I can't feel their pulses Zwelethu."

Zwe: "Stand back." He did his medical check. I knocked on the door, calling her phone.

Nkosi: "Come down baby, I'm outside."

Sasa: "Okay." I walked back to Zwe and Mthunzi.

Nkosi: "Anything?"

Zwe: "Faint. But they're still alive." I growled in anger. How dare she. The minute I get my hands on her. The front door opened. Thembisa hurried to me. I wrapped my arms around her, sniffing any scent off her. She was clear.

Nkosi: "Are you okay?"

Sasa: "Yes. What happened."

Nkosi: "Not sure yet but their pulses are still there. How's everyone? Where's Zanele?" Just then the girls came out the house.

Sasa: "Here she is. We're all okay. Do you think she was in the house?"

Nkosi: "Let's not worry about that right now. Sibonelo please call for extra security. Amahle, when do you think she left?"

Ama: "Not too long ago."

Nkosi: "Did she leave anything?"

Ama: "Other than her mud prints, nope. I checked the house. No sign of her." I needed to speak to her properly. I didn't want to alarm everyone right now.

Nkosi: "Okay. We won't move until the security is here. For now, can everyone go back inside the house, it's a bit cold." Everyone went inside leaving Mthunzi, Zwe, Sasa, Amahle and I. "What if we can't find anything she left behind the same way we couldn't figure her out."

Ama: "She's dead Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Yes, which means someone, specifically a witch, has taken over the body. This then also brings the fact that she'll need another body soon if not already. What if she was inside the house?"

Sasa: "What if he took one of the guards?" I froze.

Nkosi: "Mthunzi, how many guards did you place here?"

Mthunzi: "15. There's two missing."

Nkosi: "Check the back." Mthunzi went to the back yard with Amahle.

Sasa: "She even managed to knock upstairs there on the balcony door." I kissed her head holding her in my arms, grateful she was safe. "Does she only take dead people's bodies?"

Nkosi: "No. I'll have everyone thoroughly checked. I've called for the healer. He should be here in 40 minutes."

Sasa: "Okay. Let me go check on the girls." I kissed her lips and watched her walk into the house. Mthunzi came back with Amahle.

Ama: "Nothing."

Nkosi: "Okay. We'll wait for the healer." I looked down at my guards. Thank goodness they're still alive. They're unlikely to remember what happened but at least they still have their lives.

## PETU'S POV\_

This was such a scary experience. Never did I think this could happen. We sat in the house. Jimmy and Sasa were making breakfast. I don't know if I'd be able to eat anything yet.

Siza: "What's going to happen now?"

Petu: "I don't know yet. Maybe we can leave after breakfast." Jimmy decked the dining table.

Ama: "Let's wait a bit before we eat." His Highness walked into the house. We all bowed to him. I will never get used to his presence. Almost immediately, he stood by Sasa, whispering to her ear. She came to us in the lounge.

Sasa: "Ladies, after last night's events, His Highness has asked to let the healer in. He will do some assessments in the house and on us. None of you are in trouble. We just want to make sure whatever was happening hasn't attached to one of us because when I woke up this morning. I felt an uncomfortable breeze and the TV had been switched off. The healer will check to see if we're all fine and spiritually safe. We're all Africans, we know and believe in spirituality. Unfortunately for us, there are opposing, and very evil spirits out there. It is not anything any of us can help because these things happen to anyone. Does anyone have questions?"

Nele: "What will the healer do?"

Sasa: "He will explain as he works, my angel."

Siza: "What happens if whatever that was, did attach to us?"

Sasa: "We'll work on getting rid of it. You won't go home until you're safe."

Siza: "Thank you."

Petu: "Do you think it will follow us?"

Sasa: "No. I believe the healer will ensure that doesn't happen."

Zimmy: "What happened to the guards?"

Sasa: "I think they were complused in a sense. I cannot be sure." None of us had more questions. Sasa was so good at calming people down. I honestly felt better and safer now. She walked back to His Highness. He looked at the door while holding her. What was happening now. Mthunzi walked in, with the healer behind. This man looked incredibly scary. Possibly more scary than the girl we saw. He found a spot in the house, laying down his cloth and preparing his things. He started chanting in a low whisper. I looked around the house, everyone was looking at him, waiting.

Healer: "Akeze owok'qala." (Can the first one come forward) Sasa walked to him, kneeling in front of him.

Healer: "Ndlunkulu. Umama wesizwe. Inyoni endizela phezulu. Lowo onegazi eliyigugu. Inhliziyo yamakhosi." (First Lady/Head Office. Mother of the nation. Bird that flies high. She with the treasure blood. The Kings heart.) That was so sweet, Sasa was trying not to blush. I was even blushing for her. "Khotha lokhu, bese eyikhafulela la." (Lick this then spit it out here.) She did as he says. "Ndlunkulu." He nodded and chanted. "Olandelayo." Sasa got up, Amahle went next. She did the same, Zanele and Zimmy followed, Siza, Notha and I after. He burnt a herb with mixed with something from his bag and all our spits. That was very strange for me but I trusted the process.

Sasa: "Thokoza Mkhulu, ngicela ukubuza mayelana nenqubo esisanda kuyenza." (Salutations Healer, may I please ask about the process we just did.)

Healer: "Yebo Ndlunkulu."

Sasa: "Sizokwazi kanjani ukuthi ubani othathiwe." (How will we know who has been taken.) This bold girl.

Healer: "Osetshenziwe uzophalaza. Noma yimuphi umzuzu manje." (The one who's being used will throw up. Any minute now.)

Sasa: "Thokoza Mkhulu." The healer went through the whole house burning his herb. About twenty minutes passed.

Healer: "Konke kuhamba kahle manje. Lomuntu akekho phakathi kwenu." (All is well now. The person isn't among you.) He sat down again, preparing a bowl. "Buza umbuzo olandelayo, Ndlunkulu." (Ask your next question, First Lady.) We all giggled. Sasa looked so embarrassed it was cute.

Sasa: "Thokoza Mkhulu. Bengicabanga nje. Ngicabanga ukuthi lena ingeyokuvikela." (I was only thinking, this part is for protection.) The healer looked at her.

Healer: "Thokoza." We all got the protection and eventually the healer went to work outside then left. This was the craziest birthday I've ever had.

Sasa: "Friend, we have to go home. The parents are going home today. So we have to be there before they wake." She hugged me.

Petu: "Thank you so much for being here. I had a great time having you all here. Nele, you must come visit soon."

Nele: "I will." We said our goodbyes and they left the house with His Highness, Amahle and Mthunzi. We sat down at the table to eat. I only needed a juice and toast.

Notha: "Hm, got a really bad headache." She held on her head.

Mnqobi: "You have a hangover, love. Hang on." He got up, walking to the kitchen. He took out a bottle of pills and water bringing it to her. "Take two of these, and have something to eat then I can take you home to sleep." She nodded, drinking the pills. He dished up some food for her, placing the egg on the toast, with some hot sauce on the side. "I know you only like boiled eggs but this will do the trick."

Notha: "That's not enough hot sauce."

Mnqobi: "Okay, tell me when to stop then."

Notha: "Let me just hold on to the bottle." He chuckled. I don't know how to feel about this situation. He looked so comfortable and in tune with her. He even knew her favorite eggs and how she ate them. Of course, they live together. I didn't expect to feel this pang of jealousy especially because we were all very open about our involvement. The fact is, I don't think I wanted Mngqobi to love another woman. Did that make me selfish?

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Chapter 90

SASA POV\_

We arrived at the villa while the parents were still sleeping. Thank goodness. I thought dad would be wide awake by now. We took our showers, getting dressed and going to the restaurant to wait. I had a hangover and I needed to get rid of it quickly. I asked for some headache pills and juice.

Nele: "That was super fun." I chuckled.

Me: "Yeah, before witch lady arrived. Dad is going to freak out."

Nele: "Why would we tell him? We're safe Sasa. The healer protected us. There's no need to tell them and get yelled at."

Me: "How many secrets do you keep from your parents Zanele?"

Nele: "I'm not the angel like you sis. I have plenty of secrets to avoid judgement." We laughed. "You need to stop telling them everything. Especially uMama. Don't even try to be vulnerable near her because she'll use it against you."

Me: "Does she do the same to you?"

Nele: "Not like you, no. I don't want to talk bad about uMama but I feel like a really big part of her competes with you. She's tried to do stuff with

dad that you do when you're home. Like taking care of the chickens and cleaning the farm. She just gets really impatient because dad doesn't pay much attention to it. He's just doing his job, she's doing it for his attention. Then it causes fights about how if it was you, he would be clapping loudly." I got my pills and juice, drinking them.

Me: "But dad doesn't even clap for me Zanele. We just talk about the animals and how to do the next task, where to help."

Nele: "She doesn't get that. Problem is that, you have the same interests as dad. You're half of him, alot more him actually. So obviously you'll enjoy his things more than anything. She doesn't have those interests."

Me: "And you? Does it affect you that I spend alot of time with Dad?"

Nele: "No. Dad always spends time with me. He takes me to school everyday. When he's on break during the afternoon, we spend time cooking together. I know he has to be with you when you're around because you don't live at home anymore. And now it's going to be even worse because you're marrying a king."

Me: "Please take care of him Zanele."

Nele: "I will. I promise."

We'd had a peaceful breakfast as a family. Nkosi wasn't here, I know he'd given me this time alone with my family. The way my man was so thoughtful was heartwarming. I was always his priority. We spent our morning after breakfast in the garden. They got ready to leave at 1pm, wanting to arrive while it's still day light. I was so sad. I really enjoyed having them all here.

Xolani: "My child. Why are you sulking now?"

Me: "I'm going to miss you guys."

Xolani: "We'll miss you too. You'll be home soon, you have your negotiations in two weeks. Speaking of which, you'll be going back to res, right?" Wooow.

Me: "Yes tata. Of course."

Xolani: "Good, because you still have your ceremony before the prince takes you as his wife. I believe he made a promise and I'm hoping he sticks to it. A man is nothing without his word." He looked at Nkosi.

Nkosi: "Yes sir. I intend to keep that promise. I'll have extra security in the residence."

Xolani: "That's good. I'm hopeful, since the King has apologized there won't be more threats."

Nkosi: "None sir. Thembisa will be well protected."

Xolani: "Thank you. Well, then. Let's get going." I hugged him again. "I love you mntanam. I'll call you."

Me: "Okay tata. I love you too. Travel safely. I love you mama." I hugged her and hugged Nele.

Mama: "Please stay safe, Sasa. Don't go befriending everyone in that residence. You're an important person."

Me: "I won't. I'll still be with Amahle."

Mama: "Good. Thank you so much Your Highness, for hosting us."

Nkosi: "My pleasure, ma. I'm looking forward to seeing you soon." I watched them get into the car. They had an extra one for three guards that would stay with them in the village permanently. I waved them goodbye, watching the cars drive off.

## SIBONELO POV\_

What a weird night it's been. I've heard of witches and stuff but never thought I'd be exposed to one. Then again, I shouldn't be so surprised. Nkosi and his father had super abilities that no other human had. Or wait, how many other people had them? What if they weren't the only ones? For example this witch. What if she also had her abilities because how can you explain a dead person walking and talking?

Zimmy: "Baby. Your coffee is getting cold."

Sibo: "Oh, thanks." Everyone had finished eating breakfast, just chatting lively and making jokes. What if this witch came back? Yes we were all protected but for how long? And how far? I trusted Nkosi but I was really worried.

Siza: "I should be getting back to the kids before they wake up. Petu, can I get a cab here?"

Sibo: "You have kids??"

Siza: "Yes, 3, my prince." With a body that beautiful? Wild.

Sibo: "Oh. Also there's we don't use cabs. The guards will drive you home. Mngqobi?"

Mngqobi: "Yes, I have a car ready. Butterfly, I'll have someone bring your car this afternoon okay?" She nodded.

Sibo: "Will you be at Khaya's apartment or with your friends babe?"  
Zimmy looked at me.

Zimmy: "I'll go to your house." This is where the problem starts for me. I don't want people in my house when I'm not there and I wasn't in a good space mentally to entertain anyone.

Sibo: "I will be with my parents at home all day. I don't want you to be alone."

Zimmy: "But I'd be alone at Khaya's apartment?"

Sibo: "Zimm-"

Zimmy: "Don't worry about it. I'll catch a ride with Petu. I'm going back to res." I didn't like arguing in front of people and I avoided it by any means. Her going to res was obviously a tantrum because she knew I wouldn't be allowed inside. I can't deal with this right now especially because Zwe was staring at me slowly biting his jam toast. He wanted to tell me he told me so. Badly.

Mngqobi: "Love? How are you feeling?"

Notha: "Dizzy. Can you please take me home?"

Mngqobi: "Let's go. Butterf-"

Petu: "Siza please help me take these things to the car." Seems like I'm not the only one in hot water, thank God.

Mngqobi: "Petunia."

Petu: "Mngqobi." She got up, packing her balloons and things. Women are so dramatic. What is she going to do with balloons. I chuckled, trying to drink my coffee.

Mngqobi: "Petunia, yini manje?"

Petu: "Yini manje yani na Mngqobi, I'm trying to go home."

Mnqobi: "Uthukuthele futhi angazi ukuthi kungani." (You're angry and i dont know why.)

Petu: "Uyakhuluma manje Mnqobi? Wonders never cease." This was hilarious. Zimmy stared at me. I focused on drinking my coffee. Mnqobi stared at Petu, probably trying to calculate where he went wrong. Even me, I was confused because I thought they were a happy throuple. Suddenly ziyajika izinto. Can never take women seriously.

Siza: "Uhm, I just want to say thank you all, my princes, and you ladies. It was lovely meeting you all." She too got up, helping with the things. Insanity, I tell you. Zimmy started packing the dishes into piles taking them to the kitchen.

Sibo: "There's a cleaning crew coming, love. Don't strain yourself." She came back to the table taking more items including the cup of coffee in my hand. I'm not Mnqobi ke mina, I don't entertain iyhlanya. Zwe chuckled happily, drinking his coffee. Khaya covered his mouth trying not to laugh.

Sibo: "Lesi sangoma sifuna abafazi bethu basizonde." I mumbled. (This sangoma wants our wives to hate us.)

Zwe: "I don't have these problems and I'm glad. Let's go home, bug." They left the house. I watched the three ladies pack stuff into the car. I helped with the case of champagne, placing it in the boot.

Sibo: "Hopefully your kiddos don't get into this box." Siza giggled.

Siza: "I have a secret cabinet."

Sibo: "How old are they? The last time I came by, you were holding a baby." She looked nervously at Petu.

Siza: "Uhm. A 5 year old girl, 3 year old boy and the baby girl is 6 months old."

Sibo: "Must be a chaotic house. Two toddlers and a baby."

Siza: "Not really. They're very well behaved."

Sibo: "That's good." Zimmy was staring daggers at me, she got in the car without a word. "I'll call you later baby." She didn't respond. Okay? Was I not allowed to have conversations? That would be stupid. They all got in the car, driving off.

Sibo: "Let's go, you two." Mngqobi and Nothando left with me, going back home.

My parents were home, watching a show together. Khaya and Zwe sat with them I went to take a shower and got dressed, going back downstairs.

Sibo: "Mama, can I make you tea? I think I smell your scones."

Queen: "Yes my angel child. These ones just sat here and stared at me."

Zwe: "We were waiting for the favorite child."

Queen: "Don't be silly. I don't have favourites. Let's go Sboni, I'll have our garden table set."

Zwe: "Definite favorite." He laughed.

Biyela: "I'm even thinking of finding him a wife just so he can leave mine alone."

Zwe: "He already has one. Tell them Sbon-"

Sibo: "Awu kahle Zwelethu." I snapped.

Zwe: "Am I lying ke? Isn't that what you said?"

Sibo: "All this, because you're jealous?"

Zwe: "Yes."

Sibo: "Mxim." I went to the kitchen to make tea, placing the warm scones on the side plate. My mother was the best baker. Her scones were my favorite, if she baked them everyday, I'd gain happy weight very quickly. Zwelethu walked in the kitchen.

Zwe: "You know I'm only teasing you."

Sibo: "I wasn't ready to talk about Jimmy. It's not there yet."

Zwe: "And why not?"

Sibo: "We've only been fucking for a week."

Zwe: "You don't see a future with her?"

Sibo: "I haven't even thought that far. I'm only just enjoying this time with her. Getting to know each other"

Zwe: "And Siza?" He took a scone, biting into it.

Sibo: "Siza is married with kids. Nowhere near my type. I was just being nice."

Zwe: "Hm.. anyway, I had to take care of Solinga yesterday. Khaya needs a guard."

Sibo: "Did he threaten him? He can take one of mine for now."

Zwe: "He definitely won't come near him but I have to be sure."

Sibo: "Okay. Did you speak to dad about it?"

Zwe: "Later. When we're alone."

Sibo: "Okay. We'll talk then." He took another scone walking out. I added another and walked out to the garden. My mother was already sitting in her seat.

Sibo: "You look beautiful." I kissed her cheek. "Is that a new dress?" I sat down.

Queen: "You're trying to deflect but thank you. Yes it's a new design."

Sibo: "Did the queen like your pieces that you gifted her with?"

Queen: "I think so. She did send a bouquet this morning with a thank you note." She smiled. My heart smiled with her.

Sibo: "That's good. It was a lovely event."

Queen: "Indeed it was and a very extravagant gift you bought, my child. Thank you for dignifying our family name. Every chance you get, you make sure to put us in good light and spaces. We're still in good graces because of your judgement in standing by the throne and helping them through a difficult time. You're doing great work."

Sibo: "It's nothing, mama. Honestly I was only influenced by Zwe. It's his friendship that made my decisions."

Queen: "Still. You continue to show up. I'm proud of you, my son. So tell me, who's this girl."

Sibo: "Zwe is exaggerating mama. I'm dating, yes but it's not yet a serious relationship."

Queen: "Will it be? Sibonelo I'm getting old, I need to run after children while I still have the energy."

Sibo: "I don't know yet mama. I don't want to lie and give her a false expectation. She's now mad at me because I said I'm coming home and she can't wait for me in my house."

Queen: "Haibo Sibonelo, you bring girls to your house?"

Sibo: "But mama where must I bring them? Here to the palace?" She laughed.

Queen: "Why then is she upset? Did you say something unkind?"

Sibo: "I don't say unkind things mama. I only speak the truth. Also, I only told her that it's best she goes to her space because I'll be here."

Queen: "You must have said something."

Sibo: "Not me, mama. You know I apologize when I say things out of line. Maybe she got jealous because I spoke to Petunia's sister but even then I was being open and having a conversation."

Queen: "Petunia is Nothando's friend who was sleeping with Mngqobi?" I sipped my tea.

Sibo: "Hm. It was her birthday yesterday. Mngqobi bought her a car."

Queen: "Mngqobi Biyela!!!"

Sibo: "Mama! See now, they won't tell me things if you shout."

Queen: "Why would he do that?"

Sibo: "He's in love mos mama. We were here at Zwe's house while the girls were at Mngqobi's."

Queen: "Who are these girls?"

Sibo: "Nothando, Amahle, Sasa the prince's future wife, remember her? Her sister as well. Also, Petunia, her sister and Jimmy."

Queen: "So I assume Jimmy is yours?"

Sibo: "Yebo ma." I munched into my scone.

Queen: "Is she on contraceptives?" I laughed.

Sibo: "I thought you wanted grandkids?"

Queen: "With the way you're laid back Sibonelo, I'm afraid if this girl falls pregnant you'll leave her."

Sibo: "She is on contraceptives but I'd never abandon my child."

Queen: "Good, I raised you better than that. Back to Mngqobi. What is going through his head?"

Sibo: "They've decided to start dating mama. All three of them. But it's starting to get tricky already."

Queen: "This can't end well Sibonelo. There's bound to be problems."

Sibo: "You can only watch and see mama. He knows what he's doing, he says. It's good that they're dating first then they can take it to the next step if they're sure or they can break up."

Queen: "Yoh. You children stress me so much."

Sibo: "If we don't mama, who will? It keeps your skin glowing." She laughed.

Queen: "You're such a sweet child." ...

## KHAYA'S POV \_

I was watching a soccer game with uBabu Biyela. He and I favoured the same team, Zwelethu and Mngqobi had their own. Currently we were in the lead and nearing the end. My phone buzzed in my pocket. I took it out, looking at the message. It was her again. I'd ignored her yesterday but I have a feeling she won't take kindly if I keep doing it. <Hey, I want to see you.> Was this lady crazy? Where would she see me? She's in the most private family ever. There's barely pictures of her and her twin online. Also, I didn't know which twin she was.

Khaya: <Uhm no. I don't think that's a good idea.>

She: <Should I send a car?> Is she whoring me out now? No, that's disrespectful. I'm a man, she can't do that.

Khaya: <No. I'm not interested.>

She: <Let's not make things difficult Khaya Solinga. Make a decision or I'll make one for you.> Oh my God. This princess is a thug, obviously.

Khaya: <I'm not coming to the palace again, Princess Sikhosana. I'm a commoner remember? Plus I'm not interested in whatever this is.>

She: <Fine then. You asked for this.> My heart started racing immediately. What would she do? I quickly type back.

Khaya: <What are you doing?>

She: <You decided to involve my brother, so I've decided to involve my father. He likes to hunt.>

Khaya: <And I'll involve my brothers.> She sent a bunch of laughing emoji's. Yes, I admit. I looked ridiculous, she won. <Tell me what you want from me, maybe then I'll trust you.>

She: <Should I come to you instead?>

Khaya: <I don't think you understand the amount of trouble I'll get into. Or you just don't care?"

She: "I just don't care. 1 hour.> This girl is crazy. I locked my phone, and focused on the game. I'd obviously have to talk to Zwe about this. And soon. I can't talk to Mngqobi because he's occupied right now. Nothando is sick so he keeps going upstairs to check on her. The game finally ended with us winning.

Biyela: "Fantastic. Let me get my boy ice cream. What flavor do you want Khaya?"

Zwe: "Mxim." I laughed.

Khaya: "I would like the vanilla with 3 nil of chocolate syrup." They laughed. King Biyela walked to the kitchen.

Zwe: "How are you doing Bug?"

Khaya: "I'm fine for the most part. Just, remember the princess took my phone? She got my number somehow, probably sent herself a message. She's been texting me, wanting to see me."

Zwe: "Ohh?? You're in the game, boy. A whole princess?"

Khaya: "Bhut Zwe, she's Sikhosana. He would kill me."

Zwe: "True."

Khaya: "I've told her I'm not interested. She won't take no for an answer. Now she's threatening me. How do I get rid of this problem?"

Zwe: "I'll ask Nkosi to speak to her."

Khaya: "That's the thing. She says since I involved him , she'll involve her father."

Zwe: "Wow. Look, she can't come here. She's not going to hurt you or do anything. She's only trying to scare you. Just block her and we'll tell Nkosi. She's not going to force you to be interested. Wait... Are you?" I looked down in shame.

Khaya: "I don't know. She's gorgeous." He smiled.

Zwe: "My young prince! Haha. Still. Sikhosana would kill you if you touched his daughter. Let's not test him. Let me know if she tries to contact you again."

Khaya: "Okay." I blocked her number.

Zwe: "Has your father called you?"

Khaya: "No. I doubt he will."

Zwe: "Good. I don't want him near you. Your guard is ready as well."

Khaya: "Already? Yoh. I'm going to enjoy being driven around." He laughed. "Restaurants are opening this week right?"

Zwe: "Absolutely."

Khaya: "I missed the seafood platter at Amelia's. I'll be there the second they open their doors." He laughed. King Biyela came back with ice cream bowls for all of us. Mngqobi walked in.

Mngqobi: "Yoh, mama is going to be upset. Why would you feed us ice cream in the morning, dad?"

Biyela: "Mngqobi eat your ice cream and finish it. What is your problem?" I chuckled. In the afternoon, I decided to go over to my place and fetch some more of my things. I was thinking of renting out this apartment now. Zimmy had said she's going back to res.

Khaya: "Tata, I'm going to fetch my things from the apartment, I'll be back soon."

Biyela: "Okay. Now that you have a guard, I don't have to worry about those things."

Mngqobi: "Let me go with you, feel like getting fresh air." We walked out the house. "I'm not really going to your place. We'll drop you there, then I go to Petunia, I'll pick you up in 30 minutes."

Khaya: "Please don't be more than 30 minutes Mngqobi."

Mngqobi: "I won't be. Nothando is sick, I don't want to leave her alone too long. We'll take two guards. You and I will drive Butterfly's car then I drop you off. When I come back, I'll be back with the guard."

Khaya: "This is alot of trouble. Alot. Let's go." The guard first took us to his house to collect the car. They drove after us to the apartment. "30 minutes Mngqobi."

Mngqobi: "I promise, brother. Your guard will be here." I got out the car, taking the lift up to my apartment. I unlocked my place and walked in, closing the door behind me. The TV was on. Perhaps Zimmy was here after all. I walked in, freezing by the dining room. I stared at her, too stunned to speak. She was on the couch, eating crisps.

Khaya: "Princess Sikhosana." Her guard stood on the side of my living room.

She: "Khaya Solinga. Hi."

Khaya: "How did you....why are you here?" I took out my phone.

She: "I wouldn't do that if I were you. You might lose a hand. Come sit with me Khaya."

Khaya: "I told you I don't want any trouble."

She: "And I'm not here to be trouble. I only wanted to get to know you."

Khaya: "Why?"

She: "We're yet to find out. Come sit."....

## Chapter 91

### PETU'S POV\_

Siza and I arrived home. We took in our stuff to my bedroom. She thanked her nanny and let her leave, also giving her a bottle of champagne to enjoy. After I took a bath, I got dressed in a grey bandage maxi skirt and a matching crop top. I slipped on slides, going to the kitchen to start on Sunday lunch. It would be a full seven colours meal.

Siza attended to the babies, washing them and feeding them. I think Jackson wasn't even home. I spent some hours cooking and when I was done, went to sit in my room with a glass of champagne. The kids were with me since an hour ago, drawing in their coloring books while the TV played their Gracie's corner. It seemed only baby Maya was entertained by the songs. She sat on the bed next to me, clapping excitedly. Siza came in.

Petu: "Hey."

Siza: "Hey guys." She closed the door, laying on my bed. "Thank you for watching them."

Petu: "You didn't even sleep that long. Are you rested?"

Siza: "Better than earlier. You also need to rest, sis. It was a hectic night."

Petu: "I will maybe a little later."

Siza: "You're friends with very important people ne?" I giggled. "I see why you were so uncomfortable when I spoke about His Highness. He's engaged to your friend."

Petu: "Yeah. Please don't tell anyone about this. They're yet to announce it."

Siza: "I know royal protocol, sis. Sasa is a sweet soul. She's perfect for him. You can just see how he's so in love with her." She giggled.

Petu: "They're really cute, hey?"

Siza: "Very. I hope I'm invited to the wedding."

Petu: "And it might be soon." I sighed, smiling. I can't believe my friend is about to be queen.

Siza: "Babe, why are you angry at your man? All of you just switched up and I didn't get the memo. I was so nervous when Prince Sibonelo started talking to me. It's obvious he was trying to make his girlfriend jealous. What happened?"

Petu: "I don't know about Prince Sibonelo and Zimmy. My situation with Mngqobi is very complicated. Mngqobi is engaged to Nothando."

Siza: "Your best friend, Nothando?"

Petu: "Yep."

Siza: "Petu."

Petu: "She says she's okay with it. She wants me to be with him."

Siza: "Why?"

Petu: "Nothando isn't affectionate. She's not attracted to anyone."

Siza: "Oh. So she's asexual?"

Petu: "What does that mean?"

Siza: "When a person has no sexual attraction or urges or any desire to have participate in sexual things. Some people are just born like that. They sometimes only have emotional attraction. They mostly have relationships that don't require sexual activity."

Petu: "That's a thing?"

Siza: "Yep. I had a friend like that when I was still in varsity. It was very traumatic for her I think she even stopped dating. Every guy she dated, would pressure her into sex and because she liked them she would give in but didn't enjoy it. She would cry all the way home. We thought she was lesbian so we set up a date for her to meet this lovely woman, she couldn't even kiss her. Said, she felt uncomfortable. Then we played a game with her. We showed her different variations of people. All kinds of lesbians, fems, studs, butch. None of them appealed to her. No race, nothing. We tried with heterosexual men, nope. Nothing. She only saw a guy and said oh, he's cute but I still wouldn't sleep with him. She's asexual. It took us over a year to figure that out." She chuckled.

Petu: "Wow. I'll have to talk to her about it. But her sexuality isn't what is bothering me. Mngqobi really loves her. He admitted this, that he'd been in love with her since their teenage years. When I see how he takes care of her, how they live together. I just got jealous. That's really selfish of me isn't it?"

Siza: "No, you're a human being. Of course you'll get jealous. The only important thing is to voice this feeling out Petu. Don't hide it and be mean to your friend and boyfriend. If you guys are now dating all three of you then the only way this won't be too complicated is if it's spoken about."

Petu: "But Siza, I don't want to be that girl who always complains. What if he gets tired of that?"

Siza: "That would be his deal. If your man says you're complaining when you express how you feel and doesn't find a solution of appeasing your heart, baby that's not your man." Siza always had the best advice but how she's in this situation with her husband, boggles my mind. My phone rang, but not before I heard an engine roaring angrily outside. "I think that's your car, Jesus, can you hear that engine?" I giggled, answering my phone.

Petu: "Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "Please come outside."

Petu: "Okay." I hung up, getting out of bed. I checked myself in the mirror, everything was perfect, I added a pinch of perfume and walked out. He stood outside the car, leaning on it with a foot on the tyre. "Hi." I folded my arms.

Mnqobi: "Please come closer."

Petu: "I'm fine right he-"

Mnqobi: "Come closer." I stared at him with a slight shock but moved close to him. "What is the problem? Why are you upset?"

Petu: "Shouldn't you be attending to your wife?"

Mnqobi: "Yes I should, that's why I can't be wasting time trying to figure out what's upsetting you."

Petu: "Wow." I looked at the floor. If I wasn't hurt before.

Mnqobi: "Is that the problem? That I was attending to Notha?"

Petu: "You refer to her as your wife."

Mnqobi: "That's because she is Petunia. Her lobola was paid years ago. The only thing that will happen when she's ready is the wedding ceremony."

Petu: "And what am I Mnqobi?"

Mnqobi: "You're my girlfriend."

Petu: "I don't think this is worth my heart Mnqobi. I don't know if I can stomach this. I mean, I know you love her but I wasn't ready to see you be affectionate and caring to another woman, calling her your wife."

Mnqobi: "So what were you agreeing to yesterday? When you wanted to try this out?"

Petu: "I don't kn-"

Mnqobi: "And I'm the one at fault? Again?"

Petu: "Now you're angry?"

Mnqobi: "I'm not angry, I'm frustrated that you can just wake up and switch up for no reason. Nothando is sick and you want me to stand here to argue? Instead of actually understanding this as part of my role at being your and her man. Tomorrow or next week, you'll be sick, am I not supposed to then take care of you?? Nothando doesn't have family. She's in my home because of me. I can't expect Zwe to be fussing over her while I'm here having fun. That's absolutely disrespectful. No Petu. You're being unfair now."

Petu: "Okay Mnqobi. I'm sorry." I stepped back. He grabbed my arm.

Mnqobi: "We're going to sort this out and finish now."

Petu: "There's nothing to sort out. I think I made myself clear. I can't do it. I'm not going to sit and be uncomfortable, pretending just for you. I can't expect you to prioritize me-"

Mnqobi: "I'm sitting on a 2 million rand car that is in your name. I planned and executed the best birthday. I've been focusing on you quite literally all week. What else can I possibly do?"

Petu: "Nothing. Again, Mnqobi I'm sorry. I would rather just respectfully step back. I honestly wish you the best. I just don't think I can put myself through this."

Mnqobi: "So you're dumping me? Again?"

Petu: "I'm asking to break up. Why is this a problem?"

Mnqobi: "Fine." He held out keys.

Petu: "No, I can't keep your car."

Mnqobi: "Who then must keep it because it's in your name?" He placed the key on the wipers, walking to the other car that was waiting behind. He stopped and turned back. "Is marriage the problem?"

Petu: "No."

Mnqobi: "No it has to be because if I remember correctly you said I refer to her as my wife. So that's a problem?"

Petu: "I already told you my problem."

Mnqobi: "Your problem arose in less than 24 hours and you don't even want to find a solution for it?? Is that logical?"

Petu: "Okay, now you're angry. So rather leave my home."

Mnqobi: "I'm not going any damn where Petunia! You and I are in a relationship and getting to know one another. I don't know if it doesn't show but I'm in it for the long haul. I'm talking marriage, kids. Everything. I'm falling in love with you everyday and I love that. My love for Notha developed years ago. You cannot compare that to what we're building and you certainly can never compare it in the future. I will always prioritize you both, the equal way. But if you are sick, I will fully focus on you. If Nothando is sick, I will fully focus on her. God forbid you both get sick at the same time but I would put you both in one room and take care of you all the same." He breathed. "Why does that make me a bad person? What I share with you, is completely different to Nothando. It's not even the physical aspect, it's the emotional bond you and I have. Different things about you that have made me fall deep, that funny snort you do after laughing a crazy long time. Then get embarrassed by it. I love your excitement everytime you see ladybugs, I don't understand it but somehow you think it's good luck so I do the cross finger thing with you because I know it makes you happy. There's just so many things." He stepped closer. "I'm never going to lie about how I feel about Notha, I'm never going to lie to you. I thought that was the basis of a healthy relationship. Honesty. Please think about this carefully. I don't want to let you go but if you truly believe you can't do this then I'll leave you alone." He walked to his car. I walked into the house. I had alot to think about. If I'm being really honest, I didn't want to let go of Mnqobi but at the same time, this was difficult. Maybe we should try Notha's suggestion. We needed to spend more time together and also talk about our relationship. My phone buzzed a message. I checked it: <I'm sorry I yelled at you, butterfly. I should've calmed down first but I didn't want to lose the chance of letting you understand that you mean just as much to me. My tone wasn't kind, I'm sorry. It won't happen again.> As if he needed to be sweeter. I'll have to work on my insecurities privately. I still had some money saved up apart from the investment, a therapist could help me with my inner feelings while I navigate this new kind of relationship. I

was honestly being horrible, I haven't even checked on my friend. I'd even forgotten that she didn't have her family anymore. My own feelings had consumed me so much that I didn't think of her and how alone she must be feeling. I sent a message to Notha: <Hey Notha. How are you feeling now? When you get better, pls let me know so we can hang out. I want us to have a chill and chat.> ...

KHAYA'S POV \_

I was now getting annoyed. This girl can't come endanger my life and bully me in my own space.

Khaya: "Sikhosana. What do you want from me?"

She: "Why can't you sit dow-"

Khaya: "Look. I'm at my wits end. You either need to speak your peace or get the fuck out. I'm not going to entertain you any longer. I don't give a fuck who you think you are." She stared at me.

She: "Were you trying to sound manly? It's sexy but I'm not scared of you. Khaya, you have a woman sitting on your very expensive couch. You have exquisite taste by the way." She had to mention my favorite piece of furniture trying to butter me up.

Khaya: "Thank you."

She: "So you really won't come closer?" The last time I refused her she ended up in my house. What was her deal? I sat on the single couch. She chuckled. "You're acting like a virgin and we both know you're not. Why are you so scared?"

Khaya: "I'm not about to touch a Sikhosana. Never."

She: "You act like I'm a disease. I'm human too Khaya."

Khaya: "Really?? I would've sworn you aren't." She giggled. "Honestly, why are you here?"

She: "Sick of being in that palace. Do you smoke?"

Khaya: "No."

She: "Mind if I do?"

Khaya: "Knock yourself out." She opened her designer purse pulling out a perfectly rolled joint. What the hell? She gave it to her guard, he lit it up for her, handing it back. WHAT THE HELL.

She: "So... How come you're staying at Biyela?"

Khaya: "I grew up there. My father used to do business for them." She puffed out a big cloud of smoke.

She: "Hm." I stared at her, trying to hide my shock.

Khaya: "Where did you get that?"

She: "I grew a tree."

Khaya: "You smoke at the palace?"

She: "Yes." She handed it back to the guard who switched it off and ashed in a small container. "It helps."

Khaya: "With what?"

She: "The orgasm." I laughed then stopped.

Khaya: "Wait... What?"

She: "Is there a problem?"

Khaya: "Sikhosan-"

She: "Please stop calling me that."

Khaya: "I don't know your name."

She: "Nkwenkwezi."

Khaya: "Right, Nkwenkwezi. Is that why you're here?"

Nkwe: "Yes."

Khaya: "I don't know why you'd think..." I sighed. "That's not gonna happen, princess."

Nkwe: "This is getting boring. Khaya-"

Khaya: "No. This will only be bad for me."

Nkwe: "Who will know?" I looked at her guard like she didn't just bring in a whole human into my house. "Oh don't mind him. He doesn't talk."

Khaya: "What does that mean?"

Nkwe: "He lost his tongue...in an accident."

Khaya: "He can writ-"

Nkwe: "Illiterate."

Khaya: "You chose him specifically because you knew he can't do anything but defend you."

Nkwe: "If that's how you want to put it but I know you won't hurt me. He's only here because I'm not allowed to be in a place outside the palace without supervision." I started to laugh, only out of shock. This person was insane.

Khaya: "Nkwenkwezi, why couldn't you just ask me out like a normal person? Why this?"

Nkwe: "Where would I be asking you out to? I don't want to go anywhere." Oh dear God.

Khaya: "On a date. To get to know me."

Nkwe: "Oh. I don't want to date you though. That would be a complete waste of time."

Khaya: "Have you had sex before?"

Nkwe: "With who Khaya? Be realistic."

Khaya: "Oh, so you want me dead dead. What do you think will happen when your family finds this out?"

Nkwe: "What will they do? It's not like they're using my vagina."

Khaya: "No, Nkwenkwezi. I'll be on the chopping block. Literally. I would be beheaded. I'm not a prince, I can't marry you after I've deflowered you."

Nkwe: "Who will tell them it was you?"

Khaya: "No." She sighed.

Nkwe: "Okay then. Fine." She stood up, taking her bag. I had to avoid looking at her curvy body in those jeans, her white shirt tucked on one side.

Khaya: "Nkwenkwezi." She looked at me. "Don't.. Don't do this again. Men are different creatures. It's not safe for you especially because of your value. You're a gorgeous woman. Don't sell yourself short like this."

She: "Why do you think I chose you? Khaya. I know what men are. Why is it selling myself short when I am being honest about what I want and when? Especially because of my val- Who do you think is betting on me right now? No one is interested because they're all scared of my father. Why is it bad, as a woman, to ask for sex? Yet you can walk into a bar scoop the first girl that bats her cheap lashes and it's a victory. I'm wrong because I met you, checked your background and came to you?"

Khaya: "What background?"

Nkwe: "Don't worry." She walked to the door. It opened, Mngqobi walking in.

Mngqobi: "Honestly, I don't get women. Yazi-" he stopped in his tracks. "Princess Sikhosana." She walked past him with her guard. He waited until the elevator doors closed. "KHAYA!!!"

Khaya: "I found her here."

Mngqobi: "Why?? Why would she just come here?" He gasped. "You're dating her? Khaya, she's a Sikhosana!!!"

Khaya: "I'm not dating her. We were just having a conversation. Nothing happened."

Mngqobi: "So what does she want?" Her words really stuck with me. Did no one want her? Really? That's insane. I'd think royals from other nations are putting in the highest bids. Her family name was so powerful. She herself was stunning.

Khaya: "Uhm, not much. Just having a chat about...business."

Mngqobi: "You're going to make a horrible lawyer. Get your things, we have to go home." I really needed to speak to Zwe. I was now confused. Something about this rude princess tickled me. Zwe would advise. He's the only person who won't judge me.

## MTHUNZI'S POV\_

It was Sunday afternoon. I was sitting on my couch Busi lay on my lap, we were watching a movie. We'd spent the morning and early afternoon decorating the living room. She looked very satisfied with how it looked now.

Busi: "Babe, before I forget, please come home with the vitamins tomorrow. I've only got like two days left."

Mthunzi: "Okay my love. Uhm, do they give you the same ones all the time?"

Busi: "Yes, usually. I've only changed them once."

Mthunzi: "Why is that?"

Busi: "Too much vitamin C and iron supplements got me sick. Started affecting my hormones as well."

Mthunzi: "That's horrible."

Busi: "Oh, it was. But I keep a close eye on it now."

Mthunzi: "That's good." I brushed her hair staring at the movie.

Busi: "I think I want to nap. Do you want to join me?" She sat up, looking mischievous.

Mthunzi: "I would love to but I need to check on something really quick. I will be back soon."

Busi: "Okay. I'll wait for you in bed. Don't be too long, or else I'll have to start without you." She kissed my lips and walked to the bedroom. I was so tempted to leave this for tomorrow but I couldn't. I dialed Zwelethu. It was risky involving my friend but I could get an intern from him, willing to do anything and also keep the confidentiality.

Zwe: "Dark Knight."

Mthunzi: "Let go of this name before I find you a nickname you don't like." He chuckled.

Zwe: "Do your worst. What's up?"

Mthunzi: "Do you have any intern that I can consult?"

Zwe: "You can talk to me. I'm available."

Mthunzi: "I know you're busy with the hospital construction. I don't mind just an intern."

Zwe: "Don't be silly. We're friends. Tell you what, let's meet up at Sboni's bar by the beach line. You know it right? We'll talk and have a drink. See you in 30." He hung up. This would be difficult if Zwe is handling it. My friend will ask a billion questions.

I arrived at the club. It was still closed but Zwe's car was outside. I walked up and in. He was sitting on one of the couches, using his phone.

Mthunzi: "Prince Zwe."

Zwe: "Lord Mthunzi." He smiled. "How are you doing?"

Mthunzi: "You saw me this morning, I'm fine."

Zwe: "Why then do you need a doctor? I came all the way here." I took a beer from the fridge and sat with him

Mthunzi: "I told you, you didn't have to."

Zwe: "Why do you need a doctor then?"

Mthunzi: "Uhm...this is a bit of a sensitive topic. Busi and I are trying to have a baby."

Zwe: "Really? That's great news."

Mthunzi: "Yeah well, I'm a bit worried. I wanted something to help us so that it happens quicker."

Zwe: "Like what? Fertility pills?"

Mthunzi: "No. Vitamins. That are high in vitamin C and iron. Turns out I need a prescription." He chuckled.

Zwe: "No, you don't. Chemists usually have those."

Mthunzi: "Yeah, these are the ones recommended by her doctor." I gave him the list.

Zwe: "Oh. These are difficult to find and also, what conditions does she have? I think it's better if I check her first and be sure these will be safe."

Mthunzi: "She's been taking them for a few months. I don't want to upset her, I've already delayed too long in picking these up." He laughed.

Zwe: "Husband problems are many. Okay, I'll get these for you by morning."

Mthunzi: "Thanks Zwe."

Zwe: "Anyway, I also wanted to talk to you. Nkosi is getting married. In two weeks will be his lobola. By royal standards, she will leave her

homestead as his wife. The official wedding, for the nation, will be possibly a month after that. So I wanted us to do something for him. Not really a Bachelor's party but just a regular hang. Get him some gifts as his friends."

Mthunzi: "That's a fantastic idea. I think he'll love this."

Zwe: "Same hangout as last night or something different?"

Mthunzi: "Something different. Let's go camping for one night. Nkosi loves being in nature. He will be the happiest person on earth if he could spend one night there." We laughed.

Zwe: "I'll organize it. Anything you recommend."

Mthunzi: "I'll send the coordinates of the woods he likes and a list of products to get."

Zwe: "Perfect. Hey, would you and wifey like to come over for dinner tonight? Mama Biyela is making a special roast."

Mthunzi: "I'd love to but Busi wouldn't want to sit at a table with your brother." He chuckled.

Zwe: "Sibonelo is a menace. Sorry about that. Maybe I should do a dinner at my house, with my own wife so you can come then."

Mthunzi: "Yoh, that will be years from now. You know what actually? This is the perfect time for you to go out on dates. Since you're not working, let's get you out there and seeing people."

Zwe: "Oh hell no."

Mthunzi: "Zwelethu, you never leave that hospital. Ever. Now that it's closed for a bit, you can afford a few dates. Where is that lady you like? The one who's cooking class you attended?"

Zwe: "Zoe, she's around. Somehow scared of me. I have no idea why."

Mthunzi: "Did you ask her out?"

Zwe: "Twice now, she refused."

Mthunzi: "Wow. That's rude." He laughed.

Zwe: "The perfect woman will come into my life when I least expect it. I don't want to plan it, I want to stumble, forget words, and be as hopeless as Nkosi is. That's the type of relationship I need. Someone who will just

jumble my brain, ngizithole sengimnika isibhedlela sami." (Finding myself handing over my hospital to her.) We laughed.

Mthunzi: "No, I hear you." His phone rang.

Zwe: "Ei uSibonelo. Now he's ready to bother me. His mother is probably busy."

Mthunzi: "Let me leave you, my Prince. I'll see you tomorrow."

Zwe: "Sure thing, my friend." I walked out the club, driving toward home. I stopped by the florist and picked up some flowers. Only a few businesses were open, this being one of them. I got home, parking in my spot and getting out of the car. The guards were patrolling the yard as usual. I went to the front door, but it was locked. Okay, that's new. Busi never locks the door. There's military guards all around the yard. I unlocked and walked in slowly, pulling the gun out my waist. I placed the flowers on the table and went to the bedroom. I could here mumbling and sniffing. I pulled the safety off my gun, opening my bedroom door. She was on her knees, praying and crying. What the hell?

Mthunzi: "Busi." She jumped, staring at me then ran up to me. "What's happening?" All windows and curtains were locked.

Busi: "Something is wrong Mthunzi. Something is very wrong." She wiped her tears. I looked through the bedroom for any sign of danger.

Mthunzi: "What do you mean? There's nobody here." I was still very confused. I thought someone was holding my wife hostage or threatening her life.

Busi: "A guard walked up to the window and stared in. Right here. From our bedroom. He stood there and stared at me."

Mthunzi: "So why is the windows and doors locked, love?"

Busi: "He asked me to let him in." ....

Chapter 92

MTHUNZI'S POV\_

This was too familiar. I needed to understand what exactly happened.

Mthunzi: "Did you open?"

Busi: "No, I locked the doors instead. It's the way he said it. I don't know Mthunzi,. I felt a shiver down my spine. Like something was wrong. That's why I'm praying, I don't what it is. Maybe he wanted to harm me. I don't know." I hugged her.

Mthunzi: "Do you know which guard it was?"

Busi: "I haven't seen him before, I just thought he's new. He's wearing the same uniform as Nkosi's guards." Fuck.

Mthunzi: "Baby, I'll sort this out. Stay here in the bedroom." I walked back out the house, scanning through my guards. There was no sign of him. All through the yard. None of the other guards saw him either. I know Busi isn't lying. I know this because I didn't even tell her about last night so she has no way of knowing. I dialed Nkosi's number.

Nkosi: "Hello."

Mthunzi: "Hey Nkosi. Uhm... I think the witch came to my house."

Nkosi: "The healer is still here in the city. I'll bring him over."

Mthunzi: "Thanks." He hung up. I went back into the house. Busi was holding her bible, already rattled.

Busi: "Did you find him?" I shook my head.

Mthunzi: "I'm sorry my love. I'll get to the bottom of this."

Busi: "We need to ask a pastor to come here and pray for our house. I haven't been to church in weeks, maybe I'm being punished."

Me: "You're not being punished baby. I'll tell you everything later. Nkosi is on his way."

Busi: "No offence but can he pray?" I laughed. "This is not the time for jokes Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "I'm sorry baby. Let's not worry too much. Can I get you some water?"

Busi: "Yes please." I got her a bottle from the fridge. "Can I also get my pills? I'm spiraling." I took her bottle of pills, giving her two." We sat on

the couch, with her cuddled in my arms. Nkosi arrived in 20 minutes. I got up to open for him. The healer walked in behind Thembisa.

Busi: "Your Highness." She bowed. "Mthunzi what's going on?"

Mthunzi: "I want to check the house my love. There's a witch, who had approached us. She used the body of a dead girl. I think this guard may be her as well." She laughed. "Busi-"

Busi: "No!! I asked for a pastor. Not .... whatever this is."

Mthunzi: "This is a healer and he can help determine the energy in house."

Busi: "Mthunzi I don't believe in this stuff and it's making me very uncomfortable that it has to happen in my house. I'm a Christian. I believe in prayer."

Mthunzi: "Your pastor will not be able to control a powerful witch Busi!!" She stared at me, confused.

Busi: "And this guy, can?"

Mthunzi: "This is my house too. I need you to be safe and for that to happen, he has to be here and assess this house, giving us protection."

Busi: "Mthunzi, that person was impersonating a guard, he is probably a serial killer or serial rapist. Not a witch. He was a human. A man. Standing at my window. A witch would've barged in."

Mthunzi: "Then why were you praying??"

Busi: "To keep myself safe until you returned!"

Mthunzi: "You thought crying secret words to an imaginary being in the sky would save you from a serial killer?"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi!!"

Mthunzi: "I can't. Honestly." I walked out, taking a cigarette from the car, lighting it and smoking. What if this thing was following me? Or any one of us? We all got the protection from the healer. So what happened? Nkosi stood in front of me.

Nkosi: "You're smoking."

Mthunzi: "Yes."

Nkosi: "You only smoke when you're stressed."

Mthunzi: "I lost it a bit in there."

Nkosi: "I saw. Thembisa is talking to her. I didn't want her to feel like I'm pressuring her because I'm a future king. So rather, someone who can understand her concerns and calm her down."

Mthunzi: "Thank you."

Nkosi: "What is stressing you?"

Mthunzi: "I thought we were protected. What if this spirit followed me here?"

Nkosi: "You are protected. Your house and wife aren't. That's why it disappeared before you got here. Is it the girl still?"

Mthunzi: "No. She says it was a guard. She didn't recognize him. Apparently he stood at the window and asked to be let in."

Nkosi: "It's a good thing she didn't. Would've been a mess." I finished my cigarette, throwing it on the floor.

Mthunzi: "Let's go in." We walked in the house.

Sasa: "I'm sorry you had to go through that Busi. I understand why this is uncomfortable for you. Will it be better that we're here? Nothing that is done will cause you harm. I can sit next to you and hold your hand."

Busi: "No cutting and blood things."

Sasa: "I promise, nothing of the sort. The first process is determining if this spirit somehow seeped in and invaded your body without your consent or knowledge. The healer will give you something to lick then you spit it out. After that, he will burn a herb around the house. That is all. We can have a prayer afterwards."

Busi: "Okay." Thank goodness. The healer got on his knees on the cloth he lay down and prepared his things.

Healer: "Sondelani Ndlunkulu." They both knelt on the floor. Busi followed the instructions, licking and spitting into the bowl. The healer burnt the herb. After, then mixed his herbs, they were different than the ones he used on us.

Sasa: "Thokoza Mkhulu." I know she was about to ask. Nkosi found a gem here.

Healer: "Intokazi ingumuntu onesiphiwo. Ngidinga into eqinile njengaye, engeke imbambezele." (This lady is gifted. I need something as strong as her, that will not slow her down.) He looked at Busi then looked at me. What did he mean? He smeared the herbs on her. "Isizathu sokuthi ungalali kahle yingoba ucashela abantu bakini. Bayazi ukuthi ulimele, bafuna ukusiza." (The reason you don't sleep well is because you are hiding from your people. They know you are hurt, they want to help.) He got up, finished and packing his things. I know this was heavy for my wife, I needed to prepare her space so she can be adjusted back to her comfort. I walked to the bedroom.

Healer: "Ungambulali." I looked back at him. He was still tying up his things, not looking at anyone. Was he speaking to me?

1 WEEK AND 5 DAYS LATER

SASA'S POV\_

I have been home for a couple of days now. It was the day before my negotiations and I was more anxious than nervous. I wasn't allowed outside the house since I arrived. At all. Not even to check the chickens. I couldn't even peep out the window. As if Nkosi didn't put 10 heavily armed guards in our yard, apart from the other 3 that guarded my parents. I only knew what was happening outside because of Zanele. The village was a chaos. Everyone wanted to know what was happening in our home. The guards had alarmed everyone. My mother was enjoying the secret more than anything I've ever seen. Her phone rang relentlessly and she refused to put it on silent but never answered. Everytime it rings, she laughs and tells us who is calling. I was going insane. Zanele wasn't allowed to go to school either until Monday. She was happy about this part. She sat with me in my room, reading the Facebook group of the village.

Nele: "Everyone is still confused, they say father must have won the lotto so he needs the guards." I laughed.

Me: "That's the best one this far." Unlike the city, here in the village nobody knew the guards colours represented a certain royal house. To

everyone, a guard is a guard. Also maybe they didn't expect Nkosi would marry a commoner.

Nele: "The chief wants to come over. He's been calling dad."

Me: "He only wants gossip for his wife. What happened to your boyfriend?"

Nele: "Oh I dumped him back then when the whole thing of the pictures happened. I also blocked him."

Me: "That's good. You deserve much better than that person."

Nele: "Yes. After living with you and your husband to be, it's hard to want anything less." She laughed. Mama walked in my room.

Mama: "Hello girls."

Me: "Hello mama."

Nele: "Hello ma."

Mama: "I want to talk to you Thembisa. Zanele please give us a minute." Zanele walked out and closed the door, mama sat down. "This conversation was passed on to me by my aunt's. It is very important to remember." Here we go again. "Thembisa, I don't have to remind you that you are marrying a future King. This man has to be your first priority. Not his mother, not his father. Him and only him. You take his side, even when he is wrong. You correct him in the bedroom. Out in public or in front of others, you stand by him. Thembisa you do not shout at a man. The same way he will not shout at you, nawe you offer him the same grace. Never sleep angry, Thembisa. Never sleep in another room. Even in conflict, your husband must know your comfort. Tonight is the last night you sleep as a virgin. From tomorrow, your husband must eat Themb-"

Me: "Mama. No, please. I'm begging you."

Mama: "You will beg me until you cry. You have to hear it from me. What do your friends know about sex when they themselves are still figuring out where to look."

Me: "It doesn't matter, mama. I'll learn along the way."

Mama: "Fine. As long as you understand, your husband can never be hungry. Not while you still live. You can't be tired. Your conflict should be

put aside in the bedroom because your parts are not fighting. You can resume conflict after." Oh bawo. What did I do to deserve this?

Me: "I understand mama."

Mama: "Good. Also, you do not discuss your home issues with your friends. Never ever do that Thembisa. Never talk about your husband to friends. Whether good things or bad. Your husband is yours alone. The nice things he does to you are for you only. Next thing you'll find your friend frequenting your house kanti ufuna ukuva lento imnandi. Don't do that Thembisa."

Me: "I understand mama."

Mama: "Good. Tomorrow very early in the morning is your ceremony. Oh Thembisa ndicela nje ungandiphoxi mntanam. Oh ungandenzi ntlekisa. If kukho into enondiphoxa, itsho ngoku ndingahlekwa ziintshaba Thembisa." (Oh Thembisa, please don't embarrass me. Please don't make me a laughing stock. If there's a chance you can embarrass me, say it now so that my enemies don't laugh at me.)

Me: "I promise mama. I am still a virgin. We haven't done anything."

Mama: "Good. Yuh. Umbilini uyohla ekseni. Let me have some tea." (Nerves will decrease in the morning). Her phone rang. She looked at it and giggles. "Nanku Maduna. Do you remember when her child was graduating, they did the biggest party and we weren't invited? Haha!!" I giggled. This woman.

## PRINCE POV\_

I was in a meeting with the council. It has been a good almost two weeks of work. The city was back to normal and a close eye was kept on the other royals. The witch had gone quiet too and we've decided to deal with her after this weekend. Our lives won't just stop because of one person who has nothing going on for her or him. Whatever they is. Tomorrow was the day Thembisa would officially be my wife. I couldn't even focus. The anticipation and excitement had gripped me by the toes.

King: "Are you still here Mehluli?"

Nkosi: "Yes, I'm listening."

King: "Looks like you're on drugs."

Nkosi: "Let's focus on work father. I have a new proposal for the council."

Biyela: "What is it, My Prince?"

Nkosi: "For years, the main royal council has been the heads of royal families. Specifically males. If we are running a country, I think it would be beneficial to include women for representation of issues we as men do not have a clue about."

King: "We might as well also ask toddlers!! Mehluli, what is wrong with you?? We are the heads of our families for a reason!! If everyone has a say, it will be chaos!!"

Nkosi: "I'm going to need you to breathe, and calm down." He huffed in anger. "Thembisa joined the council meeting and even made a judgement, encouraged by you. If she's strong enough, I think adding her and a few more women in the seats would work well for our country."

King: "ARE YOU INSANE!!!"

Nkosi: "There's no reason for that father."

King: "Mehluli why do you disrespect my throne so much? Why do you hate me?"

Nkosi: "This has nothing to do with you father. I am including you in the decision but understand that this is something we all have to vote for and you're not going to threaten your way!!"

King: "You just want that girl next to you at every turn. That's all this is. You think my court is a damn love nest! This council stays as is!"

Nkosi: "You don't get to decide that."

King: "I just did. Try and see what happens." He got up and stormed off.

Biyela: "I think I should speak to him."

Nkosi: "Not yet, King Biyela. I'll speak to my father when he's calm. He just needs time. Have we concluded all business for the week?"

Sibo: "Yes, Your Highness."

Nkosi: "Good. As we all know, tomorrow I'm getting married, so I will not be available for the next week. I trust that the country will be in safe

hands with you all. My father will of course still be available and I do believe for the most part, he does want the best for the nation at large. This proposal will be addressed again, once I've spoken to him and gotten something out of him at least. Let us put it aside for now. Thank you royal council." We packed our documents. I had a few more meetings with Mthunzi that I needed to conclude before the end of the day. I'd only be traveling to Mthinomkhulu very early in the morning.

Zwe: "Nkosi. What time do you finish your meetings today?" I looked at Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "Probably around 6."

Zwe: "Perfect. I'll see you then."

Nkosi: "For what?"

Zwe: "I have a surprise for you."

Nkosi: "I don't like surprises."

Zwe: "I know you'll love this one." Maybe he was taking me to the beach again. How though because the lockdown was lifted? The streets have been literally buzzing with activity. I trusted Zwe. If there was someone who knew exactly what I liked, it was him and Mthunzi.

Nkosi: "Alright. I'll see you then."

By the end of the day I was back in the palace. I'd been summoned home a week ago so I had to stay here until of course I come home with my wife. I went up to my room and took a shower, the only memo I got from Mthunzi was to be in hiking gear. Perhaps we'd be in the mountain. I got dressed and walked out. Amahle stood in front of me.

Nkosi: "Hello."

Ama: "Follow me." I followed her into her room. Her custom made Persian rug had been removed and only a grass mat lay on the floor. On it, was a burning herb and small bowls with stuff in it.

Nkosi: "Is the healer here?"

Ama: "No. I was instructed in my sleep this past week. Take off your shoes." I took off my shoes.

Nkosi: "You were instructed to do what?"

Ama: "To tie you for extra protection. These are herbs and plants that the healer doesn't even know of. I had to go into the woods, to search for them. Apparently they are of the same caliber as our enemy."

Nkosi: "The witch."

Ama: "I'm not sure if she will appear soon but in case she does, she won't even want to come anywhere near you or the people near you. Kneel."

Nkosi: "What does it do?" I knelt on the mat.

Ama: "Intensifies your power. Those that mean you harm will cower away in absolute fear. The gods will surround you, their power emanating off of you." She took one bowl, taking some off the paste applying it on my palms. "Rub it on your head." I rubbed the substance on my head. She took a blade, making two small incision on each wrist then applied another. She lit a herb letting it burn. The smoke came straight toward me, surrounding my body. She stood up.

Ama: "Perfect. I can already feel it." She shivered.

Nkosi: "How long does it last? I don't want to scare Thembisa tomorrow."

Ama: "I didn't ask."

Nkosi: "Okay. Thank you."

Ama: "Not even halfway done." I let her work on me. To be honest, I did feel an intense difference. Every sense in me heightened, my blood sizzled under my skin, the muscles strengthened. "There. Done. Please don't fight your father. In fact, avoid him altogether until you get to Mthinomkhulu. You need to marry Thembisa. We've waited long enough."

Nkosi: "I won't touch him."

Ama: "Okay then. You can continue with your evening." I stood up.

Nkosi: "You're coming tomorrow?"

Ama: "Wouldn't miss it for the world." I smiled, walking out. I went down the stairs and just my luck, my father came through from the lounge. He stood and stared at me suspiciously.

King: "What have you done?"

Nkosi: "Nothing." He sniffed around me.

King: "Have you been to the healer?"

Nkosi: "No." He stared at me, squinting his eyes in suspicion.

King: "Where are you off to?"

Nkosi: "I'm meeting with Mthunzi."

King: "On the day before your negotiations?"

Nkosi: "Is there a rule that I can't go anywhere?"

King: "No." He continued to stare eventually letting loose. "Before I make a very long and unnecessary trip. Have you organised that the gogo tests this girl of yours before we leave here?"

Nkosi: "There's no need for that, I haven't slept with Thembisa. I know she's a virgin."

King: "Just because you haven't slept with her doesn't mean no one has."

Nkosi: "You're a bitter old man, you know that? When will it end? Whether or not Thembisa is a virgin, which she is, I'm still going to make her my wife. I'm still going to be happy and in love with her. She is more important to me than this throne you care so much about yet it doesn't even afford you love."

King: "Are you disrespecting the throne, my boy?"

Nkosi: "What will you do, father? Replace me?" I walked to the exit.

King: "You seem to forget that once her bride price is paid she will be a Sikhosana bride, right? By end of the day tomorrow, she will belong to the Sikhosana family." I turned to look at him.

Nkosi: "What are you trying to say?" Amahle came down the stairs.

King: "I'm not trying Mehluli. You think I can't replace you? Unfriendly reminder, she is treasure blood. This time, I'll make a proper King. Just Like. Me."

Chapter 93

PRINCE POV\_

Amahle held me back with difficulty. Her screaming was not registering in my head.

Ama: "Nkosinhle!!!" I pinned him against the wall.

Nkosi: "If you so much as breath near her. It will be the end of you. I don't fucking care where I end up, I will kill you with my own bare hands!!"

Nobantu: "What the hell is going on??"

Nolwazi: "Mehluli!!!" I let go of him.

Nkosi: "I will kill you Sikhosana." I walked out the house, my body immediately catching flames. I switched them off, Mthunzi was waiting out by the car.

Mthunzi: "Let's go." We got in the car and drove off. "You want to talk about-"

Nkosi: "Oh Mthunzi, don't make me turn this car around!!!" I screamed. "The fucking nerve of that man? No, the gods must truly hate me because I'm going to fucking kill him!!"

Mthunzi: "What happened."

Nkosi: "I don't think I have the mental strength to even recall how it started. But the short end? He threatened to replace me by raping my wife."

Mthunzi: "Jesus Christ." My whole body was shaking, a growl crawling from the pits of my soul.

Nkosi: "I don't know if I can wait till tomorrow to leave. If I'm closer to her, the quicker I can respond."

Mthunzi: "Security around Thembisa is tight right now. None of the guards are part of the throne. This is fully your security, only loyal to you. I'll even have the helicopter ready. Don't let your father disturb your thoughts, you know he's only trying to poke at you." I hissed staring out of the window. My vision blurred to thoughts of Thembisa just to calm myself down. My father will not be anywhere near her. I trusted the security around her, it may seem excessive but it was necessary.

Nkosi: "I'm not in the mood for company Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "I know, my king. This is why this is perfect." We drove into the woods. I enjoyed walking around these woods. They felt more home than any other. So maybe this might not be so bad. We parked the car, two more cars were here. Zwe and the other princes. I got out walking to them. All of them stepped back.

Mthunzi: "Surprise."

Nkosi: "This isn't a surprise. I know exactly where we are."

Zwe: "Why is he in a bad mood?"

Mthunzi: "Long story. Nkosi, we'll be staying here all night. We're putting a tent. Making a fire. Also, I know you don't like to eat the animals you chase so I got meat from the butchery we can cook on the fire." I looked at him.

Nkosi: "All night?"

Mthunzi: "Yep." I smiled. "Go ahead." I bolted to the left, running at full speed. I stepped on a rock, flipping forward but transformed into my tiger launching myself into the air and landing on the ground to continued running. I roared loudly. This was incredible.

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

Zwe had invited us to Nkosi's bachelor party. I was a bit skeptical at first because he drove straight into the woods. I was suspicious already.

Zwe: "Alright, princes. Please get the stuff out the car."

Mnqobi: "Why are we here Bhut Zwe?"

Zwe: "We're camping for the night. It's Nkosi's bachelor party."

Khaya: "Oh that's cool. I haven't done that."

Mnqobi: "You'll enjoy it. Bhuti, will we be doing it prince camp style?"

Zwe: "The grown version of it, yes."

Sibo: "There's no signal here."

Zwe: "Yes Sboni. Your brain needs a break from technology."

Sibo: "That can't work, I own a telecoms company that needs me to be available at any time."

Zwe: "Your company is in good hands. Your father won't let it run to the ground. Grab a beer." I sighed. Another car drove toward us and parked. Nkosi got out, walking to us. I shivered in my skin at the sight of him. He looked pissed and ready to rip someone's head off their neck.

Mthunzi: "Surprise."

Nkosi: "This isn't a surprise. I know exactly where we are."

Zwe: "Why is he in a bad mood?"

Mthunzi: "Long story. Nkosi, we'll be staying here all night. We're putting a tent. Making a fire. Also, I know you don't like to eat the animals you chase so I got meat from the butchery we can cook on the fire." I looked at Zwe. We were supposed to spend time with someone who was this angry and dangerous? In the woods? ALL NIGHT? In no time, I heard him taking off. Running at full speed. He was blistering through air I thought he'd catch on fire. Then again, that wouldn't even hurt him because it's his power.

Mthunzi: "Young princes, please grab those poles. Let's start mounting up the tent while we still have some light." A loud roar frightened my soul out my body. HELLL NOO!

Mnqobi: "What the fuck was that? Are there bears here?"

Khaya: "It sounded more like a lion or tiger. Bhut Zwe, I don't think we're safe here."

Zwe: "You'll be fine. I promise."

Mnqobi: "We just heard a roar, Bhut Zwe!"

Zwe: "We have guns. We'll be fine boys. Keep working." They followed Mthunzi, helping him set up. I stared at Zwe.

Sibo: "I'm taking them home." I hissed.

Zwe: "No, you won't. Nkosi won't harm anyone-"

Sibo: "He's in a horrible mood and I just watched him transform into a damn wolf!"

Zwe: "He's not a wolf. He's a tiger."

Sibo: "That fucking enormous?? Zwe, stay if you want. That's your friend. I'm not putting our brothers in danger. You'll find us at home."

Zwe: "Sibonelo come on, you knew Nkosi. You knew he could change."

Sibo: "That doesn't mean I want to be in his territory when it happens Zwelethu. I don't want the boys to see that either!"

Zwe: "They didn't see anything-"

Sibo: "They heard it and they're terrified! They think a fucking lion is loose in the same place they'll be sleeping in."

Zwe: "Would you rather they saw their king transform into one??"

Sibo: "Exactly why they should leave."

Zwe: "Sibonelo please. Nkosi needs this. He needs us. Sure he's going through something, but he would never harm any of us. Please. I just wanted all of us to hang out and enjoy the night together. Please Sboni?" I folded my arms, not yet convinced. I've watched horror movies but this? This was way worse than anything I've ever seen. "Please trust me my brother."

Sibo: "Fine." If I didn't trust anyone, I had to trust my brother. I know he will never put me in danger. If he says, I should stay then I suppose we'll have to find a way to shield these two from more questions.

Zwe: "Thank you. Let me get you a beer." He walked to the car. I stared down the path Nkosi had disappeared to and shook my head trying to focus on the present. I looked at my currently useless phone. Jimmy was ghosting me. Since that Sunday, I hadn't seen her again. I've tried calling, emailing, even going to the res I wasn't allowed in. She claimed to be busy at every stage and I refuse to keep begging. Zwe handed me a beer. We built up the tent we'll be in, I doubt I will get sleep. I wonder if Nkosi will come back. We finished the tent before it got dark. Mthunzi started a fire. I sat on a log, still nervous. The boys were talking about school, Zwe talked to Mthunzi. He looked over at me and came to sit down.

Zwe: "Hey."

Sibo: "Hi."

Zwe: "You've been sulking a bit these days. What's happening?"

Sibo: "Nothing."

Zwe: "I'll let you smoke with me if you tell me." I looked at him.

Sibo: "I didn't bring any." He reached in his pocket, taking out a perfectly rolled joint. I laughed. "Thats unlike you."

Zwe: "Only this once. Light up." I took it and lit up the blunt taking a deep inhale then handed to him.

Sibo: "This thing with Zimasa. I broke a rule and I knew I'd fucked up but I was thinking with my dick then."

Zwe: "What happened?" He took a puff.

Sibo: "She refuses to pitch up for a meeting. She insists on online meetings only as if she lives in a different country. Anytime I need to discuss our business, she sends an email requesting a fucking Skype meeting."

Zwe: "I mean, she's not wrong. Maybe she's busy with school work and can't afford to go in and out of res."

Sibo: "She's definitely avoiding me. The minute I conclude our meeting, she hangs up. It is highly irritating."

Zwe: "Is it irritating because you thought she would beg you?"

Sibo: "No."

Zwe: "Yes."

Sibo: "She's playing hard to get. She wants me to beg and go all out on grand gestures. It's not going to happen."

Zwe: "So what will you do?"

Sibo: "I'm done dancing to her tune. She's an adult, if she doesn't want to physically show up for the next meeting I'm taking an additional 20% share in our business."

Zwe: "Absolutely fucking not Sibonelo! You're not going to bully this girl because you want attention. No."

Sibo: "I can't do business with a childish person."

Zwe: "Oh, so you can sleep with a childish person? You fucked this up Sibonelo. You can't be playing happy house with someone's daughter and then decide to kick her aside when you damn well please and embarrass her no less."

Sibo: "But Zwe I don't want people in my house."

Zwe: "Was she not in your house the whole week? Why didn't you communicate that then? Why tell her in front of her friends?" Yoh, sometimes my brother's psych is designed just to defend women. Siblo: "So I was wrong by asking her to go to her place?"

Zwe: "Why are you pretending to be stupid? You could have communicated this on Friday or during the week. You know your schedule, you know you love hanging out with your mom on Sundays. You knew you wouldn't be home. Yet you left it till the last minute."

Sibo: "Okay, so how do I fix it then?"

Zwe: "Beg her." I laughed.

Sibo: "Uyasangana ke manje. Me? No thanks. I'm not begging for pussy."

Zwe: "And that's all you see from her?"

Sibo: "Zwelethu, now I must force myself to be in love?"

Zwe: "Mxim." He drank his beer. Sure I really liked Zimmy but I wasn't yet looking for a wife. I wasn't even sure I wanted a girlfriend. "You're going to lose this girl and you will regret it just like you do Sienna."

Sibo: "Yoh, Nkulunkulu ka Sienna. We're back there."

Zwe: "Let's not be disrespect, I'm warning you Sibonelo. You're old. You're successful enough to start your life. Your mother won't be here forever to cuddle you to sleep."

Sibo: "What does that have to do with anything now? You're pushing me to marry so I can leave my mother alone?"

Mthunzi: "No man guys. You can't be fighting now."

Zwe: "Leave her alone ngani?? She's married to your father!"

Mthunzi: "Zwelethu."

Sibo: "This has nothing to do with uBaba-"

Mthunzi: "HEY!!!" I looked at him. "What the hell? Find something to do and calm the hell down. Manje nizobe nishayana ngezibhakela."

Zwelethu stared at me. I looked back at him. He burst into laughter. I hate him.

Sibo: "Mxim." I smiled.

Zwe: "You want to grow old in your mother's bed?"

Sibo: "And what's wrong with that?" I snapped.

Zwe: "Eh. I'll leave you be then." It's not like I didn't want to marry, obviously I would, one day. That day is not this year or next. I won't tie myself down. "But at least apologize to Zimasa. You know better."

Sibo: "I will apologize, I promise."

Zwe: "Okay. Tomorrow we leave early, you'll go with one of the boys."

Sibo: "I'll take Khaya. Mngqobi can ride with father. You'll be with the King?" He looked at Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "No ways, Zwelethu. I'm with Nkosi. I can't be in a car with the King and Nkosi can't either."

Zwe: "It's likely that he'll ride alone anyway. We don't have to worry about that yet."

Sibo: "Is the prince coming back anytime soon?"

Zwe: "Unlikely." The boys came to sit down with us, having a drink. "We haven't had time to catch up. Khaya, what's up with you?"

Khaya: "Nothing Bhut Zwe." He sipped his non alcoholic beer.

Zwe: "What about the princess?"

Khaya: "Bhut Zwe." He hissed.

Zwe: "Well?"

Khaya: "Well, since I blocked her that day she hasn't reached out. I don't know if I was harsh."

Zwe: "You set a boundary, Khaya. That wasn't harsh, she broke into your house."

Khaya: "Then why do I feel bad?"

Zwe: "You see Sibonelo? You don't notice this pattern?"

Sibo: "How did this suddenly become my lecture?"

Zwe: "It is definitely your lecture because you've done exactly what this princess did. You instill a fear in your conquest so that they're scared of you. Once you've invaded their space, you size yourself down, tricking

them in thinking you're not that bad. They've already made the decision that they're uncomfortable and they voice that because they know it's a right thing to do. What do you do? You let them go and pretend to leave them alone. They then feel bad that they were the mean one. The next time you approach, no matter how well meaning, they will accept your advance because now you've shown you're good. But you're actually not. It's an abusive strategy. You may not see it, but that's exactly what it is. Your brother is proof."

Sibo: "But I didn't break into someone's house and threaten them?"

Zwe: "Maybe you forgot but I'll remind you. Thembisa. You didn't invade her residence? You didn't-"

Sibo: "Okay. I apologized for that, Zwe. Why is it being brought up again?"

Zwe: "Because you're doing it again. You may not have threatened Jimmy but you lured her to you. You went to work in Khaya's apartment regularly and propositioned her. When she said no first, you retreated but not without icing her out and entertaining the possibility of being with other women. She fell right into the trap you set. Am I lying? Now that you got what you want, you're icing her again. When you want what you want again, you will force your way in like what you said by cutting 20% in her income. That's not abusive?" Okay this was embarrassing.

Sibo: "Why talk about this here Zwe? You wanted to embarrass me?"

Zwe: "You wouldn't be embarrassed if you didn't do it but we're all human and we make mistakes. I'm not perfect myself. I want to talk about this here because Mngqobi himself is about to be married, I am thinking to get married sometime in the future. I want us to have this open communication so that we can point each other in the right direction. One day I'll be the one to fuck up and I expect you to sit me down and tell me. And I'm not going to talk about these issues behind the young princes backs because they need to hear them from us and they need to learn from us. They can't be idolizing and copying our mistakes. Now, we have this situation with Khaya that he's refusing to speak about. I know that he's scared and I know he finds her attractive. As his brothers, we need to make sure that he's safe and doing what he consents to doing because if he was Zinhle, all hell would break loose. So no, I'm not embarrassing you. Young princes, you're grown now."

You've seen our ways and mistakes. Let's try our best, to not repeat them."

Mthunzi: "I hear that."

Khaya: "So what do I do then Bhut Zwe? How do I differentiate what I feel? How can I tell it's victim sympathy or actual attraction?"

Zwe: "This we can all walk through together. Right Sboni?"

Sibo: "Absolutely." It was a few hours of talking and drinking before I heard leaves. We'd become so comfortable, laughing and telling stories. The second I heard a crunch, we stilled. It was fully dark with only the fire burning. We looked all around, I spotted a pair of orange eyes. Mthunzi got up, went to the car. Nkosi walked closer to us and stood, still visibly pissed. His clothes in shreds. My heart was hammering in my chest, this man looked so dangerously angry. Mthunzi handed him clothes he changed into and he sat down. Zwe gave him a beer.

Zwe: "Okay, Mr Groom. It's time for your lecture now. Mthunzi, as the husband, the floor is yours." We laughed. Nkosi grinned, drinking his beer.

Nkosi: "Let's hear it." ...

## Chapter 94

### SASA POV\_

I was awake by 4 in the morning. My mother didn't miss a beat, she was singing loudly. It was impossible not to wake up. The only thing I'd asked for was a basin bath. I managed to wash my body and got dressed in a skirt. My mother helped me with the beads around my neck and wrists.

Me: "So what will happen from here mama?"

Mama: "I spoke to the wife of the chief last night. I told her we're having a ceremony for your virginity today and it would be ideal if she could make it. At first she had an attitude but I think she remembered that she's speaking to me and I'm currently the most famous woman in the village." I couldn't help but laugh. Honestly, I was on the floor. "Heee.

Laugh. But they all want to be here. They know you're getting married, but they don't know to who. OH, THEMBISA!!! I am the happiest woman in the world. I cannot WAIT to see the looks on their faces when a King walks into my house." She ululated and screamed. My father walked in.

Xolani: "What is the problem now?"

Mama: "I am so happy Xolani!! I can't even breath."

Xolani: "Well you'll have to. We have a long day today. Remember, you're not allowed to be in the living room when the negotiations happen."

Mama: "Xolani, please don't sell our daughter cheap. This test will prove that we raised her right. This is our only chance Xolani, don't call below 100 cows."

Me: "What!!! Mama, no!! That's ridiculously expensive."

Mama: "Thembisa you're a virgin, you're in second year university. Very smart girl. This is a royal family, how can you want less??"

Me: "I don't want Nkosi's money. I love him."

Mama: "Mntanam, that's beautiful. Love him very much but he must pay."

Xolani: "Ntombenhle, Thembisa is not a commodity that I am selling. These negotiations is merely a way of our families getting to know each other. I won't charge a million. That is very greedy."

Mama: "Xolani, this is the family that is running our country. They do not care."

Xolani: "No! The important thing today, is that Thembisa and Nkosi are joined in union. Let's focus on that. The money is not important."

Mama: "Yuh. Okay ke." She sulked.

Xolani: "Thembisa, are you ready? Remember, once you go in that hut, you cannot change your mind. Tell me right now, if there's something I should know."

Me: "Tata." I begged.

Xolani: "I'm only making sure. I don't want you embarrassed in front of the village."

Me: "I promise tata."

Xolani: "Okay my child." He walked out, my mother following him trying to give him more instructions. I looked at my phone, I'd just received a message from Nkosi. <Good morning Thembisa. I'm reminiscing of the first time I saw you. I was sitting in a club, my guards all around me. I was in a mentally dark place. All I had going for me, was that I'm the most powerful person in possibly our continent. I had abilities only known to my family. I had a life only known to me. I looked at you and immediately my interest focused in. Once you looked at me, I forgot that life. You captured me from that moment and you will have me for the rest of your conscience. In death and the next life. I found a soulmate in you. I love you so much. I want you to know I will love you forever. Once we reach forever, continue a lot longer than it. I cannot wait to be your husband. I cannot wait to wake up next to you for the rest of this life.> My heart softened to liquid. I responded: <I never thought I'd ever feel this connected to a person. You are the most perfect human I have ever met. You teach me so much without you knowing. I feel as though I am discovering life with you and it is the most adventurous, and most amazing time in my life. I love falling in love with you. I cannot wait to spend the rest of eternity with you. I love you with my heart and soul Nkosi yam enhle.> I sent it.

It was around 7 in the morning when I heard singing outside the gate I had prepared a lot of the food and finished. Two ladies, stood in the kitchen overseeing that the food stayed warm. The women of the village had come along with their daughters. This was very embarrassing for me because why would the whole village need to know my vaginal affairs? Couldn't it be a private thing? Not to my mother. She wanted the whole nation to know. She walked into my room with the Chief's wife.

Mama: "Thembisa, the gogo is here. She's ready for you. We have to cover your head when you walk to the hut." She put a blanket over my head, walking me out. The singing continued as we left the house. We headed to the little hut in the back. The anxiety. Outside the gate, the community had gathered, singing loudly. The funny thing is that, this wasn't a practice that was common in our village. So how they were excited and singing still confused me. I entered the hut. The gogo was there, waiting. She instructed me to lay down and I did. I knew that I hadn't had sex yet so why was I nervous? Why was I so scared to get a

different result? Once she finished, she got up, going to the lady who waited outside. I covered myself again. Why was it quiet? I didn't have sex. Would they believe me? Suddenly, a ululation sounded outside and cheers went off. I breathed a sigh of relief. Why was I so scared? I chuckled. I was let out the hut. My mother was screaming with joy. The chief's wife was beside herself with happiness. If they could, they'd carry me on their shoulders. The village was in high spirits, screaming and shouting.

I went into the house once again.

Xolani: "My child, you have made me so proud. You have made this entire village proud. You have set the standard for all young girls to preserve themselves. I am so proud of you Thembisa." I still wish for the day that this wasn't important. Our village already had a statutory rape problem. We don't know the root of it and I feel like this ceremony is spitting in the faces of victims in some way. I am being rewarded and celebrated for keeping a body part intact when others don't even have the protection I had. They didn't have a protective or present father.

Me: "Thank you Tata." The celebration went on outside. I'd gone back to my room, and had my tea and porridge for now. I was so bored honestly. The last time I spoke to Nkosi, was an hour ago and he was on the way here. My mother had then taken my phone. I was so anxious to speak to him and just tell him all that's on my mind. Yes it was our day but I wanted to talk about the future of our nation. With my King. That on its own, made me blush. The first time we sat down to know each other, I couldn't be sure we'd reach this point. I didn't think we would fall deeply in love. Zanele finally walked in my room.

Me: "Girl. I've been waiting for hours."

Nele: "Yoh, Thembisa. Outside is so lively. Everyone is so happy, man! All the girls in the village are singing happily. They're suspecting that you may be marrying someone from a rich family. Mama almost fainted with joy. I swear." I laughed. I'm so glad people were happy. The people in my village were, as I know them, peaceful. I'm sure there'll be a hint of jealousy which is normal but regardless, they will be very happy.

Me: "That's funny. I am so bored in here Nele. I don't know what to do. The last time I spoke to Nkosi, he had left Mountain Peak but didn't mention how long he would be."

Nele: "Sis, please be patient. If one thing is going to happen today, you're going home with your husband." She screamed. "I am so excited. Thembisa, you're about to be queen. That's HUGE."

Me: "Not yet. Only a few months from now." I giggled.

Nele: "If I didn't say it before, I want you to know sis, I'm really proud of you. You are my biggest inspiration in life. I know you're not perfect. I'm just glad that you don't even pretend to be. You're just yourself. I can see why His Highness is in love with you Thembisa, I don't think there's any other human that is his perfect match. Yazzi, the whole time we were there. His Highness never took his eyes off you. It's like he lived to see you. I heard mama and tata gossiping the other time you were with him, they thought I was sleeping. Mama even questioned how possible this could be. That maybe you dabbled in muthi. But tata then told her about the time, you and him had come to register for school and you'd been in a restaurant where his Highness was and he mentioned how he couldn't keep his eyes off you. All I'm saying Thembisa is, never ever doubt that man. He's very sure, and absolutely secure in his love. Yoh. I'm so tired of talking next thing you'll say I'm a chatterbox." I laughed.

Me: "When did you become so smart?"

Nele: "I take after you." We laughed.

The uproar was deafening. I knew at that moment they had arrived. I peeped out of my window. There was so many cars, I think I lost count at 7. All belonging to the Royal Throne. Zwelethu, King Biyela and Mthunzi stood at the gate. I heard them call out the clan names. I stopped peeping and waited, sizzling in my room. No one inside my house was moving. My father had invited the Chief and the community leader to be a part of the negotiations. I wasn't particularly happy about that part but they were the leaders of our village but they also respected my father. They kept calling and nothing in my family was happening. I was getting so anxious. These are Royals. You simply cannot just ignore them. This was getting to a bad start already. I knew the King was here. I just knew it. My stress was peaking. Eventually, someone walked out of my house. Nele was at the window, peeping very discreetly.

Nele: "They're talking." I listened, watching her nervously. "They just put money on the floor. YOH.."

Me: "What?"

Nele: "That is a large stack of money."

Me: "Forget the money, did they let them in?"

Nele: "Not yet. He's coming back."

Me: "Oh no. I hope the people tata chose aren't greedy."

Nele: "The guards are keeping the community back. They're carrying guns."

Me: "No!! The community won't hurt anyone. They're just excited." She handed me her phone.

Nele: "Check what they're saying on the group. I'll watch the window." I didn't want to see what they were saying. I didn't care. "He's back out talking to them." I sat on the edge of the bed. "He's opening the gate, he's letting them in." She whispered. I could've screamed! Okay, first step. "Oh My God."

Me: "What?"

Nele: "The King is walking in too." My heart stopped. I knew it. I just knew he was here. Was he even allowed? I was near crying. We couldn't really hear what was happening in the lounge or what was being said. All we could do was wait. It felt like forever. My mother was in her room, perhaps with the Chief's wife. So someone would alert her to bring me to the lounge. She came to knock on my door.

Mama: "Thembisa, it's time. You remember what I told you?" I nodded. "Good, walk to the lounge." I walked to the lounge, and knelt on the mat with Zanele.

Xolani: "These are the flowers in my house. May you please pick the one you are here for."

Zwe: "Mr Ntaka, I believe it is the one on the right."

Xolani: "Thembisa, do you know these gentlemen?" This, I understood to be the final stage of "Are you sure you want to do this?" If I said no, they would have to leave.

Me: "Yes Tata. I know them."

Xolani: "Very well. Please return to your room." We went back to my room. This was it. Please God may they agree on a price. It didn't even matter what it was. I just wanted to be with my love.

## PRINCE POV\_

I couldn't enter during the negotiation stage. I sat in the car with Sibonelo. I didn't expect him honestly but as we had arrived, Mthunzi and Zwe went in. He came to keep me company. I was nervous. I didn't have a reason to be. Thembisa wanted to marry me. My problem was my father. He had definitely tried to speak to me today and I had ignored him. I was done with his games. He wasn't going to keep threatening my wife and expecting me to be gracious.

Sibo: "The village is happy to be in your presence again."

Nkosi: "They don't even know they're in my presence."

Sibo: "A King just entered a house, I think they've put two and two together. It's a good thing they're joyous about it."

Nkosi: "I suppose." I couldn't even look outside the window. My heavily armed guards had lined the cars in front and behind me barricading me in. "Why are you scared of me?"

Sibo: "I'm not."

Nkosi: "I can feel your heart beating at triple it's normal rate."

Sibo: "Oh. You can feel that?" I looked at him.

Nkosi: "You saw me transform."

Sibo: "Yes. In the woods."

Nkosi: "It wasn't your first time, so why are you scared now?"

Sibo: "It was just different. You were in your element. I watched you run at lightening speed, then when you should've tripped and fallen instead flipped over shooting into a high jump turning into a ferocious animal and continue running. That's not even movie material."

Nkosi: "I would never harm you."

Sibo: "I know that now. At first, it was difficult."

Nkosi: "Good because your energy is throwing me off and I'm trying to drive time."

Sibo: "Okay, do you want to talk about anything?"

Nkosi: "I guess."

Sibo: "How did you meet Thembisa?"

Nkosi: "I met her at the club. It was her first time in a night club. You could probably see it, she looked nervous and out of place."

Sibo: "And you approached her?"

Nkosi: "No. I met her again at my restaurant, still didn't approach her. A few weeks later, I saw her again. I had started to make contact but I wasn't good with communication then."

Sibo: "How did you know she was the one."

Nkosi: "I think I felt it from the first moment I saw her. I just didn't know. All I could literally do was stare at her. It only started to register some time later. Our first weekend together. I didn't know joy until that weekend. When I had to return to work on Monday, I was so sour." He laughed.

Sibo: "She's a very special lady and you're going to make a perfect husband."

Nkosi: "I'll try." The singing started once again. Mthunzi was walking out of the house coming to us. He got in the car.

Mthunzi: "It is done. Congratulations Mr husband." I smiled.

Nkosi: "Can I come in, now?"

Mthunzi: "Yes, you've been invited in."

Nkosi: "Can I see her?"

Mthunzi: "Reel it in, loverboy. Alot still needs to happen. You will see her."

Nkosi: "My father didn't give any problems?"

Mthunzi: "None. He was very pleasant in fact." My blood boiled. "Don't worry. He won't do anything. You need to ignore him Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I will." We got out of the car. My guards surrounding me. The community was possibly in the highest of spirits. I didn't think the singing could get louder but it did. We stood at the gate. She and her father came out the door. I was invited in, and walked to her. Dressed in full traditional attire, she looked like a goddess.

Nkosi: "My wife."

Sasa: "My husband." She blushed.

Nkosi: "You look gorgeous."

Sasa: "Really? Thank you love. Look at you dressed in your sexy suit."

Nkosi: "I thought I'd wear it for you because it's your favorite."

Sasa: "Thank you. Would you like to come in?"

Nkosi: "Yes please." She led the way inside her home. Everyone inside bowed.

"Your Highness." We sat down at the table. My father and King Biyela were having a conversation, Zwe was listening in.

Sasa: "How are you, love?" She whispered. "Your aura is very strong today." The table went quiet. Why were they suddenly interested in my conversation?

Nkosi: "It was a very exciting day for me. I'm very happy I get to go home with my favorite human."

Zwe: "I'm offended." We laughed. The conversation returned to the table. We only had this brunch left, then we're back in Mountain Peak. My mothers were getting ready to welcome her in as a daughter in law. A ceremony would be performed and we would be done. It would be a very long day but my heart was at peace. I held her hand, her palm was soft and moist.

Nkosi: "Why are you nervous?"

Sasa: "I'm not nervous." She giggled. "Okay maybe a little bit. Let me go dish up for you." She got up and left for the kitchen. I looked around the cozy house. It was warm, simple and beautiful. A picture of Thembisa and another of Zanele as toddlers hung on the wall. They was so cute. On the cabinet in the lounge, a few accolades were displayed. Thembisa had trophies? Maybe she played sports? She never mentioned that before. She came back to the table, carrying a tray and bowed.

Sasa: "My Prince." I received my food.

Nkosi: "Thank you." My stomach rumbled at the aroma of the food. My father was served and everyone else received their plates after. I waited patiently.

King: "Why aren't you eating?" I ignored him. It was childish but he started this.

Mama: "My Prince, is there anything wrong with the food?"

Nkosi: "No."

Zwe: "Nkosi, what's wrong?"

Nkosi: "I'm waiting for Thembisa to sit down so we can eat together."

Mama: "Thembisa." My wife came back to the table and sat down with her plate. I wasn't about to eat when she wasn't eating. I could feel the stare my father gave me. It had a mixture of anger and confusion in it. Thembisa touched her stomach, trying to drink water but the glass shook in her hand. I looked at her.

Nkosi: "What's wrong?"

Sasa: "Stop fighting him." She whispered. "Please." ...

## Chapter 95

### PETU'S POV\_

#### Trigger Warning: Gender Based Violence

Today was such warm perfect day. I had a date planned with Notha. The past almost two weeks we're a bit challenging. When restaurants opened, Mngqobi had booked us a table and we had dinner. Another time we had lunch. And then last Saturday, we decided on an activity we could do. Painting and music. This I thoroughly enjoyed. Today was the first time I'd spend alone with Nothando. We thought it would be a great idea since Mngqobi isn't around. I got up from bed and took a long bath. I came back to dress up in high waisted jeans, a black rough cut crop top

and black sneakers. I tidied my room then went to the kitchen. Siza was rocking the baby to sleep.

Petu: "Hi sis."

Siza: "Hey." I could hear in her voice, she was low in spirits.

Petu: "What's wrong?" She looked at me, tears in her eyes and smiled.

Siza: "Nothing love. You look pretty, you got a date with your man again?"

Petu: "No, Notha. Siza what's going on?" I heard some other voices in the house.

Siza: "Do you mind if we went to your room? Quickly?"

Petu: "Why?"

Siza: "Now Petu." She grabbed my arm. I followed her but what she was trying to hide came right out. Jackson came out their room with his girlfriend. I couldn't even hide my shock. We walked into my room and closed the door. "Please don't say anything."

Petu: "I beg your pardon?"

Siza: "I'm fine Pet-"

Petu: "He's fucking her in your bed while you're here!! With his children in the house!!"

Siza: "Petunia, lower your voice!"

Petu: "No! I'm not lowering anything Sizani. He's a dog and he must know that!!"

Siza: "Petunia, you will not disrespect my husband in his house-"

Petu: "He's disrespecting himself!" The baby started crying. "Siza, please pack your bags."

Siza: "No!!"

Petu: "Sizani, it's either you pack your bags or I'm putting poison in his food."

Siza: "Petunia, where will we go? I have nothing to my nam-"

Petu: "I have some savings. We can get a flat in town but dear God, we're not staying here."

Siza: "I can't expect that from you."

Petu: "Yes, you can and you will! Just because you're older doesn't mean you must be the only to take care of us. We're sisters, we should be leaning on each other. We'll figure out a way. We will, Siza. But this is not it. You're not comfortable, you're not happy, you're always crying and worse of it all, even your children aren't comfortable. They're not even allowed to make a slight sound and you think that's okay? No ways." I took out my suitcase. "Please go pack."

Siza: "Please hold her." She gave me the baby. I put her on my hip while I packed my clothes, recklessly. I didn't even care honestly as long as I didn't leave a thing behind. On my second suitcase, I finished closing it and checked my savings. It would be enough to rent a 1 bedroom, buy a bed and some food. We'll find a way to make money somehow. I don't know how long it will take for my investment to pay dividends but we would make it. I sent Notha a message postponing our date and because she is Nothando, she called immediately.

Notha: "Why are you canceling on me? I'm already dressed."

Petu: "Something happened. My sister and I are moving out of her house."

Notha: "You didn't know you'd be moving days before?" I heard shouting from Siza's room.

Petu: "No. We decided right now actually. I'll update you."

Notha: "Petunia, is everything okay?"

Petu: "No. I have to go Notha-"

Notha: "Hold on, I hear shouting. Is there a violent situation?"

Petu: "Notha, I'll speak to you later, I need to check on Siza." I hung up, noticing a silence. I put the baby on the ground and ran out.

Jackson: "I took you from nothing and you think you can just do as you please? Where do you think you're taking my children?" He kicked her on the floor.

Siza: "Jackson, please." She cried.

Petu: "What the hell are you doing!!?"

Siza: "Petu take the kids and go!"

Jackson: "She's not taking my children anywhere, get out of here!! You're in my house, living for fucking free like the opportunist you and your sister are!! Now you're bold to come into my bedroom. Get the fuck out!! If you dare take my kids, I'll find you and shoot you." I couldn't leave my sister here. I couldn't let him hurt her but I didn't know what to do. I went to fetch the children from their room and took them to mine and locked it. I dialed for the police. It took a while for someone to answer.

Petu: "Hi, my sister is being beaten, her life is in danger." I rattled off the address with a shaky voice.

Officer: "Who is beating her sisi?" What does this question have to do with anything?

Petu: "Her husband. Please hurry, he's threatening to kill her!!" I cried.

Officer: "Please calm down, sisi-" my body trembled with all kinds of emotions.

Petu: "PLEASE COME TO THE ADDRESS!! I WILL ANSWER ALL YOUR QUESTIONS WHEN YOU'RE HERE!!" I screamed.

Officer: "Please repeat the address." I told her again. She wasn't taking this seriously enough. There was no urgency in her voice nor empathy. My sister's cries had gone quiet. "Okay, I've sent a van to your address." I hung up. My phone rang again. I answered.

Mnqobi: "Butterfly. How are you today? We arrived safely this side. You were sleeping when I called in the morning."

Petu: "Mnqobi I need you to hurry up the police. My sister's husband is beating her, I'm locked in the room with children."

Mnqobi: "Okay, I'll call you back." He hung up. I took the baby in my arms. Wiping the toddlers tears.

Petu: "Mommy will be okay. I promise. Okay?" They nodded. Jackson banged on the door.

Jackson: "Must I shoot down this door?! Get my children out of there right now!!" I took the kids to the corner and sat shielding them. "You clearly don't know me." He banged the door again and walked away. From a distance I could the sirens, hoping to God they're not too late.

Petu: "Babies, let's count to 10. Okay? Mia do you want to teach Miles to count? Let's do it baby."

Mia: "1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...9...10."

Petu: "Good job love. Miles do you want to try?"

Miles: "I only count to 5."

Petu: "That's fine angel, let's hear you go."

Miles: "1...2..."

Petu: "Go ahead, you're almost there."

Miles: "3...4...5." the sirens were much louder, with tyres screeching outside. I wiped my tears.

Petu: "Thank God." I heard the front door break off it's hinges and many footsteps barging in.

Officer: "Stand right there!! Put your hands up. Langa, put him down. I'm going through the house."

Jackson: "You do realize you're breaking the law by trespassing into my house without even a search warrant? I'll sue this entire department!!" A knock sounded on my door and all doors in the house.

Officer: "Is there anyone in here? It's the police." I got up and opened the door, shaking.

Petu: "My sister. She's in that room."

Officer: "Okay. I'll go in. Please stand here." He walked to the room. From the open door, I could see her laying on the floor. Oh please God don't do this to me. "Get the paramedics here, Langa!" He shouted, walking back to me.

Petu: "Is she okay?"

Officer: "I was instructed to remove you from here. Your sister will be attended to."

Petu: "I'm not leaving until I see her!"

Officer: "Okay, but I can't let you see her like that. Let the paramedic do his work first." I nodded. "Can I get you a glass of water?" I nodded again. He walked out.

Mia: "Where's mommy?"

Petu: "A doctor is coming to help her, baby. We'll see her soon." My phone rang again. "Hello." I answered.

Mnqobi: "Have they arrived? Are you safe?"

Petu: "Yes. We're waiting for the paramedics."

Mnqobi: "Okay, I'll be back soon. The palace guards are coming, they'll take you home." I was so shaken I couldn't even be nervous.

Petu: "Okay."

Mnqobi: "I'll see you soon my love."

Petu: "Okay." We hung up. The officer gave me my glass of water that I gulped down. "Thank you." The paramedics arrived some minutes later. They worked on Siza in her bedroom. I waited with a fear in my heart. God can't do this to me. Siza was the only family I had left.

Siza: "Where are my children?" I heard her faint voice. My heart jumped.

Officer: "I'll watch the kids." I went to her room. She was on the stretcher, refusing to be still even in her pain.

Petu: "Sis. I have the kids. I'm here Siza."

Siza: "Oh Petu."

Petu: "I'm taking them to safety. He won't touch them. I promise."

Siza: "I'm sorry Petu."

Petu: "It's okay. It's okay. I'll take care of the kids." They took her away, leaving me in that bloody scene. I went to the kids room and packed for them. Leaving the house, finally.

## KHAYA'S POV\_

The celebration in the village was incredible. It would be difficult for us to leave. We just had our brunch, we only had about an hour before we left for the city. We walked out the house. Even now, the community was still at a safe distance, singing. The guards kept them in place. I've never been in a village and maybe one day I'd enjoy the experience but definitely without the Prince. His people adore him. They would follow him anywhere.

Mnqobi: "Thinking of finding yourself a wife?" He chuckled.

Khaya: "No. Are you scouting for your third?"

Mnqobi: "Absolutely not. I'm very happy with my two. Besides, they'd kill me." We laughed. He took out his phone dialing a number, and walking around to speak on his phone. With the way he's smiling he's probably calling one of his wives. I chuckled, shaking my head.

Sibo: "Young Prince." He walked to me. The crowd became uncontrollable.

Khaya: "I think that's for you."

Sibo: "I'm already in trouble, I don't need stress. Please." I laughed.

Mnqobi: "We have to drive back. Now!"

Sibo: "Why? What's wrong?" Mnqobi called again.

Mnqobi: "This is Biyela. I need a ready team to urgently get to this address." He called out an address. "Already? Hurry the fuck up then." He hung up.

Khaya: "What's going on?"

Mnqobi: "Siza's husband has beaten her, and is threatening the kids and Petu. They're locked in Petu's room."

Sibo: "Get to the car, I'm telling Zwe we're leaving." He went back in the house. We ran up to our car, getting in. Sibonelo followed soon after and we drove off to the city.

Sibo: "I'm getting the guards to rush over there as well. Did you get a time frame?"

Mnqobi: "They said they'd be there in less than 5 minutes. Someone in the Biyela family had already sent them. Must be Nothando." He dialed Petu's number again, talking to her on the phone. We were at least 4 hours away, this was a completely stressful situation.

Khaya: "Have you followed with the paramedics?"

Sibo: "I've just sent them."

Khaya: "Oh shit- The hospital is still closed."

Sibo: "They'll have to send her to Oceans medical."

Khaya: "They won't let her in Sbo. And depending on how bad her injuries are..."

Sibo: "I'll make the call, I'll put her in my name. She's family. I can't let her go to a public hospital. That useless thing might target her there. He might have connections." He put the phone to his ear calling the medical facility. My heart was in my throat, highly triggered by this situation. Having watched my mother in this situation for years, it really fucked me up. It was getting harder to keep back my tears. My mother never made it out. I pray to God, Siza does. Her kids need her more than she realizes. No matter how long it's been, it still hasn't gotten better for me. My father killed her years before she actually died, and he still lives on happily. This actually wasn't the time. Mngobi held my hand. I wiped my eyes, looking out the window.

## SASA POV\_

It was finally time for me to leave home. I only had one bag and I'd had to fight for it. Apparently, according to my mother I needed wife clothes. What the hell is wife clothes? I mostly owned long dresses. Does she think royals only wore regal attire all day everyday? By the way, they don't. It's only on special occasion and actual royal appearances. Yes I'll have to get new dresses made, but alot of the time I'll be inside the palace or villa, studying. It would be very ridiculous for me to wear a suit dress.

Mama: "It's time sisi." She had tears in her eyes. Mostly from joy and happiness that the entire nation envied her. "Ungandiphoxi Thembisa. Kuyanyamezelwa emtshatweni mntanam." (Don't disappoint me Thembisa. In marriage, you have to be strong.)

Me: "Okay mama." I carried my bag out, I was required to take it to the gate, from there, my husband or his guard I guess, takes it into the car. A symbol of me leaving home willingly. The singing was unbelievably loud. I could hear my name from the crowd. My face was covered with beads still but the cat was out of the bag. Zanele had told me I broke the internet. The royal engagement had been announced as of an hour ago and the nation was rejoicing. Suddenly I was so shy. I met Nkosi by the gate, he took the bag from my hand.

Nkosi: "My wife." I giggled.

Me: "My husband."

Nkosi: "Do you want to say goodbye to your people?"

Me: "No, I'm shy. I'll apologize when I come back to visit." He laughed.

Nkosi: "You're so silly." He handed the bag to the guard. "Your family will be in the second car. I wanted them to be there when you're welcomed into my family."

Me: "You don't know how much that means to me." He opened the door for me to get inside. We finally went on our way. It was a bittersweet moment. I would miss my village as a commoner. The only time I'd visit now would be as a high royal. That would be so different. Nkosi held my hand.

Nkosi: "Sibonelo and the young princes had to leave early. Apparently there's an emergency in Mountain Peak. Something to do with your friend Zwe said."

Me: "What friend? Zimmy? Petu? Or Nothando? Do you know what happened?"

Nkosi: "I don't have the full information my love but they said they have a handle on it. She's in safety. I'm not sure which friend also."

Me: "And I forgot my phone with my mother so I'll only know when I'm in Mountain Peak. I'm so nervous."

Nkosi: "Let's focus on our day. If they're safe, then we can attend to it tomorrow."

Me: "Yes my love." He kissed my hand.

Nkosi: "Do you want to tell me what happened earlier? You touched your belly, looking like you're in pain." I looked out of the window.

Me: "Remember when I was dreaming about the past?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Me: "I was in Mam Nonkosi's body. Pregnant with your father. I felt the pains giving birth. I felt my womb pain and then felt his heart. I don't know how but He's in pain Nkosi. He hides it with anger and unfortunately it will be to his detriment. Nkosi, your father can't die prematurely. I know that he gets on your nerves but we need to peel

those layers off him until he's ready to join his next life. We need to be patient with him."

Nkosi: "He threatens you every chance he gets, Thembisa."

Me: "I know. And I'm really scared but we have each other. We'll get through it." ...

## Chapter 96

### NOTHANDO'S POV\_

After the call with Petu, hearing the shouting in her background I immediately called the police with Mngqobi's name. I don't know what was happening in that house but they'd do a wellness check and it would be Petu or Siza who determines they're okay. I can't just stand by and do nothing. I went to the lounge area where Mama Biyela was working. She designs her own clothing line for her boutiques and seemed to really enjoy it.

Notha: "Mama."

Queen: "Hello my angel."

Notha: "I just got off the call with my friend, Petu. Do you remember her?"

Queen: "Yes, weren't you supposed to meet her today?"

Notha: "Yes mama. She called to cancel. Says they're moving out her sister's home. Then I heard some shouting. I don't know what was happening. I've sent the police on a royal wellness check, making it top priority." She put down her papers.

Queen: "You think it's that bad?"

Notha: "I don't know what to think mama. I've also spoken to Mngqobi, he's on his way back." I got an alert on my phone. "They're at the house now."

Queen: "What does the alert say? Is it a green?"

Notha: "It's red."

Queen: "Oh no. So it's bad."

Notha: "I hope she's okay." We waited for just over 10 minutes when my phone rang again. "Mnqobi?"

Mnqobi: "Hi love. I called Petunia some time ago. She had a violent situation at her home. The police are with her right now. She's coming to the Palace."

Notha: "So she's okay?"

Mnqobi: "She sounds shaken. Let me know when she's home okay? I'm on my way."

Notha: "Okay." I hung up. "Apparently there was a violent situation."

Queen: "Oh no. Is she okay?"

Notha: "Mnqobi says she's shaken. They're bringing her here."

Queen: "Here to the palace?"

Notha: "Yes mama. I assume she'll arrive in a few minutes, they were in Oceansview."

Queen: "Oh. Okay. Uhm, let me get a helper to fix her a room." She got up nervously and walked away. I think she knew about us but she hadn't yet asked. I don't even know how we would explain it but we will find a way. I waited around the dining area not sure what to do. I heard the cars driving in so I waited by the foyer. Mama came to stand next to me. The door opened and a guard walked in first. Petu came in after him holding a baby and two toddlers walking next to her. My mind went blank for a second then I remembered, Siza has children. So if Petu had the kids, where was Siza? Surely the guards didn't leave her there?

Petu: "Good day, my queen."

Queen: "Hello. How are you?"

Petu: "I'm well mama, how are you?" She was holding back her tears and her eyes were already puffy from crying.

Queen: "I'm okay. Are these your babies?"

Petu: "No, Uhm. They're my sister's." Her voice broke. Oh no.

Queen: "Come sit, sweetie." We went into the lounge and sat down.

Petu: "My sister's husband has been abusing her, I don't know for how long. Today, he got angry because she was leaving him. He had a woman in the house, so I asked her to pack her things so we can get a flat somewhere in town rather than live with a man who disrespected her so much and hurt her. I was packing in my room when I heard her screaming. I was on the phone with Notha at the time so I quickly went to attend to her and he was beating her." She cried. I took the baby from her, putting it on my lap. Not sure what to do with it but Petu was breaking down and incapable of holding her.

Queen: "I am so sorry sisi. This is such a horrible thing. Did he hurt you? Or the kids?"

Petu: "No, he was threatening to shoot down the door because I locked us in our room. The police arrived before he did."

Queen: "Thank God. Is your sister still coming in?" She shook her head.

Petu: "The paramedics took her."

Queen: "This is so horrible. You need some chamomile tea to calm you down. You're safe now. Look at these beautiful little angels. Have you even had any food? It's awfully early for all this." Petu wiped her tears.

Petu: "No mama. May I please make their meal so they can bath and nap?"

Queen: "Oh sweetheart don't worry about that." She called in a helper. Petu instructed her on what to make especially with the baby giving her the porridge.

A few hours later, Mngqobi, Sibonelo and Khaya walked in. Petu and I were in the lounge. Mama Biyela had the baby, feeding her a bottle. She loves children alot. You could see her eyeing them eagerly the minute they arrived.

Mngqobi: "Good afternoon mama."

Queen: "Hello boys."

Mngqobi: "Butterfly, how are you?"

Petu: "I'm okay. Good afternoon." She whispered, very shyly. "I haven't heard from Siza."

Sibo: "I spoke to a doctor, she's still in ICU. I'm going over there right now. Would you like to come with me?"

Petu: "Yes please. Uhm, mama, may please leave the kids here for a short bit?"

Queen: "Petunia, don't be silly. Of course you can leave them here. I'll take very good care of them."

Petu: "Thank you mama." She knelt down to the toddlers who had been entertained by their toys on the floor. "Mia, I'm going to check on mommy okay?"

Mia: "Can I come with you?"

Petu: "Not yet my love. You have to stay here in the castle."

Mia: "We're in a castle?"

Petu: "Yes. This is where a King and Queen live."

Mia: "So I'm going to be a princess when I'm inside it?"

Petu: "Yes, while you're inside you can be princess Mia." The toddler giggled. "Do you want to give me a kiss to give to your mommy?"

Mia: "Tell her it's from Princess Mia, okay?"

Petu: "She'll love that so much." After checking the babies, she, Mngqobi and Sibonelo walked out.

Queen: "Khaya, are you okay baby?"

Khaya: "Yes ma. I just need to get headache pills and lie down for an hour. I think it's the heat. Tata and Zwe are already on their way back but I think they'll go straight to the Sikhosana palace. The negotiations went well. The Prince is officially engaged."

Queen: "That's wonderful. I'll have someone bring you something to nibble on so you can nap."

Khaya: "Thank you mama." He walked up the stairs to his room.

Notha: "I can find someone mama, I'll sort it out."

Queen: "Thank you, angel. There's nothing I can complain about personally because I'm very blessed." I smiled.

Everyone came back in an hour. I'd also made had the kitchen make some refreshments and a light lunch. I know the princes would have to go to Sikhosana palace for the welcoming. We would only attend tomorrow as invited royal guests and the official engagement would be done at the Arena. This is where, Sasa's face would be revealed. So far, her village knew but no pictures of her face were allowed online until tomorrow. Sasa barely had pictures online anyway. She didn't have much of a social media, I think she only really followed it for celebrity news. Now she's the celebrity. I chuckled.

Queen: "Thank you so much Nothando."

Mnqobi: "Before we eat mama, can we please talk about something as a family?"

Biyela: "Is it urgent, son? We're due at the palace. Can't we talk and eat?"

Mnqobi: "I'll be short, I promise."

Biyela: "Very well." We sat down.

Mnqobi: "I haven't been fully transparent on everything to you as my parents and I apologize for that. You taught me better. The reason why I hadn't been transparent is because I'm also still learning. Nothando has agreed to marry me again and while she and I already had this arrangement, I had met Petunia and I fell in love with her. I still very much love Nothando and will continue being her husband. She and I spoke about Petu, she supports our relationship fully. She had supported it before the ruling was made so it is not influenced by her not having a choice. I respect her. We have been together all three of us officially for two weeks now. As it stands, Petu is my girlfriend and I do see a future with all three of us. We are still learning and with that, I would appreciate support and advice from you as my family."

Biyela: "So you're in a polygamous marriage wena Mnqobi?"

Mnqobi: "Yebo baba."

Biyela: "What makes you think we don't know that?" Mnqobi looked at Sibonelo, who was munching on his food. He obviously told them already.

Mnqobi: "I just thought maybe it would be more respectful if I said something myself and not just do it behind your backs."

Queen: "And you ladies are okay with this?"

Notha: "Yes ma"

Petu: "Yes mama."

Queen: "Okay then. Thank you for letting us know."

Biyela: "I don't know anything about this. As I've raised you Mngqobi, you have never seen or heard of another woman. If truly, this is something that you all want, and will all respect each other, we can only support. Also, when you have problems we are here to find solutions as a family."

Mngqobi: "Ngiyabonga baba."

Biyela: "Alright then. Let's eat so we can leave." ...

## SASA'S POV \_

The arrival in the palace was dramatic. The royal band stood at the gate, trumpets and all.

Me: "This happens everytime you come home baby? Because you don't come here often." He laughed.

Nkosi: "No, this one is for you. They don't care about my comings and goings."

Me: "Are you sure? I was here before and they didn't trumpet for me."

Nkosi: "It was mother's birthday, they wouldn't have trumpeted my love. They're celebrating you." He chuckled.

Me: "Oh. It's very nice."

Nkosi: "And embarrassing?"

Me: "Very." He laughed.

Nkosi: "I know you get embarrassed very quickly. Unfortunately you'll have to go through it because tomorrow will be worse. You'll be at the Arena."

Me: "And they'll see my face. Oh." I sighed.

Nkosi: "I'll be right by your side."

Me: "You know if I make a mistake, the whole country will laugh right?"

Nkosi: "Including me because you're very funny. Come, let's go." He laughed, getting off his side of the car. Mine was opened by a guard. A tiger's skin was laid on the floor for me to step on and another after it all the way to the door. Nkosi stood next to me holding my hand.

Nkosi: "I was told that there will be splashing of water with herbs on it. We walk slowly all the way to the door. Don't react to the water hitting your face, it's safe, the healer assures it." I would've been shocked but definitely not to react.

Me: "Thank you for the heads up." The healer came forward with his bucket.

Healer: "Boo-Sikhosana, Musi KaMhlanga. Mhlanga ayihlangani ihlangana mhla kwezithebe! Msamkhulu, Somboni.\* Samukela indodakazi yenu emzini wenu. Ungumama wesizwe wakusasa. Inyoni le indizela phezulu. Lowo onenhliziyi yeNkosi. Siyanibongela Makhosi." (Clan names until \*. We welcome your daughter into your home. The future mother of the nation. The bird that flies high. The one with the King's heart. Congratulations my Kings.) We reached the door, at this time I was damp. The King and Queen stood at the entrance.

King: "Umndeni wakwaSikhosana uyakwamukela ekhaya." (The Sikhosana family welcomes you home.) I bowed. They stepped aside as we walked in. The healer was burning the incense all around me to the back yard. We went up to an area that was cordoned off in the garden. An animal had been slaughtered.

Healer: "Guqa lapha, Ndlunkulu." I knelt on the grass mat. He changed speaking to the ancestors in words I didn't really understand. He place a band around my head and attached two ball-like wet things. "You can place this in your mouth and swallow." I took the meat on the bowl and ate it. This didn't taste good but I couldn't spit it out so I braved it through. "Sesiqedile ke mama. Wamkelekile Kwa Sikhosana." I got up, Nkosi holding my hand back to the house.

Our day had went very well. I wasn't too surprised because Amahle had looked pleased I was officially Mrs Sikhosana but the nation was demanding a wedding. Okay, not demanding but very eager according to Zanele, who had checked the news. Tomorrow's ceremony would be

the official engagement for the nation and where I would get my new name.

Nkosi: "You look tired, my love."

Me: "Only a little."

Nkosi: "Then let's go. We've done our bit. The rest is only for them."

Me: "So we'll tell them we're going to bed?" He laughed.

Nkosi: "Why are you shy?"

Me: "Nkosi, our parents and the guests will know we're going to have sex. I don't really care about the princes, but the parents Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "You're my wife." He chuckled.

Me: "Yes but is it not shameful that we're rushing to go have sex while they're still awake?" He was so amused, laughing hysterically. I don't know why he was finding this so funny. My first time and my parents are fully aware that it's happening? Is that not shameful? Now everyone was staring because he couldn't stop laughing. "Please stop laughing." I whispered.

Nkosi: "I will never. This is going to be the best memory of my life."

Me: "Out of everything, this is the memory you choose?"

Nkosi: "Our children will hear of it."

Me: "You want me to die of embarrassment."

Nkosi: "Okay my love, we will wait." But I did want to leave now, I was tired of smiling. "Are you considering?" He chuckled.

Me: "I see you're very happy."

Nkosi: "I've got everything I want, how can I not be?" He smiled. "I'll help you only this one time. So follow my lead."

Me: "Thank you baby, but don't make it embarrassing."

Nkosi: "You're making me laugh and it will be hard to focus if I am laughing."

Me: "Okay baby. Do your thing." He tried to stop smiling. I drank my juice also trying not to giggle.

Nkosi: "Love, you look a little tired, do you want to rest?" He said more audibly.

Me: "Yes please."

Nkosi: "Alright. Family, thank you so much for celebrating the day with us. We're retired to bed for the evening as tomorrow will be a big day."

King: "Already?" Father God, why!

Nkosi: "Yes father. It's been a long day." He quickly stood up, I stood up with him, following him. "You're right, they're judging us."

Me: "So I wasn't making things up. Oh, I'm so embarrassed. How will I even look at them in the morning?" It wasn't even early, it was just after 8 in the evening.

Nkosi: "They also had their turn baby, I'm sure they're not even thinking of it." He chuckled. We walked into his room, closing the door behind us. I stood in the middle of the room, nervous. I'd thought of this day for such a long time and now it was happening. With the man I was in love with and now married to. My stomach was doing somersaults inside me. I turned to look at him. He was staring at me with his hands in his pockets. My heart skipped a beat.

Me: "Hi." His face softened into a smile.

Nkosi: "Hey." He walked closer to me, standing in front of me. "You're nervous."

Me: "A little bit." I undid his first button of his royal suit, undoing the string then the chain and the button underneath. "Here we go with your suspenders."

Nkosi: "Thembisa, please stop making me laugh. This is not the time."

Me: "I'm sorry baby but you know I love your lingerie, it just needs so much effort." I took off his jacket and placing it on the chair. I took off his shirt next. He took off my beads and dress gently, leaving me exposed with only my thong. I'm glad I wore the pretty red one. I felt him hissing in a low tone. The bulge in his pants fully visible. I undid the button and hook, pulling down the zipper. His black underwear low and tight on his body. He took off his pants leaving it on for me to take off. It sprung out pointing at me. I had something I wanted to say but he would laugh, and I know he's trying to be serious. He lifted my chin to look up at him. All of my thoughts drifted away when I looked into his beautiful eyes. I kissed

his lips, him holding me to his body. He lifted me up, taking me onto the bed. He kissed my face, down to my neck grazing his teeth on my skin every few seconds. He pulled off the underwear kissing my stomach. His tongue slithered over my folds, sucking on my clit. I held his head, opening wider. He stopped sucking and started licking again.

Me: "please do it again." I moaned. I felt his teeth slowly graze on me. My body shivered with desire. He sucked back on the clit, his tongue rapidly working on it building an intense high. "Nkosiii." I moaned, feeling dizzy. My body felt warm, tingling in my toes. I felt numb, my clit throbbing to his rhythm and finally climaxed, shaking to a sizzling still. I had to catch my breath, he came up to my face kissing my lips. My body still feeling sensitive to the touch. He stopped at the entrance, I felt his tip twitching, and a rumble in his throat. He sucked on my lips hungrily. I felt him slowly push in, tearing through me and fitting himself all in.

Nkosi: "Ohh..." He moaned, pulling back out slowly and back in. The numbness I'd felt faded quickly away with his penetration. My legs shook, feeling the uncomfortable pain. He kissed my lips, chin then my neck and looked at me. His orange eyes glittered, looking so dangerously sexy. His pace went faster, balling the sheets in his fists. The stroking once again aliving my body with pleasure. He buried his face in my neck, sucking on my skin then grazed on it once again. I moaned in pleasure, holding on to him. He went deeper.

Me: "Nkosi.." I muttered. He focused on just that, my vision blurred. "Nkosi." I cried. He didn't change a thing, consistently fuckingly rubbing my g spot. I felt another climax, coming up. "Yesss... Baby ... Almo." He growled. My body stilling in an orgasm and singing his name. He pushed deep inside, his teeth softly sinking into my shoulder as he released.

## Chapter 97

### PRINCE POV\_

I don't even remember how I fell asleep but I had the most peaceful dream. I opened my eyes, looking in my arms. Thembisa was still fast asleep. My wife. Who would've thought I'd be married to her in less than 5 months. This time, the Gods were on my side. I watched her breath

softly in slumber, her heart rate steady. Her skin was so smooth, tasting sweet. Now she had a few marks on her body because of me unable to control myself. Just the thought aroused me. I licked the bite on her shoulder, tasting the sting of dried blood.

Nkosi: "I'm sorry baby." She stretched her body, waking.

Sasa: "Morning love." My heart gleamed with joy. She was awake. Finally.

Nkosi: "Good morning Mrs Sikhosana."

Sasa: "What were you mumbling while I was sleeping? Were you trying to juju me awake?" I chuckled.

Nkosi: "Yes, and it worked." She giggled. "How did you sleep?"

Sasa: "I slept great. I think I passed out actually."

Nkosi: "Me too. I'm sorry for these." I touched the marks on her shoulders and neck.

Sasa: "Why are you sorry for giving me tattoos?" She kissed my chin.

Nkosi: "Don't they hurt?" She blushed.

Sasa: "No."

Nkosi: "No?" She hid her face in my chest. What did she mean? "Baby?"

Sasa: "They don't hurt love, don't worry." I wouldn't have been worried if she was lying to me but she wasn't. Unless my senses don't work anymore. So naturally, I'm worried.

Nkosi: "How does it feel then?"

Sasa: "At first it hurt just a bit, then it stung. So you licked it and it was fine. When it started to itch, you licked it again. The second time, it didn't even hurt. My body wanted and expected it." That's fascinating, I've never bitten anyone before so this was a first for me. I don't know why.

Nkosi: "That's interesting."

Sasa: "How did it feel for you?" I smiled.

Nkosi: "It felt good."

Sasa: "Oh so you feel good by biting me Nkosinhle?" I laughed.

Nkosi: "Sorry baby. It was an uncontrollable urge. It just feels strange because it has never happened before."

Sasa: "Hmm. I wish we could stay in bed like this all day so that I can also bite you." I laughed.

Nkosi: "Maybe we should. It's not like they'll break down the door."

Sasa: "You want to make everyone upset? I'm still embarrassed from last night. How will I look at them? I hope my dress covers up to my neck."

Nkosi: "I don't care what they think anymore. I'm going to hurry that ceremony up so we can come back to bed."

Sasa: "Nkosihle please."

Nkosi: "What baby?" I kissed her skin, putting her nipple in my mouth. "If they had a wife as gorgeous as mine, I'm sure they'd do the same. They can't judge me." My phone rang. "They've started."

Sasa: "Already?" I reached over for my phone.

Nkosi: "Mthunzi." I answered.

Mthunzi: "My King, it's time to get ready."

Nkosi: "I need another hour."

Mthunzi: "I can stall for 30 minutes not an hour."

Nkosi: "45-"

Mthunzi: "Nkosihle, I said 30 minutes!" He hung up. I chuckled.

Nkosi: "Mthunzi is already angry." I kissed her neck, up and along her jawline.

Sasa: "Let's wake up baby." Her eyes said something different. My wife was so gorgeous, I just couldn't get over it.

Nkosi: "Do you know how ready I am to pile furniture up the door?" She giggled. I kissed her face, getting on top of her. We haven't done anything but make love, and I wasn't ready to try anything else. I loved watching her face when I stroked into her, I could see instantly when I was hitting the right spot and when she climaxed calling my name. She held my face.

Sasa: "Why are you staring at me like that, Mr Sikhosana?"

Nkosi: "I want to make love to you." She smiled, pulling me to kiss her again. I kissed her lips, sucking on her bottom. I traced kisses down her body, all to her clit wasting no time in licking it, sucking on her labia. She opened wider, holding my head, moaning. My tongue slipped into her slit, her cries and taste hardening me. Her juices dripped onto my tongue, almost ready to cum. I stopped and kissed her inner thighs.

Sasa: "babby." She complained, pulling on my head. I placed soft kisses on her. "Ohhh..." She was so close. My tongue slipped in again. Tasting her once again, I needed to be inside her right now. Her grip on my head was firm while she sang my name. I felt her throbbing on my tongue, her legs shaking, she poured out in my mouth. I couldn't hold it any more, I got right on top, driving into her. Her lazy eyes, looking deeply into mine.

Sasa: "I love you." She mumbled. I kissed her lips.

Nkosi: "I love you." I paced myself into her slowly but it wasn't working. I was already close. I was getting dizzy. Her legs wrapped around my waist, I held her body to me. A growl escaping out of my throat.

Sasa: "Baby..." She moaned. "Ohhh." I held her even tighter. Her hole choking my dick, throbbing, warm and leaking. Fuck. I roared, my body shivering to a still as I came deep inside her. My body loosened, spazzing every few seconds.

Nkosi: "You feel so fucking good." I licked her neck kissing her. "It will take a miracle to get me out of bed." She smiled.

Sasa: "I won't even fight you baby." I lay on top of her, trying to catch my breath. "Don't fall asleep now."

Nkosi: "It would be impossible for me to stay awake. I just need 10 minutes baby." She kissed my head.

Sasa: "Okay, 10 minutes only." ...

SASA POV\_

We only managed to get up because Mthunzi called again. After taking a bath, someone knocked on the door. Nkosi opened it.

Helper: "Good morning my Prince. I am here for the Lady. Her attire and stylist are ready."

Nkosi: "I'll bring her." He closed the door.

Me: "I can't wait to see my dress." I was so excited for it but I only saw the sketch design. He stood behind me, placing a soft kiss on my neck and holding me in his arms.

Nkosi: "I don't want you to worry about anything today. It will be great. I am so happy you are mine." I held on his arms. "Let's go baby." I'd only gotten dressed in underwear and a gown. He walked me to the dressing room. My body was aching from our activities but I wouldn't dare let it show. Walking was a process but God forbid they see me stumble. I sat down slowly. The stylist bowed. Nkosi kissed my head.

Nkosi: "I'll be right next door getting dressed. I'll be here when you're done."

Me: "Okay baby." I kissed his lips. He walked out. I looked at my stylist. "Good morning."

She: "Your Highness."

Me: "What's your name?"

She: "I'm Precious."

Me: "You have a beautiful name, Precious. Let's get started." She smiled

Precious: "Thank you, Your Highness. Do you have a hairstyle you prefer?"

Me: "No. What do you suggest?"

Precious: "You already have such beautiful hair, I wouldn't want to put it all down in a braid. Perhaps some plaits from the hairline to quarter way into you head. Then leave the rest of the afro combed out, I'll add some gold beads as well."

Me: "That sounds perfect. Let's do it." She started on my hair, working quite fast but incredibly neatly. Once she was done, added the few beads on the cornrows in the front. We started on my make up.

Precious: "Do you want a full glam or a soft natural look, Your Highness?"

Me: "Soft natural babe." She nodded and kept working quietly. She managed to cover up the marks with the makeup. When she finished, I looked like a goddess. "Thank you so much. This looks amazing, Precious."

Precious: "You're welcome, Your Highness."

Me: "Are you the royal stylist or this is your first job?"

Precious: "It's my first time working on a royal, Your Highness. I applied a few weeks ago."

Me: "Your work is beautiful and efficient. Let's get dressed."

Precious: "Thank you very much, Your Highness." I got off my chair. I honestly didn't want to be called Your Highness. My name is Sasa and I'm not royal. I'd rather just be called by name but the explanation would just tire me out. Also, I don't know how the queens would react to having people call me by name. Maybe they'd take offense, maybe they'd punish them instead of me. I'd just have to suck this up and let it be. I looked at my dress and gasped. I wanted to jump up and down with excitement but my body wouldn't let me.

Me: "Who made this?" Everyone kept quiet, looking around. A young woman stepped forward, fearing what would happen next. I just wanted to thank her. This was so beautiful.

She: "I worked with the head seamstress, my Lady."

Me: "It is beautiful, thank you." She smiled nervously.

She: "Thank you Your Highness." Two ladies helped me into my dress. They tied up the corset behind me, the other checked my front. I never knew a black dress could look so elegant but I honestly looked and felt like a goddess. The corset snatched up my waist ballooning my breasts up modestly. Then came the gold jewelry. The first was a thin gold chain with a black stone pendant, it had matching earrings. I slipped into beautiful gold black heels. The nail in my coffin.

Precious: "Let me help you Your Highness." I sat on my chair. She wore gloves, taking a cream and rubbing her gloved hands. She massaged my feet gently. I'd be lying if I said I hated it. Once she was done she took a warm damp cloth and dabbed all over my feet then fit my heel on my feet. My feet felt so amazing. "It's a numbing cream, to help your feet not hurt throughout the day. It'll wear off in about 8 hours, so before bed

please soak your feet in warm water with coarse salt. Then dry and lotion with your preferred lotion. They won't hurt at all."

Me: "Thank you, Precious." Nkosi walked in dressing room. He looked gorgeous in his black regal suit matching my dress. He held my hand.

Nkosi: "You look so gorgeous."

Me: "Thank you love. You look so handsome. Look, we're matching." He smiled.

Nkosi: "Come, Mthunzi is already upset." He kissed my head walking me out.

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

I sat at the breakfast table by myself, I was already dressed and ready to leave. For once, my family was late. Not late to the event, but late to breakfast. We still had an hour to spare, when we should be eating. Khaya came out first, wearing a suit.

Khaya: "Bhut Sbo."

Sibo: "Hi." He sat down, dishing up breakfast. "The tailor needs to make you suits with the family colours soon. What do you think?"

Khaya: "Will that be necessary? I have a number of suits. More than I need in fact."

Sibo: "You can't have too many. Besides, you need a few with the family colours for events like this so they know you're with the Biyela family, you're one of us."

Khaya: "Okay. I'll contact him tomorrow."

Sibo: "Good." Zwe came to the table, fully dressed in his attire.

Zwe: "Morning princes."

Khaya: "Morning bhut Zwe."

Sibo: "Hello." He dished up food.

Khaya: "How is Siza doing?"

Sibo: "Better. Her doctor says she may be coming out of ICU tomorrow but he wants to keep her in the hospital for a few more days to monitor her head injury. She had a nasty blow to the head." I drank my coffee.

Khaya: "That's horrible." I looked at him, feeling the cry in his voice. "Hopefully she recovers soon."

Sibo: "She will. In the meantime, Jackson is in jail. His bail hearing is in the morning. I'm not sure if word has gotten to him yet but I think it might have." I looked at Khaya.

Zwe: "Why do you think so?"

Sibo: "His lawyer is Mpendulo."

Khaya: "That's not surprising. Abusers tend to stand together."

Sibo: "If he's granted bail, he might skip the country. Knowing we're behind Siza, he won't want to stick around."

Zwe: "I'll speak to the judge."

Sibo: "Okay."

Zwe: "Do we have a plan for him?" The rest of the family came downstairs.

Sibo: "So many."

Zwe: "We'll discuss it later then."

Mnqobi: "Good morning family." We greeted him and his wives. Mom came in, carrying the baby. We're going to have a problem here. She was getting attached. Everyone settled in their seats.

Biyela: "How is everyone doing today?"

Sibo: "I'm fine."

Zwe: "We're doing well, father. How are you?" My father looked at my mother, smiling.

Biyela: "I'm great." I dropped my fork on the plate. I pray to God they didn't make me another sibling.

Zwe: "You're enjoying being a grandpa?"

Biyela: "No, I still have a lot of energy in me."

Sibo: "There goes my appetite." I mumbled.

Biyela: "Why Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "Can we go now? I've been waiting here an hour."

Biyela: "We still have a while. Don't worry."

Queen: "Petu, why aren't you dressed angel? You can't go to a royal event dressed casually."

Petu: "Oh, I am going to stay behind mama. It's okay."

Queen: "Don't be silly. You can't stay alone here all day. I have something for you to wear, let's check my dressing room right after breakfast."

Petu: "What about the babies mama?"

Queen: "They're well behaved, I think we can take them. Right love?"

Biyela: "Yes, they'll be fine. You'll take a helper to assist. The arena is very hot and it can be loud and stressful for children so an extra hand will be better."

Petu: "Thank you very much, mama noTata. Not only for welcoming me into your home but making my stay comfortable and safe. I am grateful."

Queen: "You are welcome." The kids were very quiet, almost like they weren't even here. Siza hadn't lied. Her kids were very well behaved and polite too. I don't have much experience with children but I was 7 when Mngqobi and Khaya were born. They were the noisiest babies I've ever heard of. Khaya specifically screamed everytime he had to go home. Not these toddlers, and that's very worrying. We had our breakfast, mama taking Petu to her dressing room.

Sibo: "Mama, please put down the baby."

Queen: "Put her down where? She doesn't have a seat."

Zwe: "Let me hold her. You'll need to help Petu with the dresses." He took the baby.

Queen: "I'll be back just now." She gently pinched her cheeks and walked away with Petu.

Sibo: "Mngqobi, do you have a plan for this situation?"

Mngqobi: "Yes. I'll move Petu, Siza and the kids in my house."

Notha: "I'll contact the agency for a nanny to help since Petu will be attending her virtual classes and Siza recovering."

Sibo: "Okay."

Zwe: "What makes you think mama will let the kids leave this house."

Sibo: "That's why it needs to happen soon."

Biyela: "Why? The children aren't bothering anyone."

Sibo: "Tata, the kids are great but the longer they stay, the more pressure I'll get for bringing a grandchild."

Biyela: "I don't think that would be a bad idea."

Sibo: "How? I don't even have a wife, where will I find a child? No tata. I think you should focus on pressuring Zwe. He's the oldest. Why is this my responsibility?"

Biyela: "Zwe is busy."

Sibo: "I'm also busy Tata."

Biyela: "The kids aren't going anywhere until their mother can take proper care for them. My word is final." I stared at my father. You know what, this isn't even my business to worry about.

## MTHUNZI'S POV\_

The event was almost starting. After breakfast, I sorted the security, selecting specific guards for each royal member. Also scanning thoroughly through the guards to be sure that the imposter wasn't here. The incident in my house made me really paranoid. I called the healer to work through the guards as well to be fully sure.

Mthunzi: "Alright, we're ready. The four of you are on the outer perimeter, you go in first. You six are for His Highness, you surround him as usual. You other six are for His Lady. You surround her too. They'll be together at all times so you all work together around them." They nodded. I continued for the King and queens, then the princesses and led them out. The army was outside and ready. The family was ready. The King walked out with his guards first, followed by the queens and then Nkosi and Thembisa. I watched the princesses follow them and

then followed. We drove into the arena. I secured my rifle on my side walking to the entrance to watch all guards. The family walked in, getting to their seats. First phase complete. The arena as expected was full. The crowd was overjoyed, screaming and singing. The speaker addressed them, calling the praises and welcoming speech. My phone vibrated in my pocket. I checked it, missed call from Busi. She was supposed to be here by now, I'd sent a car for her. I went to the royal guests seating but she wasn't there. I dialed her number back.

Mthunzi: "My love." The phone beeped. What the hell is this now? I called her again, it rang unanswered. I called the guard I had sent to her.

Guard: "My Lord."

Mthunzi: "Where is my wife?"

Guard: "She's not answering the door, my Lord."

Mthunzi: "Can you see inside the house?"

Guard: "Yes. Permission to go in, my Lord?"

Mthunzi: "Yes. Go in." I checked the guards to be standing in their proper places and they all were. "Well?"

Guard: "My Lord, she's here. Please hold." I waited for a second.

Busi: "Baby."

Mthunzi: "Hey, are you okay?"

Busi: "Yes. I tried calling to tell you I don't think I'll make it. I'm feeling sick."

Mthunzi: "Sick with what, baby?"

Busi: "I don't know. My body is extremely weak, I'm shivering to the bone and bleeding non stop."

Mthunzi: "I think it's better you go to the hospital, I'll meet you there."

Busi: "It's not that serious baby. I promise, I think it's just my hormones acting up. Don't worry, congratulate Sasa and Nkosi for me. I'll send them a gift tomorrow." Busi never ever wanted to go to the doctor unless she couldn't move or protest. She hated being a burden.

Mthunzi: "Busisiwe, please go to the hospital."

Busi: "If I don't feel better within the hour, I promise I'll go to the hospital."

Mthunzi: "Okay, but that guard isn't leaving your presence."

Busi: "Okay."

Mthunzi: "Are you sure you don't want me to come?"

Busi: "I'm sure, love. You have a very important job, I'll be okay. I have the guard to help, I'm safe. I'll send message updates. I'm sorry to disturb you."

Mthunzi: "You'll never disturb me, my love. I'll check on you in an hour. I love you Busi."

Busi: "I love you too baby."

Mthunzi: "Please give the guard the phone." She handed the phone over.

Guard: "Yes my Lord?"

Mthunzi: "Watch her closely, make sure she's not too weak to respond. If it gets to that, drive her straight to hospital. I'll book at Oceans on standby so you won't have to wait. Have her drink some water for now. Am I understood?"

Guard: "Yes my Lord." I hung up, dialing for my doctor at Oceans medical facility. I didn't think Busi would get sick so quickly. The vitamins should've started to show in her system weeks from now. The dosage was too high for her immune system to handle and with that, they'd have to remove it all from her, including the implant which was the only obstacle with getting her pregnant.

## Chapter 98

### SASA'S POV\_

The noise in the Arena was deafening. I sat next to Nkosi still with a veil on my face. The royal speaker praised the family names addressing the crowd and introducing the first performance. It was a dancing group of

young ladies. I watched in wonder. The place we sat in had a perfect view of the entire arena. Yes, it was still intimidating and high off the ground. Yes, I felt very awkward being there but I was enjoying myself. After the dance, group of young men came to perform as well then a band followed.

Nkosi: "You seem to be enjoying yourself." He smiled.

Me: "I am." He held my hand, and kissed it.

Nkosi: "Good."

Me: "Will we have to go into the middle of the Arena as well?"

Nkosi: "Not today, my love. Isn't this thing hot?"

Me: "No, don't take it off. I like it." He peeped under the veil and kissed my lips. "Stop it." I giggled.

Nkosi: "I miss seeing your face."

King: "Mehluli." Nkosi sat back in his chair, still holding my hand. It was such a joyful event. There was now a singer at the center of the stage. His voice was so powerful and the crowd loved him. I could stand up and dance but definitely would never. I was too shy. When the song came to an end, the speaker came forward again.

Speaker: "And now, we introduce to you, His Majesty, King Sikhosana the Great one. The King of the nation. Along with the mother of the nation, our gracious Queen." King Sikhosana and his first queen walked up to the front. The crowd cheered. We waited until they quieted down.

Speaker: "I introduce to you, His Highness, Prince Sikhosana. The future King of our nation. The Royal Heir of the throne-" he couldn't even finish the praises before the crowd started screaming. Nkosi held my hand, standing up. We walked forward to their full view. The King stood on his other side, the queen on my other side. It was time.

Nkosi: "Introducing to the world, Mrs Sikhosana." He whispered in my ear. I smiled. The crowd settled down so the king could speak.

King: "I welcome you all, to this very important ceremony. My Prince has found himself a wife. The Sikhosana family is joyful for this new addition to our home, to our throne. The ancestors will now choose a name upon her life and reign." The healer came forward and knelt on the ground,

shaking his bones. Everyone waited in anticipation. He looked up at the king. What was wrong? He got up and bowed to him.

Healer: "My King."

King: "The country is waiting." He hissed. The healer whispered in his ear. "No. Ask for another one." The healer was stuck. What was going on?

Nkosi: "Father?"

King: "Do it." He ordered the healer. The healer went down on his knees again, doing his chants. I wish this was done in private. Now everyone was waiting and thinking something is wrong. Was there something wrong? The healer looked very scared.

Healer: "I'm sorry, my King." My heart started racing.

Nkosi: "What is the problem father?"

King: "Nothing." He looked back at the crowd, speaking into the mic. "The ancestors have made themselves clear. The throne welcomes the future mother of the nation. Nobomi Thembisa Sikhosana." I was so shocked I could faint. Why would they choose the same name? I couldn't even hear the crowd rejoicing. All four of us were still confused and specifically my heart pained at this. This was probably hurting the king more than he let on but for the sake of peace, he kept the ceremony going. Nkosi stood behind me. I quickly removed the doubt and confusion from my face. He removed the veil from my face. I smiled, still looking to the ground. He held my hand, standing next to me. The band was playing and marching in. My heart was aching. I looked to my left, the king being on the other side of Nkosi. He clenched his teeth staring straight ahead, not even a flicker of emotion on his face but it was a lie because I could feel it. I could feel his heart bleeding.

SIBONELO'S POV\_

The engagement announcement was made. The nation was rejoicing, enjoying the entertainment. What I find very strange was the naming. Why did they use the dead queen's name? Was it because she passed away prematurely? Zwe would be able to answer this question, he knows alot about royal history and why certain customs are kept.

Sibo: "Zwe?"

Zwe: "Prince Sibonelo."

Sibo: "So has the naming always been done publicly?"

Zwe: "Yes. Even with the current queens, it was public."

Sibo: "But the dead queen's wasn't."

Zwe: "She was heavily pregnant. Father says, because of that, everything concerning her was private except of course her crowning because it had to happen before she gave birth to a prince."

Sibo: "Oh. So why did they use the same name?"

Zwe: "That, I don't know but the ancestors are never wrong. They must have a reason."

Sibo: "I guess." I took out my phone to check for any messages. Nothing. Was Zimmy honestly going to make me beg? And was I really going to? I wasn't that desperate. I checked her social media. Oh she was having fun. The past week, she'd been going out to dinners and posting flowers. Who was taking her out? She had nothing posted today, her last update was last night. A picture of herself looking sexy as hell at Amelia's.

"Screen time." A little voice said. I looked next to me. Mngqobi was carrying his now foster son. The 3 year old, Miles. He pointed at my phone.

Sibo: "What's screen time, Mngqobi?"

Mngqobi: "You're asking me?"

Sibo: "Who else must I ask? Miles, what is screen time." Seemingly he can speak. All along I thought he couldn't. He hasn't said a word since he arrived.

Miles: "Its your phone. I watch Paw Patrol."

Sibo: "I don't think I have paw patrol, what is that?" He took over my phone, swiping through the menu and found YouTube. He pressed it and gave it to me.

Miles: "Paw patrol." I typed it on the search button and it came up. He was excited then, jumping over to my lap and watched his show.

Sibo: "Now what must I use?"

Zwe: "Let the child enjoy himself, Sibonelo. You used to love babies, what happened to you?"

Sibo: "I still love babies but I was about to write an email. It can wait, I guess." I sat him comfortably on top of me and watched the performance in the Arena while he entertained himself with Paw Patrol.

Zwe: "Still haven't heard from your girlfriend?"

Sibo: "Nope. Plus she's going out on dates now."

Zwe: "Have you taken her out on a date?"

Sibo: "No. We were in lockdown."

Zwe: "You keep making excuses."

Sibo: "I'm really not. After the lockdown, she iced me and this whole week I've been busy with work. Remember we had to travel to villages around the city to install my network? I have a company to run."

Zwe: "Yet you miss her. That's why you stay updated on her life."

Sibo: "Mxim."

Zwe: "I don't know why you can't just admit that you like this girl and swallow your pride. You want to stall until someone takes her-"

Sibo: "Not again Zwelethu. I heard you the first time! Dear God." I snapped. "Yes, I like her alot. Fine. Is that enough?"

Zwe: "Now I'm satisfied. I can help you."

Sibo: "Finally."

Zwe: "Deliver her favorite flowers, and an apology note."

Sibo: "I don't know her favorite flowers."

Zwe: "You're telling me you haven't hacked her socials yet?"

Sibo: "You told me not to." He smiled.

Zwe: "Good. You can check key words like a normal person."

Sibo: "From what I've gathered, she likes pink flowers."

Zwe: "Organize an arrangement of flowers. Send in your note to write on your behalf."

Sibo: "And if she doesn't respond?"

Zwe: "Send her a gift everyday. Something that reminds you of her. Since tomorrow it's flowers, Tuesday, you could send her a bottle of perfume and tell her you miss her smell. Wednesday send over a singing group to sing for her, tell her you miss the sound of her voice. Thursday evening, send a guard to give her the note to step outside. So she can watch fireworks. Organise someone to light the fireworks. At this stage, she's melting." This seemed desperate, surely. I'm going to look like an idiot.

Sibo: "I'm going to look stupid but fine. Let's see."

Zwe: "Your person is fast asleep."

Sibo: "So quickly? Eh." I paused the paw patrol show. Turning him on his chest so he can sleep properly. I checked my phone going to the website I usually use for my mother when I'm sending her flowers. I looked through the flowers they had available. The Tulips were beautiful and quite unique. She'd like them, I hope. I sent the order and now it was time to write a note. I wish Zwe would write it because I wasn't good with words. I don't even remember why I was doing this. Dear Zimmy- Nope, too formal. No need to greet, just get to the point. "Hey, I saw these and they reminded me of you. I know I acted like a jerk, I am sorry. Please forgive me. - Sibonelo." I wanted to throw up. This was going against everything I am. I don't beg. I sent the order then checked for another store that sold premium perfume. It was a royal store and it only specialized in custom scents. I selected the notes that resembled her. Soft, sweet and with a hint of spicy. Two were recommended, I can't make a choice. I ordered the first one because the bottle looked pretty. This would be delivered to my office, a guard would drive it to her on Tuesday. There, now I was done attending to women for the day. I could focus on the celebration.

Sibo: "Heee. Mngqobi, is this little person wearing a diaper?"

Mngqobi: "I don't know, why?"

Sibo: "Something smells funny. Unless one of you farted." Zwe chuckled. "Was it you Zwelethu?"

Zwe: "Sibonelo don't disrespect me." He laughed.

Sibo: "Mngqobi?" He couldn't even respond, he just laughed silently. "At your big age Mngqobi?"

Mnqobi: "It's not me." He breathed.

Sibo: "What's so funny then?"

Mnqobi: "I don't know if he's wearing a diaper, you'll have to check."

Sibo: "ME?? Mnqobi uyangidelela. Zwe, you're the doctor."

Zwe: "Please don't involve me. Take care of your little person." I looked around for the nanny but she was feeding the baby. Petu had the 5 year old girl on her lap. I checked the boy's pants. Thank goodness, there's a diaper. Can you imagine the mess if he wasn't wearing one? Now we had to mask the smell until he woke up.

Sibo: "Mnqobi, let the nanny know, when she's done she can come take him to change."

Zwe: "Let him sleep. He'll change when he wakes up."

Sibo: "So you're saying I'm going to be smelling of poop for a while?"  
They laughed.

Zwe: "It's baby poop, it doesn't count." How can it not count? It smells.

Sibo: "You can never say no to anything I ask for ever again Zwelethu."  
He continued laughing. Mxim.

## MTHUNZI'S POV\_

I kept checking on Busi throughout the morning. She was responding and talking fine on the phone but wasn't getting better. I was now worried. I called once again.

Busi: "Baby."

Mthunzi: "Hey. I think you should go to the hospital."

Busi: "I'm already on the way there, I'm feeling much weaker now. The guard said he's taking me to Oceans."

Mthunzi: "Yes I told him to."

Busi: "Okay. I'll be fine love. I'm sure the doctor will just put me on a drip and I'll be okay by evening."

Mthunzi: "Okay, but I'm on my way." I hung up before she protested. I went up to Nkosi.

Mthunzi: "Hey. I've appointed Dumane to watch over security. I have to rush to Busi, she's on her way to hospital."

Nkosi: "Is she okay?"

Mthunzi: "She says she is but I don't think so. I'll be bac-"

Nkosi: "No. I'll be fine. Stay with her. We won't be here long, we'll be back in the palace for the rest of the day. Stay with Busi, I'll see you tomorrow."

Mthunzi: "Alright." I looked around, still unsure.

Nkosi: "Go. Update me when you get there."

Mthunzi: "Okay." I went to my car, driving to the city at full speed. I know what I did was horrible but I couldn't help it. This was the worst part, after this, she will be fine. It wasn't ideal but I had to. I didn't want a baby with any random woman from the internet. Once Busi falls pregnant, she will bond with the baby in her belly. Even if it's one child, I'll be fine with it. I didn't need a house full. I just wanted one. It was almost an hour when I parked at the hospital and walked in. The sister at reception smiled upon seeing me.

Mthunzi: "Hi. I'm here for Busisiwe Mwelase. She's my wife."

Sister: "General Mthunzi. Your wife is in room 12. Take the lift up to the third floor, turn left and you'll see it down the passage. Her doctor is Dr Ngayi."

Mthunzi: "Perfect, I know him. Thank you." I went to the lift, and up to third floor. I got off and walked straight to the room first. Busi was on the bed, asleep. The drip attached to her arm.

Mthunzi: "Dr Ngayi."

Doc: "My Lord."

Mthunzi: "How is she?"

Doc: "Better. She's stabilizing. If she'd waited an hour longer, we'd be saying a different story."

Mthunzi: "It's that bad?" My heart slowed. This was not the plan. She couldn't just die.

Doc: "Well, fortunately it won't be. I did a few scans and I've drained the toxins from her body. Overdosage of vitamins. Why they would be prescribed to her is very strange. Right now, I'm hopeful her immune system will pick up. So far, she's good."

Mthunzi: "Uhm, she has an implant as well."

Doc: "We removed it. I saw in her medical history. My apologies for stepping the line, My Lord, have you and the Mrs decided to not have a baby?"

Mthunzi: "She put it in some time ago. Wanted us to wait at first. I'll have a talk with her about it. If she wants to wait a little longer, what should she do? Will you put another one in immediately?"

Doc: "I'd highly recommend waiting at least six months. I want to monitor her closely, letting her body work itself better naturally. For now, she has plenty of other options. I'll have a list drawn up for you." I won't need that. As long as the implant was out of her body, I'd handle everything else.

Mthunzi: "Thank you very much Dr."

Doc: "You're welcome."

Mthunzi: "And you're sure she's fine? If you don't mind, I'll prefer to have my friend check as a second opinion. Dr Biyela."

Doc: "I'm sure but if it's comfortable for you, then get the second opinion, my Lord. I don't mind. Dr Biyela is very good. You're a caring husband. Busi is lucky to have you."

Mthunzi: "Thank you." He walked out. I sighed. The worst part was over. I had six months to impregnate her. It seemed a long time but it wasn't. I've checked alot of information online about getting off the implant and how long one waits before they actually fall pregnant. I was crossing fingers it would be in a few months. I sat on the chair, holding her hand.

Mthunzi: "I'm sorry, love. This will all be worth it in the end. I promise. I love you so much Busi. I promise I will take care of you." .

## SASA'S POV\_

I woke up on Monday morning. Nkosi was fast asleep still but had a tight grip on my body. We were so tired when we came back from the Arena, we only managed to wish my family a safe journey and they left. After that, we left for bed. I feel like we should at least attend breakfast for respect. I tried to wiggle away from his hold but he pulled me closer, growling in my neck before he licked me and fell asleep again.

Me: "Baby."

Nkosi: "Hm.hm."

Me: "We have admin to do."

Nkosi: "Later."

Me: "Baby, please wake up. We need to go down for breakfast, we basically abandoned your family yesterday."

Nkosi: "They're fine."

Me: "Love, please." He loosened his grip. I got up, going to the bathroom. I took a pee, then brushed my teeth after flushing. Nkosi walked in, standing behind me.

Nkosi: "I think we should go back to our own house now." I rinsed my mouth and toothbrush.

Me: "We'd never get anything done if there's no one to shame us." He laughed, hugging me.

Nkosi: "I didn't get the chance to ask you before, how do you feel about the name?"

Me: "Nervous. Scared. Why would the ancestors pick the same name?"

Nkosi: "Maybe you can ask them."

Me: "I kind of wanted my own name. The nation is probably reeling in questions."

Nkosi: "Don't worry about the nation."

Me: "That's not easy for me Nkosi. I wasn't raised to be a Queen. This is kind of new for me and so I'll be worried about alot."

Nkosi: "At least they like you."

Me: "Thank God. Imagine if they started booing and throwing tomatoes?"  
He chuckled.

Nkosi: "You're being dramatic. Take a shower so we can go downstairs."

Me: "Alone?"

Nkosi: "Yes." He kissed my neck, holding my breasts. "Everytime I touch you I get aroused but you're still sore." I turned to look at him.

Me: "Only when you go in, after that...." I kissed him.

Nkosi: "No. Let's wait.."

Me: "Okay." He was already hard. I touched it, massaging it slowly.

Nkosi: "Baby.."

Me: "Shhh." I knelt on the floor. He picked me back up, walking me to the bedroom.

Nkosi: "You're too short to kneel while I'm standing." He sat on the chair and leaned back. "Continue." How he changed into this dominant in a second was such a turn on. I licked the tip, wetting it. Then put it in my mouth and sucked. He held my hair, pushing it in my mouth and back out.

Nkosi: "Ohh..." His grip tightened on my hair, bobbing my head a little faster. I could barely fit half of him in my mouth, so I was genuinely choking. I spat out and breathed.

Nkosi: "Keep going, you were doing so well." His eyes danced around my face, menacingly. I was not a quitter, if I had to choke and die then so be it. I licked from his balls up to his tip and sucked on it then pushed it in to the back of my throat. I softly grazed my teeth on his skin when pulling out and went back in without. He groaned, in a low rumble. I went faster, the flat of my tongue curving the under side of his dick, I sucked.

Nkosi: "Fuuuck..." I pulled it out and massaged again with my hand. "Put it back in Thembisa." He demanded.

Me: "Make me." He grabbed the back of my head.

Nkosi: "Back inside, baby. Don't make me fuck it out of you." I was now dripping wet. I touched myself, looking him in the eye. "A challenge?"

Me: "Make me." He stood up, picking me up and tossed me on the bed. He flipped me over, holding down my hands behind my back. I moaned as he penetrated me, slowly. Moving in and out of me, gently to get used to his pace. I moved with him, matching his pace. He went faster, growling. "Nkosi.." he let go of my hands and lay on my back while stroking in and out of me, groaning in my ear.

He knelt back up and pulled out. A stinging spank attacked my ass. He kissed it, tracing all the way to my hole. "Oh babbby." I cried. His licks were rapid and consistent. I held on the mattress, screaming into my fist feeling my climax coming very quickly. He stopped. "No baby!" I turned to look at him. "Why did you stop?" I climbed on him, he kissed me back down.

Nkosi: "You started." He lay me on my back, still kissing and pushed it back in.

Me: "Please keep going baby, I won't disturb you again." I begged.

Nkosi: "Hmm." He pulled out again, pushing back in. He held my hands above my head, staring into my eyes while fucking. I drowned in those orange eyes, my body heating up, I opened wider for him. He groaned going faster, his grip tightened on my hands. I felt my muscles untangle and my climax came in waves, I trembled like a leaf, leaking and crying. He kept fucking, the same pace, my body stopped and took off again building another orgasm. I just felt dizzy, feeling another wave. I sang his name, feeling for a different craving like a hunger. He lay on top of me, moving the same, holding my body and grazed his teeth on my skin. He climaxed as they sunk in, his whole body shaking.

Nkosi: "fuck." He licked the bite. I tried catching my breath. "I want to stay in here forever."

Me: "So you can keep biting me?" He laughed.

Nkosi: "I don't know what's wrong with me. It's either I bite or roar. The roar is embarrassing because the whole house can hear it."

Me: "You're lying!!"

Nkosi: "I'm serious. The only way I can suppress it is biting. I can't control it otherwise." We laughed. He pulled out and lay next to me. "You're right, with no one to shame us, we'd never get anything done. I really want to just order breakfast up and take a nap."

Me: "Now you want your family to hate me? Unlike you, I still have a chance to be a fave. You're a lost cause. Don't drag me down with you." He laughed.

Nkosi: "How are you this funny all the damn time? We just had sex Thembisa."

Me: "Just say you like me because I haven't even pulled out my best jokes for the day. Come, let's shower for real this time." I got out of bed, my pussy was swollen ready to fall off at this point. Rather that because my husband knew how to lay that pipe. Why the hell would I ever starve him?

Breakfast was rather quiet. It seemed like this was how it usually is. It didn't feel awkward. There were no stares or awkward silence. Just pure silence.

Nobantu: "Nobomi, what is your plan for the day?" I drank my juice. Wait, I'm Nobomi. I choked.

Me: "I'm sorry, my queen. I haven't gotten used to the name. Uhm, I'll be attending my virtual classes from 9 to 1 pm."

Nobantu: "I thought you took the week off."

Me: "I would, my queen but with the lockdown and my accident, we were behind in school work. So I'd rather catch up now."

Nolwazi: "Accident?" I looked at the King. He stared at me so I looked away.

Me: "Yes, my queen. An accident."

Nobantu: "And when you're done with your classes?"

Me: "I'll do a bit of revision and notes then I'm free for the rest of the afternoon, my queen."

Nolwazi: "Your education is more important than your husband?"

Me: "My husband is my priority, my queen but I'm going to keep my promise to myself and finish my degree. He supports me."

Nkosi: "Fully behind you, my love." He kissed my hand.

Nobantu: "When you have an hour to spare, please do let me know. We have a few things to discuss. Protocol, dress code, and all." I felt like she was judging my dress. It covered my chest, tying behind my neck and I wore a cute cardigan to cover the open back. The outfit looked very modest and respectful.

Me: "I think 3pm will be best, my queen." The second queen chuckled.

Nolwazi: "So we're going to be dictated to by Mehluli's wife now?"

Nhlanhla: "Ay, I'm just as confused, mother."

Nkosi: "What is confusing really? Thembisa is not going to cancel her classes because she has to please you. Protocol and dressing up can be discussed anytime."

Nolwazi: "She's a new wife. Barely 24 hours in and she's already back at school. That doesn't seem like someone who prioritizes you, Mehluli."

Nkosi: "Father, please advise what a person who prioritizes their loved one is like."

Nobantu: "Nkosinhle Mehluli Sikhosana!!"

Nkosi: "Mother, please forget about me keeping quiet when it comes to taking jabs at my wife. I will not be lenient at all. I will go below the basement of hell. She has her life apart from me, as I do from her. We are building one together and with that, we will communicate what we each need. To each other. Thembisa supports me more than anyone sitting at this table. She listens to me, advises me and does the best she can in any condition she's in to make sure I'm okay. So yes, that sounds like a good wife to me."

Nolwazi: "My King, are you going to let our son speak to me like this!?"  
The King stared at his food quietly.

Nkwenkwezi: "Dad?"

King: "What is it?"

Nhlanhla: "Are you okay?"

King: "I'm fine." He drank his coffee. Silence fell upon us once again. I hated tension but I wasn't backing down. I will not give in because if I start now, it will happen forever. Now I couldn't eat. Great.

Nkosi: "Father, I was thinking that it would probably be best if we moved back to our house by end of this week."

King: "Okay." I looked at him. Something was obviously wrong. "I have a meeting." He got up and walked out.

Nolwazi: "Never thought I'd see the day you actually broke your father's heart." She got up and walked after her husband.

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

Monday morning. I had a meeting with the council. Nkosi had the week off and that means, it's only us and the King. I thought I was scared of Nkosi, I was wrong. His father is much worse. At least with Nkosi, I trust him not to hurt us. I sat at the breakfast table, checking the news while I ate breakfast. Nkosi's gift was ready and I was thinking of delivering it sometime this week. I decided it would be his wedding gift from my family. Apart from the council meeting, I had another meeting with Phakamisa in regards to the vineyard. Then I have to visit the hospital because Zwe is having an opening today. They were done building, it was suspiciously fast in my opinion but I know nothing about construction. I checked my latest business analytics. The one I had with Jimmy. It was doing quite well and we had a meeting tomorrow with a pharmaceutical chain that wanted to be a part of the delivery process. I sent Jimmy an email with the details of the meeting and time, making sure she knows her attendance is compulsory. I was going to be extremely busy this entire week. Miles wandered into the dining hall still in his pajamas, and unsurprisingly his slippers were on the wrong feet.

Sibo: "Good morning Miles."

Miles: "good morning. Where is mommy?" Oh yeah. There's that. Siza was still in hospital and she'd be moved out of ICU today. Petu and Mngqobi would go see her sometime during the day.

Sibo: "She went to the doctor in hospital, little one. Have you had breakfast yet?" He shook his head. I felt so bad for him but what was I going to say? I couldn't tell him the full truth about what happened to his parents. That would be cruel.

Miles: "No."

Sibo: "Okay. What do you want to eat?"

Miles: "I don't know."

Sibo: "Alright then, let's go look for I don't know in the kitchen." I picked him up, walking to the fridge. "Can you spot it?" He giggled. "What does I don't know look like? Show me."

Miles: "A banana!"

Sibo: "Oh! Well, that's in the fruit bowl. Right over here. Grab one." He pulled a banana off the pile.

Miles: "Please open." I placed him on the counter, and opened the stem.

Sibo: "Pull it down over here. Again. And again. There, now you can eat your banana. What else do you eat for breakfast?" He munched on his banana, swallowing before opening his mouth.

Miles: "Porridge." I took him off the counter. There was a box of his porridge on the other side of the counter. One for him and for the baby. His was written his age. I read the instructions and made it in a small bowl.

Sibo: "Do you think you're going to finish this?"

Miles: "Yes. What is your name?"

Sibo: "My name is Sibonelo."

Miles: "Bonels." I chuckled.

Sibo: "Uncle Bobo. Taste test, tell me how it is." I gave him a spoon of porridge. "Is it nice?"

Miles: "Yes Uncle Bobo." I took him and his porridge back to the dining hall. The family was now seated.

Sibo: "Good morning."

Zwe: "Hello baby daddy." They laughed.

Sibo: "Mxim." Miles was finished with his banana, not really because he only took 3 bites and he was done. "Do you know how to eat on your own Miles?"

Miles: "No."

Sibo: "You're such a big boy but can't lift a spoon? No ways. We have to teach you. Grab it like this, like a shovel, scoop up some dirt, and take it to the construction site. Open up." He took one spoon in his mouth, giggling happily. "See? It's a big boy's job. Show me again." He ate his food and finished.

Zwe: "You see why you have to have one first? I can't do all of that. You'll have to teach me. You're obvious baby daddy material."

Sibo: "Please don't start. What time is your hospital launch?"

Miles: "Uncle Bobo?"

Sibo: "Yes Miles."

Miles: "Can I please have water?"

Sibo: "Sure." I poured water in a glass for him, holding the glass for him to drink. "Zwe."

Zwe: "12pm." He smiled. "Are you bringing Miles to work?"

Sibo: "No. Why would I do that?"

Zwe: "I don't think he'll let you go." He chuckled.

Sibo: "Miles is a big boy. He'll wait until I'm home." I brushed his curly hair. Maybe my parents were on to something or were they tricking me to get what they want out of me? I was suddenly considering having a child but how? I already told Zimmy to be on contraceptives. Would she even say yes to carrying my child? I don't know. The nanny came to fetch him for his bath. I continued eating my now cold breakfast.

Zwe: "Okay princes. Today is a council meeting. It starts at 9. There's not a lot on the agenda, I think we'll be done by 11. Khaya, Mngqobi you have school from 11:30. Where will you be working?"

Biyela: "In my office, Mngqobi has another meeting at 1 and I need him."

Zwe: "Okay, Khaya, you have a meeting with Mthunzi at around the same time. You'll be meeting him at Amelia's."

Khaya: "Okay."

Zwe: "My hospital has an opening launch at 12. It's not a big thing, just an official media statement that we're operating. Pun included." I chuckled.

Queen: "I'll be there my son. You've done such an amazing job. I'm sure it looks even better than before."

Zwe: "Thank you mother. Sbo, you'll be at Bi Connect All day?"

Sibo: "More or less."

Zwe: "Alright then. All the girls will be home and attending virtual classes. The kids have the nanny. Petu, Mngobi will pick you some time during today to go visit your sister. She's coming out of ICU."

Petu: "Thank you Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "We're all sorted for the day."

Sibo: "I believe so. What time do we leave?"

Zwe: "I have to go right about now to the hospital just to overlook that everything is going well before I get to the council meeting."

Sibo: "Okay. I'll start at my club. See you guys soon." I took out my phone, walking out the house. I got in the car, driving to my club. Now that we we're operating fully. I'd opened the kitchen from 10am in the morning. I had 3 chefs in rotating shifts. My alcohol license was from lunch time to 2 am. I needed to apply for the 24 hour one because people need to drink in the morning. How can you have breakfast mimosa without champagne? Insanity. With all of my businesses, I made sure operations were fully legal and not manipulated. Even though my name was influential enough, we didn't use it for illegal things that negatively impact us. Father would have a fit. I walked into the club. They were cleaning up and kitchen staff was unpacking the food. I checked the stock with the manager.

Sibo: "Phila, do girls like to be delivered food? Or will it be like you're dictating what she should eat or you're trying to make her fat. You never know these days." He chuckled.

Phila: "Yes my prince. My father always tells me if you want a woman to love you, feed her."

Sibo: "And it's worked for you?"

Phila: "Yes. Everytime my girl is mad and I don't know why, I buy her favorite food."

Sibo: "See this is why I don't want relationships. Now you're playing a guessing game by yourself. Nx. Please order the meat platter in the

kitchen, have a driver on standby. I'll send you an address to deliver it by midday."

Phila: "Yes my Prince." I walked out, going to the council meeting. The flowers would be delivered sometime this morning. I do feel like I'm doing too much. I can't beg, I've never had to. So if she doesn't respond to this and tomorrow's gesture, then I'm done. I'm not going full week. Angihlanyi mina. There's way too many gorgeous women in this city.

## PRINCE POV\_

I was done with my day just after 1 in the afternoon. I walked into the palace looking for Thembisa. She was in our room, packing away her books.

Nkosi: "My wife."

Sasa: "Hi love. How are you?"

Nkosi: "I'm well, don't you need to do revision?"

Sasa: "No actually, I had a break at around 11 and I was on a group chat with some of my class mates. We made our notes and revision then. I'm done with everything."

Nkosi: "That's good. Then we can go fruit picking and have a picnic."

Sasa: "I'd love that baby but your mother already asked for me."

Nkosi: "She's expecting you at 3pm. We have two hours to lay in the sun." She smiled.

Sasa: "Okay." I kissed her lips and led us out. "Wait, my cardigan-"

Nkosi: "It's hot outside baby."

Sasa: "Yes but I have to respect your home Nkosi. I can't just walk around with naked shoulders." I laughed. After taking her cardigan we left for the garden. We walked out the court yard. My mothers were sitting in the garden table having wine.

Nkosi: "Mothers."

Nolwazi: "Mehluli." She sipped her drink. I know she was mad at me.

Nobantu: "Where are you going?"

Nkosi: "We're going fruit picking then having a picnic on my courtyard."

Nolwazi: "She has you picking fruit like a peasant?" She sipped her wine again.

Nkosi: "Mother." I warned.

Nolwazi: "Am I lying? Have you ever seen a king pick fruit?"

Nkosi: "Maybe if he did, he'd be a lot more happy as a person."

Sasa: "Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "Come." I walked her into the garden.

Sasa: "Babe, you can't speak like that to your mothers. It's very disrespectful."

Nkosi: "And insulting you isn't disrespectful?"

Sasa: "Yes but we can reach a more respectful solution to all of this. Your family and I haven't had a proper sit down and get to know one another. I only spoke to your first mum, not the second."

Nkosi: "I know my family, baby. They will not change."

Sasa: "I don't like it Nkosi. I don't like hearing you talk like that to other people. That's not how I know you. We have to find another way to get through to them." I sighed.

Nkosi: "Thembisa, why do you let people walk all over you?"

Sasa: "I do not!"

Nkosi: "Yes, you do."

Sasa: "They're elders, Nkosinhle. Elders are to be respected, it is in the Bible!"

Nkosi: "That won't work on me, my love. I believe in respect for respect. If you feel it's okay to swear at a child, be prepared to be sworn back to by that child. It's simple. You can't teach a person to be decent to you when you're horrible to them. That's abuse." She looked at the ground, quietly. "Love?"

Sasa: "Hm?"

Nkosi: "Is that what you were taught by your parents?"

Sasa: "It's in the Bible, Nkosi. We're taught about it everywhere." I hope this is not what I think it is. Her father doesn't seem like the man who would hurt her. I wasn't too sure about her mother and I didn't want to assume but this is coming from somewhere. She can't possibly have come from that, surely I would've picked it up when they were here.

Nkosi: "Love, if there's something that hurts you, you would tell me right?"

Sasa: "Something like what?" She smiled. I could see the pain behind her smile. No, this can't be.

Nkosi: "Anything at all. Whether it's family or friends. Even me."

Sasa: "Yes love. I'd tell you. Look, there's a peach tree." She took off running. She lied to me.

Chapter 100 🍌🍓

SASA'S POV \_

The day has been okay. I'd met with the queens and they explained to me about protocol, dress code, security checks and everything. Turns out, she wasn't judging my dress because it was fine, but she was definitely judging my style. I think that's much worse. Nkosi has been withdrawn since our picnic. He'd gone back to his quiet shell of occasional smile and a slight chuckle instead of full blown laughter that I'd gotten used to. I know why but I was not about to snitch on my mother. She's the only one I had. Besides, it wasn't happening anymore, I wouldn't be subjected to her treatment as often and you can't change the past. So it's best just to let it go. I know Nkosihle is only soft when it comes to me, no one else in his opinion deserves his grace and that is very scary because he can do anything to someone who hurts me. I can't let that happen. It was now dinner time and as usual, the family sat quietly at the table. I hadn't gotten to see the twins much. They really never appeared in the palace as if they didn't live there. I didn't know much about them. Amahle was busy with schoolwork today too but we planned to have a hang out tomorrow. Before bed, I needed to call Petu

and find out how Siza is doing. Overall, it's been a good day. I sipped my juice.

Nkwe: "How is your first day inside a palace, Nobomi?" I looked at her.

Me: "It was lovely. You have a beautiful home."

Nhlanhla: "You didn't get lost? It's enormous."

Me: "Surprisingly, no. I've got an impeccable memory."

Nkwe: "Have you been down to the dungeons?"

Me: "Dungeons?"

Nhlanhla: "Yes, that's where grandpa locked and starved commoners. It's like a museum." She giggled.

Me: "Interesting. No, I haven't been to the dungeons." I sipped my juice.

Nhlanhla: "Maybe sometime this week I could show you. As a sister in law. We haven't spent time together."

Nkosi: "Try it."

Nhlanhla: "Bhuti I'm just trying to get to know her."

Me: "I'd love to." I smiled. Nkosi looked at me. What would she do? Lock me in a dungeon? That would be stupid because now everyone already knows where I'd be. "Are you studying Nhlanhla?"

Nhlanhla: "Why would I do that?" It only clicked then, these were princesses groomed to marry a prince who would give them anything they ask for. Why would they need to study?

Me: "I was just wondering if you have a schedule that I would need to consider. I'll just come find you when I'm done." She stared at me with a sizzle in her eyes. Our starters were brought to the table.

Nolwazi: "How was your day, my king?"

King: "Fine." He ate his starter.

Nolwazi: "That's good."

Nobantu: "Amahle, did you have a good day?"

Ama: "It was fine, mother." Okay, so dinner was awkward.

Nkosi: "Do you have any assignments?"

Me: "Only one so far. I need to call Khaya tomorrow so he can help me. I just hope he's not busy."

Nhlanhla: "Who is Khaya? Mother, didn't you forbid friends?"

Nolwazi: "I believe the king did." I looked at the King. He drank his wine, then stared at the glass.

Nkosi: "Friends aren't allowed inside the palace, yes but father didn't say anything about cutting off the outside world."

Nolwazi: "This is going to be a problem. Now, our family things will be discussed with God knows who. Perhaps you should go to your own house, Mehluli. Clearly whatever this girl is feeding you is working. You have thrown away all our customs, you have disrespected and humiliated me enough. It's fine, please, by morning you can leave. I don't want this girl in my house."

Nkwe: "I agree. All she's done is drive a wedge in our family. Now uBhuti doesn't even respect father, he speaks to him and our mothers anyhow he likes. Look at our dad, he's heartbroken and can barely say a word. All because he's trying to keep peace in our family. I hope you are happy Nobomi. If your aim was to break apart our family, you have succeeded."

Nhlanhla: "And so quickly. Imagine when she becomes queen, yoh, She'll kick us out of our home." Nkosi got up.

Nkosi: "Let's go."

Me: "Nkos-"

Nkosi: "Let's go Thembisa." I got up and followed him to our room.

Me: "Baby." He took out a suitcase and started packing clothes. I don't know how he thinks this will work because he couldn't even fold clothes. "Love, please look at me." He looked at me. "We can't leave."

Nkosi: "We definitely can and we will." He went back to the wardrobe.

Me: "Nkosinhle, please listen to me."

Nkosi: "No." He place the clothes in the suitcase.

Me: "This is your home. I need to get to know your family and perhaps we can-"

Nkosi: "I said No."

Me: "But your father needs help. Can we at least stay for him. You can see he's in a bad place."

Nkosi: "When he wants help, he'll come to us." He tried to close the suitcase.

Me: "Can I at least speak to him before we go?"

Nkosi: "No."

Me: "Hayi Nkosi!"

Nkosi: "Don't protest now. I will not allow anyone to look down on you or insult you. I did not go fetch you from your peaceful life to come let you be abused in my home."

Me: "Okay, I understand maybe you can be there when I speak to him then. Please Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Mxim." He walked out the room. I started the packing all over again, doing it properly and finishing before he walked back in. "He's waiting for you in the lounge." I looked at him.

Me: "Okay." I followed him out to the upstairs lounge. The King was in his chair, drinking a whiskey staring at a painting. I looked at the painting. I didn't know much about art but I knew he was a collector and had very expensive pieces around the house. This one in particular, I didn't understand. It was a black and white painting of I don't really know what. It was just lines.

Me: "Apparently, art is subjective. Different to each person that sees it. Expresses personal perspective. Yet I still don't know how I'd explain this." I hugged my body, cringing. What if he tells me to fuck off. Well, he did even worse. He didn't respond or even flinch. I know he knows I'm here. I stared at the painting, focusing really hard.

Me: "The cycle of life. That's what I see. These lines represents roots. Roots are where we come from. It represents those that come before use. This part, entangling, shows hardships. Things we have to face while living. This last part, it looks pure, almost delicate. The beginning of a new life. Is that what the painting is?"

King: "It's just an eye."

Me: "Oh." That's embarrassing. I thought I got it. At least he responded. "It's really beautiful though. Does it come in colour?" He looked at me.

Right, his eyes. Of course they come in colour. "Ah. Your eye does come in colour. Very unique one too. You know when I met Nkosi for the very first time, the first thing I noticed was his eyes. They were scary. It didn't help that he has an intimidating look." I chuckled, sitting down. We sat in silence once again. He wasn't even going to ask why I'm here?

Me: "Are you okay?" He just looked at me again then looked back at his painting. "I'm also confused about why they decided on the name. Sometimes it gets overwhelming because I feel like I'm crossing boundaries by asking too many questions. But that's how I learn. Maybe I'll meditate. Mam Nonkosi did visit the first time I did so she might have answers." He stared at me.

King: "Visit how?"

Me: "When I was in the meditation huts, she appeared."

King: "That's not possible."

Me: "It isn't but it happened."

King: "You're lying."

Me: "In what way would that benefit me? I don't have a reason to lie."

King: "You're trying to tell me, you meditated and a dead person appeared and talked to you?"

Me: "Yes." He chuckled, shaking his head.

King: "If you say so."

Me: "I can show you."

King: "No you can't."

Me: "Yes I can. It will be scary. So you'll have to be sure. I think it can only happen in the villa. I haven't tried anywhere else."

King: "And what happens if I catch you out on this lie?"

Me: "You can do what you want."

King: "So I can get rid of you? With your permission?" Oh heaven and hell. What am I saying? I thought he'd just cut me off but he means permanently?

Me: "Yes." He stared at me.

King: "I'm not Nkosinhle. I don't believe in fairytales and running around the garden, picking flowers, dancing with fairies and whatever nonsensical mythical things you do."

Me: "Yoh tata. That's very bold to say, considering you have lightning coming out your hands." I blurted. He stared at me with contempt. "I am so sorry." Nkosi walked in the lounge.

Nkosi: "Done?"

Me: "Yes." I jumped up.

## MTHUNZI'S POV\_

Busi was doing exceptionally well. I'd taken her home this afternoon. She was already busy with work things but still in bed. I cooked her favorite dinner, bringing it to her on a tray.

Mthunzi: "My love. How are you feeling?"

Busi: "Much better actually. Strange how my vitamins just turned against me, right?" She chuckled. "Try to stay healthy and the healthy tries to kill you." I smiled.

Mthunzi: "I'm glad you're okay. I'd never let anything bad happen to you."

Busi: "How was the engagement? I watched it today on TV."

Mthunzi: "It was great."

Busi: "I'm glad. I have to send her a gift soon."

Mthunzi: "Uhm, love. Did the doctor tell you he removed the implant?"

Busi: "Yes. He said it would be about 6 months before I insert it again. He doesn't recommend the injection yet either. So I have the option of pills or abstinence."

Mthunzi: "Oh. So I'm going to starve?" She giggled.

Busi: "I'd never let that happen. The doctor said the pill is reliable. I think we can try that and then also only abstain during my ovulation period."

Mthunzi: "Alright. Will you need help with planning your calendar and sorting your pills, setting alarms and stuff? I don't mind."

Busi: "You're the sweetest husband any woman could ask for. I know you have a very important job baby, I can handle this."

Mthunzi: "My job is fine. You're my wife and you're also important to me. I will always be available to take care of you."

Busi: "I know. Okay, I'll transfer my app on your phone then you can sort the time for the pills and set an alarm."

Mthunzi: "Seems easy. Did the doctor give you the pills?"

Busi: "Yes he did. They're in my bag."

Mthunzi: "I'll sort them into your pill containers keeping each one in your bags and office."

Busi: "Okay. He also recommended I eat more nutrients since I'm off vitamins, I'll need food that has them. So alot more greens, fruit that is citrus."

Mthunzi: "I'll contact a nutritionist to compile us a menu. What do you think about having a helper come in the house for half day? She'll clean then make lunch and supper. I know how anxious you are about having someone in your space."

Busi: "We can try it again. I'm open to it. I will be adjusting to getting my health back on track so perhaps, someone to help me will be okay for half a day. Maybe let's try three times a week first."

Mthunzi: "Okay, I'll call the agency."

Busi: "Thank you." She put aside the tray. "Do I ever tell you how much I appreciate you? You make me feel so loved and safe. I love you Mthunzi. I'm really blessed to have a man as loving and caring as you." I kissed her.

Mthunzi: "I love you too baby." If I wanted Busi to bond with our baby, I needed her to feel how much I loved her and see that I'm always available for her. I now worked reasonable hours because Nkosi has Thembisa. He also had Amahle who protected him spiritually and anticipated any attack from far. Also Dumane was doing a great job heading his security when I wasn't around. I obviously didn't trust anyone but myself with my kings life but I believe we were doing good so far.

SASA'S POV\_

I insisted on coming to the villa. Our other house was still awaiting furniture. I'd picked out a TV and a couch but it would be delivered in a few weeks. The beds for the other rooms would be delivered this week. I didn't like online shopping. We needed a dining table, coffee table, a rug for the lounge, curtains for the whole house. All these I wanted to pick out in store but I know I probably wouldn't be able to. The freedom of walking into a shop was now a dream because the nation knew who I was. I haven't been out in public yet but I have a feeling there'll be a bit of drama when I do go somewhere. It was Tuesday morning and Nkosi wasn't in bed. It was just after 6. Perhaps he went for a run. I only had two classes today then I'd spend some time with Nkosi. I took a shower and dressed in my baby blue maxi dress and sandals. I needed a coffee to drink while I sat in the garden so I made my way out to the restaurant. Nkosi was here, to my surprise. With his father and a bit of tension.

Me: "Good morning." I stood next to Nkosi.

Nkosi: "Morning love."

Me: "My King, are you joining us for breakfast?" It was way too early for breakfast but why else was he here?

King: "No. You said you would show me how you talk to the dead. Here I am."

Me: "I guess I did. Uhm. You want to do it now?"

King: "Yes. Is there a problem?"

Me: "Erh...no. not really. We can go."

Nkosi: "Where are we going?"

Me: "To the meditation huts love. It will be a good way to start the day. I'll get the supplies." I quickly walked out of the restaurant to go find white candles. I know there was still some of that branch Amahle had given me. Now it was all up to the ancestors. "Please dear God. Show him what he needs to see, otherwise I am actual toast today. I'm wearing a pretty dress, I can't afford to be burnt." I took the matches and candles as well as water. They were waiting by the back exit. Here goes nothing. We walked out to the meditation huts.

King: "I hope you know what you're doing."

Me: "I do." I don't know where my confidence stemmed from but I'm glad it was there. You have to believe in yourself as a person. We reached the huts. "Okay, so I'm not sure how it works. It happened by mistake the first time, and I was alone. So maybe, I can tell you what to sa-"

King: "No, we're going in together. You will show me." The hut was big enough to fit all three of us but now I was scared. What if it doesn't work?

Me: "Okay. Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "Yes love?"

Me: "Do you want to come inside or you'll wait here?" He looked at his father.

Nkosi: "I'll wait here." Damn it.

Me: "Alright, we take off our shoes here and walk in." I took off my sandals and went into the hut. The King followed in behind me. He stood, and looked around. I took the small blanket and covered my shoulders, sitting on the pillow. "It will be better if you sit down my king." He sat on his pillow and stared at me. I lit the candle first.

Me: "I'm starting a journey to light up this space and provide sight." The candle flame shon bright. So far, we were doing good. I picked the leaves from the branch, placing them in the bowl then set it alight as I did the first time. The flame died down but still burnt through the leaves. The smoke filling the room instantly. "Please close your eyes my king." We closed our eyes. "This herb is to purify the air, welcoming only the good sources of energy, sources of light and all righteousness. I am only opening this space for good, for well intending and for protectors. May no negative thoughts linger or intrude my meditative state." The familiar feeling of calm came over me. My senses tingling and tapping into each nerve gently. I enjoyed this feeling so much. The power it gave me was incredible. Even if Mam Nonkosi didn't appear this time, surely the king can feel this sense of peace. I opened my eyes looking at him. He stared at the door, in complete shock. I looked in the same direction, my heart almost jumping out of my throat.

King: "Father." ...

## SASA'S POV\_

Out of all the people, he shows up? This is not my conversation or journey so perhaps I should head out.

Me: "Your Majesty, it is an honour to be in your presence."

Ngidumise: "Yet, you want to leave." Shit, he had the ability to read minds like Nkosi. I swallowed the saliva in my mouth. He didn't remove his eyes from me once. If there was a competition of who I feared the most between the two, shut those thoughts down instantly. I looked at King Sizwe.

Me: "See I didn't lie?" He stared at me sarcastically.

Sizwe: "Is this my mother?" Can't do anything nice for human beings, I guess.

Me: "Your Majesty, King Ngidumise, i thought we'd be visited by Mam Nonkosi. Is there a message you have for us?"

Ngidumise: "No." I shivered. Why do I always have to be in awkward situations? I looked at King Sizwe to say something but all he did was stare at his father. I don't know anymore. "How are you scared of me and not of your husband? He's my photocopy."

Me: "He's a bit different."

Ngidumise: "Good, you mean?" I nodded my head, holding my breath. His demeanor was the same, creepily so. He was just a bit older. "Well, he is me." Finally he looked at his son. "You look well, Sizwengaye."

Sizwe: "I am well, father."

Ngidumise: "Do you have anything you want to ask me?"

Sizwe: "No father." I stared at him. Are you serious? You won't ask him why he lied to you about your mother and hid her existence? You're not going to ask why you don't have brothers? Not even why he never once told you he loves you? The reason you were raised to be so cold and unforgiving? Are you serious?? Kanti why are we here?

Ngidumise: "That's a mouthful." Oh damn it!

Me: "I just think it's very upsetting, my King. I'm now his target because he doesn't have information that I believe he should've received in his youth. With all due respect to you, Your Majesty. This was a dangerous game that almost cost me my life."

Ngidumise: "It's not a secret that I was not a good man. I raised you to be unfeeling because I knew how much hurt you could experience when your world dies in your arms. I never wanted you to ever feel that. It did make me weak but only because I lost it. The truth is that it was her love that made me strong. When she died, I became bitter with rage. I am sorry, my son."

Sizwe: "What are you saying?"

Ngidumise: "I am saying that I was wrong in not showing you love. I was wrong in raising you to be so cold. I regretted it even before I left this earth. I didn't think I should apologize before my death. Instead, I thought having my spirit grow in Nkosinhle would right my wrongs."

Sizwe: "So you decided to put your soul into my child against my will?"

Ngidumise: "Nkosinhle is his own soul. He only has my spirit."

Sizwe: "Why did you burn down that village, father?"

Ngidumise: "I didn't want you to find it."

Sizwe: "You didn't want me to find my mother's roots? You didn't want me to experience just even a grain of her love?" He stood up. "I wondered for all my life, if you hated me. I just realized, you actually did. You resented me with all of your being. You wish I'd died instead of her."

Ngidumise: "That's not true."

Sizwe: "How is it not? I can assure you the only reason I stayed alive was because I was your first heir to the throne. Nothing else. Do you even remember the first words you spoke to me? I'll remind you. You said to me 'your mothers last words before she died while you were in her arms were, You can't kill a king. but that doesn't mean He can't be killed.' Do you know that's all I knew about my mother until this child came along? You call that love? Now that she's suddenly here, I must embrace her. WITH WHAT!!! What did you equip me with to show her that I appreciate her for just this small window of what it felt like to be close to her?? No, tell me because I only know what you taught me. You taught me how to be King. How to rule. How to show no mercy. No

kindness. You taught me how to be a man. Yet today, I'm battling with strange feelings I cannot explain and all you can say is sorry?" He walked out the hut.

Me: "He just needs time-"

Ngidumise: "No he doesn't. He's acting like a child for the first time in his life." He moved closer to me, a dangerous cold breeze whirling around me. "Tell me where to find my wife."

Me: "I..I don't know, Your Majesty."

Ngidumise: "Yes, you do and you will. You have her blood so you will bring her to me." ...

By the time I left the meditation huts, I was shaken. King Ngidumise's voice alone will put the fear of God in your soul. What makes it worse is that, he's not even alive. Nkosi was waiting for me outside.

Nkosi: "Hey baby." He pulled me in his arms. "You okay? You're shaking."

Me: "I'm fine." I looked back at the hut. He had long disappeared but it felt like he was still staring at me.

Nkosi: "What happened?" We walked away from the huts.

Me: "Where's your dad?"

Nkosi: "he went to the villa. Did he try something?"

Me: "No actually. He didn't. Mam Nonkosi didn't appear. King Ngidumise did."

Nkosi: "What?"

Me: "Yeah. I don't know how that happened. I'm a bit scared but before that, your father is hurting and confused. I don't know how to help him. He's really angry at his father."

Nkosi: "What did Papa say?"

Me: "He looks alot like you. He apologized to his son. Then told him, he put his spirit in you to right his wrongs. Your dad is pissed."

Nkosi: "Oh." I held his hand.

Me: "He also wants me to find his wife."

Nkosi: "Who? Papa?"

Me: "Yes."

Nkosi: "That's impossible. You can't do that."

Me: "I don't think I have a choice. I thought we'd have some time to settle into our marriage but I think we need to start soon. First, we need to find the spirits of the lost princes. Perhaps this week." He sighed.

Nkosi: "Okay. Today you have classes. You finish at 1pm. We can travel then."

Me: "We'll need Amahle as well." We reached the villa.

Nkosi: "I'll call her." He pulled me into his arms. "Thank you my love, for being here with me and for me. And my family. Even though, they can be ungrateful."

Me: "Your father said something to his, that is now stuck with me. I don't think he'll ever open up about it but I'll try to talk to him. He said, he's battling with strange feelings that he can't explain. Different from what he was taught about being cold."

Nkosi: "What do you think that means? That he's feeling something?"

Me: "Maybe. Maybe for once he's starting to care about stuff."

Nkosi: "That would be a miracle. He'd never talk to me about it. Maybe he'll open up to you. You're the only person he's spoken to in days." ...

PRINCE POV \_

How is it possible that my wife can see my grandfather and I can't? The last time I spoke to him was at the river and he couldn't show himself to me, I could only hear his voice. But she saw him? Her blood is truly of treasure. How strong can it be to even achieve this? It's incredible. She was now in our suite, attending her virtual classes and making notes. I didn't want to disturb her. My father had left. He didn't even stick around for a minute after the meditation, he left immediately. I wish I'd had a chance to try and talk to him. My phone rang.

Nkosi: "Hello."

Mthunzi: "My King. How are you today?"

Nkosi: "I'm well. How are you?"

Mthunzi: "I'm doing great. I heard last night you moved to the villa."

Nkosi: "Yes. Thembisa insisted. Until our furniture is delivered. How is Busi?"

Mthunzi: "Getting better. She's now exercising outside."

Nkosi: "That's good. I need to talk to you when you're free."

Mthunzi: "Okay, I can come over. I'll be there in an hour or less."

Nkosi: "Okay." I hung up, sitting down to wait for Mthunzi. I wanted to go look at Thembisa but I didn't want to disturb her. It's only a few hours until she's done. Mthunzi parked outside a little under an hour, walking in with Zwe. Isn't he supposed to be at work?

Nkosi: "Good morning."

Zwe: "Hello Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Why aren't you at work?"

Zwe: "I'm slacking off for the day. How are you?"

Nkosi: "You're a doctor."

Zwe: "They'll call when they need me. How are you Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "I'm fine."

Mthunzi: "Do you want a drink?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Zwe: "Why do you keep looking down the passage?"

Nkosi: "Thembisa is studying."

Zwe: "Okay. You'll find us in the bar." I walked to the suite. Thembisa was staring at the computer screen, reading something.

Nkosi: "Hi baby."

Sasa: "Hey." She smiled.

Nkosi: "I'm in the bar with Zwe and Mthunzi."

Sasa: "Okay love. Can you please order me a snack from the kitchen?"

Nkosi: "You didn't have breakfast are you sure you don't want something more filling?"

Sasa: "No love, just a snack and juice."

Nkosi: "Okay baby." I kissed her lips and walked out. I put the order in when I got to the bar and sat down with my friends.

Zwe: "You look well. Marriage loves you." I smiled.

Nkosi: "I know." They laughed, pouring the drinks.

Mthunzi: "So, how is she adjusting to the family?"

Nkosi: "Not good. You know my family. I had to get her out of there. And you know Thembisa, she's very soft. Which is very confusing."

Zwe: "Confusing how?"

Nkosi: "She's a very delicate person but my ancestors have decided she's the perfect person to burden with our problems."

Mthunzi: "What do you mean?"

Nkosi: "The village Papa burnt was called the treasure village. It was said to be the village that birthed companions of the throne. He let one young boy escape that village and I think he knew why. I think somehow, his conscience caught up with him but it was too late to back down and the only way to fix it was to let one person escape. That person was Thembisa's father."

Zwe: "This was Mcebo village? I've read about it, quite long ago but there's not much information about it. It's regarded as folklore."

Nkosi: "It's very much true. Thembisa is of treasure blood, which somehow happens to be quite strong. Her connection to the spiritual realm is so deep. Not only to her own ancestors."

Mthunzi: "So, she's like a healer, sangoma?"

Nkosi: "No. Well I don't think so. So far, she's only communicated with my ancestors and they are piggybacking on her like you wouldn't believe. She dreams, living in the past and also has visits in the present. So far, both my grandparents have shown themselves to her. As in physically. My father flew out of here like he was being chased."

Zwe: "Are you serious?" I sighed.

Nkosi: "I don't know anymore. She's already dealing with alot. Something about her family. I can't put a finger on it and she refuses to open up about it. Now she's occupying her time with these spiritual tasks. Is it not enough that I've changed her whole life now she must speak to the dead?"

Mthunzi: "Jesus Christ. So what do they want? Is there an end in sight at least? Like if you do this and that, it's done?"

Nkosi: "Do I even know? There's two tasks now that need to be done. Who knows, maybe three more come up?"

Zwe: "It does sound frustrating. Look Nkosi, for now, just support Thembisa. When you see that she's suffering, also go to the alter and speak to your people so that they're lenient on her. Ask them to give her breaks. They'll listen to you. Yes, she wants to please them but you must protect her in doing so. The same way you protect her from your living family."

Nkosi: "Then there's the witch. That is another stressful situation."

Mthunzi: "Is the witch a living person? Can we track her down?"

Nkosi: "I think she is but uses the dead to travel."

Mthunzi: "What if you can trace her using the dead body she sends?"

Zwe: "Like a trap? Is that safe? First we need to figure out what she wants."

Nkosi: "I already know what she wants. Me. If she can get to me. Either by spilling my blood, or killing me. There won't be an heir to the throne."

...

SIBONELO'S POV \_

It's been a long day for me and the final meeting I was in was with Zimmy and the pharmaceutical company. She was heading the meeting herself and I was impressed at her research and well curated questions. Mnqobi and Khaya had prepped her well but she brought the show herself.

Zimmy: "Mr Grayson. We are offering this rate as a start. You're the first of many offers that we're considering. From this point forward our association will be much dependent on highest bidding."

Grayson: "You're a start up, a nobody. My brand will build yours and association with my name will bring reliability. I think we can negotiate the rate."

Zimmy: "Reliability has been established and building from it will be easy seeing that our service is a first of its kind. Mr Grayson, I do not wish to waste any further of yours or my time. We can schedule another meeting if you want to think about the offer but I do want to kindly remind you that space will be given to the first to sign." Perfect. Don't drag it any longer, show him you're the CEO and he's wasting your time. Don't back down baby.

Grayson: "Very well. I'll have my office contact you soon." He packed his documents and walked out.

Sibo: "That was impressive. You did great."

Zimmy: "Why is he so stubborn?"

Sibo: "You're a young black girl with no name. He's trying to shake you down."

Zimmy: "That's disgusting."

Sibo: "It's business unfortunately. You have to be tough and stand your ground. You offer value, and reliability. Now it's time to grow it. We have the first prototype for the Bi-motive scooter. Do you want to check it out with me?"

Zimmy: "Uhm..." She sipped up her folder, nervously. "Sure. I'd love to see it."

Sibo: "Perfect. Let's go." She stood up, packing her bag. Her black dress sat so sexily on her slender body. She really tried to pull off the professional look but all I could think was bending her over this table.

Sibo: "Did you get the flowers yesterday?"

Zimmy: "Yes. I sent you a thank you text remember?"

Sibo: "Right. Yeah."

Zimmy: "I enjoyed the meat platter too." She hung her bag on her shoulder, smiling.

Sibo: "I'm glad to hear it."

Zimmy: "So can we go?"

Sibo: "Do you forgive me first?"

Zimmy: "Do you even know what you're apologizing for?"

Sibo: "No."

Zimmy: "Then why are you apologizing?"

Sibo: "Zimasa, I'm tired of these games. I've been begging for weeks."

Zimmy: "I don't want you to beg Sibonelo. That's not why I was upset."

Sibo: "How am I supposed to know then-"

Zimmy: "Why don't you ask me!?! Sibonelo, this is why I didn't want to be involved with you in the first place. You're very arrogant. You expect women to run after you and fall to their knees for you. I wasn't expecting a relationship from you. But then, you spent the week holding me, kissing me, cuddling me. You had a doctor come in and take blood samples so we can stop using condoms. You spent the week teaching me how to make your perfect coffee, your favourite breakfast. You had me picking out your clothes everyday, and making your space comfortable and ready for you when you came home from meetings. I had a drink ready, the humidifier on with your favourite essential oils so that you walk in and relax on my breasts. There's so many extras you'd asked from me and I happily did them, stupidly thinking we're building our way to an official relationship. But no, the minute you felt like it, you tossed me aside. Embarrassing me in front of all my friends after I excitedly told them how much I like you. You could have pulled me aside but because you're Sibonelo Biyela, you'll say it publicly and unashamedly that I'm now dismissed. I wish you didn't teach me to like you. I wish you treated me like a disposable from the word go so I don't make a fool of myself. That's what is upsetting. You know what made matters worse, you then went out of your way to flirt with another woman to poke at me. Was there a reason for you to be looking at Siza with lust? No. You just wanted to hurt me. I'm not even mad shame because I should've known and stayed away. This is just who you are Prince Biyela. But it's no matter. We all live and learn. So we can put this aside

and continue working amicably. Honestly I'm over it. I just want to focus on my schoolwork and business." Why does she make me sound like an asshole? Well... I was but I wasn't intentional in hurting her.

Sibo: "I'm trying to make amends here Zimmy."

Zimmy: "And I'm very grateful for that but please stop. I'm over it. There's no need to beg me or pretend to be someone you're not. We have a long partnership ahead of us and I'd prefer we keep it professional."

Sibo: "So why were you avoiding me?"

Zimmy: "I needed to get over you." Nayi imihlolo.

Sibo: "And you got over me in just two weeks?"

Zimmy: "It doesn't matter how long. Can we go please? I have a test I need to study for tonight."

Sibo: "So you won't act funny when I start dating someone else?"

Zimmy: "I honestly wish you the best." There was not even a flicker of sadness in her eyes. I refuse to believe it.

Sibo: "Are you seeing someone?"

Zimmy: "No." Was she serious? She looked very serious. She must have mastered the play hard to get game but she'll submit one way or the other. "Can we go?" I moved closer to her and she stepped away.

Sibo: "What's going on, Zimmy? I said I'm sorry, what more do you want?"

Zimmy: "To see the prototype so I can go home and study." Maybe I stink? How can she not want me?

Sibo: "So, what... We're done?"

Zimmy: "We didn't even begin." Okay there's no need for this. She will come around soon enough.

Sibo: "Okay. Let's go." I walked out the boardroom, to my office. I switched on my laptop, connecting it to the projector and pressed for the prototype. The video showed on the large screen.

Zimmy: "Looks reliable. Will it be branded?"

Sibo: "It's already branded."

Zimmy: "Yes, everyone knows it's a Bi-motive but to differentiate it from the regular ones. When it delivers my snacks or groceries, I need to see the business logo."

Sibo: "That's unnecessary, these scooters are already specifically designed to deliver for this business. No one else will buy them."

Zimmy: "Branding them will still be a good idea because they will advertise whenever they're on the road."

Sibo: "No."

Zimmy: "I'm a shareholder, Sibonelo. I have a say-"

Sibo: "I'm the majority shareholder and I say it's not necessary. It's an extra expense."

Zimmy: "We can use the money from the marketing budget-"

Sibo: "Who's money?" She stared at me.

Zimmy: "My apologies. Will that be all for the day?" I was really hoping she'd fight me but she just let go just like that?

Sibo: "No. I'd like a report of the meeting with Grayson before you leave."

Zimmy: "You were there."

Sibo: "Yes, and I need you to write a report so we can doc it. Will that be a problem?"

Zimmy: "No sir. May I use the boardroom?"

Sibo: "Boardroom is only for booked meetings. You can find a cubicle on the first floor."

Zimmy: "Okay." She walked out. Zwe was going to chew my head off. But I was done with Zimmy. She's my employee now and she must be treated like one.

Chapter 102

SASA POV\_

I was finally done with my classes and ready to start with our journey. Amahle and the healer was on her way as well.

Me: "Baby. Let's pray."

Nkosi: "For what?"

Me: "To have a safe and smooth journey. Come."

Nkosi: "That's not necessary, love."

Me: "I know you don't believe in prayer but I do. I think it's important."

Nkosi: "Fine, let's pray." I closed my eyes then peeped at him. He still stared at me. "I have to close my eyes?" I nodded. He closed his eyes.

Me: "Dear God. We come to you this afternoon, grateful to be in your presence. We ask that you have the journey we're about to embark on. May you please remove the obstacles that can delay or even withhold us from reaching our destination and goal. We ask for mercy, we ask for protection and most importantly guidance. Amen." I opened my eyes. "Babe." He opened his eyes.

Nkosi: "You haven't eaten."

Me: "I'll eat supper when we come back. I'm not hungry right now."

Nkosi: "Okay." I heard cars parking outside the villa. Amahle is usually in one car with her guard. Nkosi sighed. We walked to the door. Amahle walked in with her father and the first queen as well as the healer. I was shocked and confused. What was going on?

Me: "My King and Queen." I bowed. Amahle hugged me.

King: "I hope we're not late."

Nkosi: "For what?"

King: "Amahle told me that you're going to the villages to collect spirits. Sounded adventurous so we thought we'd tag along." He was doubting again.

Nkosi: "Father, this isn't a game. This is very serious."

King: "I'm also serious. Unless we're not invited, Thembisa?" Oh, so my first name?

Me: "No it's okay. Maybe this will work better, seeing that you're their older brother."

King: "I beg your pardon?"

Nkosi: "Whose spirits do you think we're fetching?"

King: "I don't know!"

Ama: "Sasa, we need to collect herbs from the garden. I already brought a few from the palace. There's two more that are here."

Me: "Okay, let me cover my head so we can go." I went to fetch my scarf and we went to the garden. "What did you tell your dad?"

Ama: "I tricked him. I only told him we're collecting spirits for a ritual and he didn't ask any questions. He jumped." We laughed silently.

Me: "You're the worst. Why!"

Ama: "He needs to call them. He's their older brother. You have connected us to their spirit but you won't be able to call them forward because you're young and not their blood. He's their elder."

Me: "You're right. This would've been a waste of time otherwise." We picked the herbs enough for our trip.

Ama: "We'll only be able to collect two today."

Me: "That's a good start." We finished in the garden and went back to the villa.

Ama: "We're ready."

Nkosi: "Alright. I'll be traveling with Thembisa and Amahle, father you will follow us with mother and the healer. The first village we're going to is Emlangeni."

King: "Again, who's spirit are we collecting? I thought we needed to do a ritual."

Ama: "We do. We'll find the spirit there." I fiddled with my scarf unable to keep a straight face but trying really hard. We walked to the cars.

Emlangeni wasn't too far from the city, just about an hour away. As we drove in, the village almost was in a standstill. This wasn't expected of course and they weren't sure if it was really the King who had arrived unannounced. The cars stopped at the cemetery. This was the wrong place. We couldn't be here.

Me: "We can't be here."

Nkosi: "Why? This is where the first is buried."

Me: "Yes but we haven't even made sure. We haven't asked for permission. We're stealing. Taking his spirit against his will. It will cause problems."

Nkosi: "What do you suggest?"

Me: "We have to start at his home. Acknowledge his other family and have their permission."

Nkosi: "Yeah, that won't happen. Father will drive off instantly if you ask that of him."

Me: "We have to find a way to convince him Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Love, you know this guy."

Ama: "Then you'll have to do it Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Absolutely not. No ways." A splitting headache was starting to crack my skull in half.

Ama: "We're all making sacrifices here."

Nkosi: "Really? What's your sacrifice? You picked a flower from the garden?"

Me: "Can we stop fighting? I'll speak to them, let's go. Right now, we're attracting unnecessary spirits who all want to be taken home. I can't deal with all of that right now, let's just go!" I massaged my forehead.

Nkosi: "Drive." He ordered. The car drove off. "Love, are you okay?"

Me: "We need to finish this quickly."

Nkosi: "Okay. I have the addresses fortunately." We drove to the house in question. At this stage, the village had poured out of their homes. I got out of the car surrounded by guards. Nkosi held my hand. An old woman walked out the door coming to the gate. She bowed, her whole body trembling in fear.

Woman: "Your Highness."

Guard: "May we be let in?"

Woman: "Yes, you may. Hlehle!! Bring the chairs out."

Me: "No ma, may we please come into the house?"

Woman: "Inside my house? Yoh. Your Highness, my house is not in a standard to even be graced by your presence." She bowed.

Me: "It's no worries ma. May we enter?" She led us in, saying a prayer in tears. I walked in the house with Nkosi. The guards surrounded the house outside. "Ma, we don't want to waste alot of your time. As you know, this is the future king. Prince Sikhosana. We are here because we have reason to believe that a child that was born here was one of his uncles." I had no worry of telling her this because Nkosi would be able to tell if she's lying. He was looking around the house currently, I'm not even sure he was listening.

Woman: "We had suspicions, Your Highness. I wasn't sure nor was I convinced. I just want to be honest. My sister had gone out one night to one of her places and never came back. Once she did, she spoke about being with the king. Obviously I didn't believe her. She then showed signs of pregnancy and kept telling us she's carrying an heir. Still, I didn't believe it. I thought she was lying. I know she was a good woman and never lied but with the way His Majesty was? I doubted her story very much. She gave birth to the baby that didn't cry. He was very quiet but well. His eyes as orange as His Highness. I couldn't believe it. The whole village rejoiced. We had a prince in our midst. Everyone wanted to see him. We received gifts from the Chief to the poorest family. All thanking us for the honour of bringing an heir of the throne. The news reached His Majesty..." Her voice broke. "He was only a baby." She cried. I didn't even want to know what he did. My heart couldn't take it.

Me: "Did he acknowledge the child?"

Woman: "I don't even know if that's what it is that he did. He walked in here and looked at him not longer than a minute before...." She wiped her tears.

Nkosi: "I'm sorry."

Woman: "The throne knows what is best, Your Highness."

Nkosi: "No it doesn't. What happened was cruel. We're here, to rectify that mistake. I am sorry that my presence into your home revived your trauma." She kept quiet. "Is the mother here?"

Woman: "No, Your Highness. She committed suicide following his death." My tears gave in. Silently rolling down my cheeks.

Nkosi: "I am sorry." She wiped her tears, fixing her voice. "The reason why we're here, is to ask for your permission. We would like his spirit to cross over to join our ancestors, with the rest of the kings. He is of royal blood and deserves to be welcomed in that realm. That way he can also take care of you here in the land of the living. He appeared to my wife in her sleep. With all the others that were killed as he was. They are in a waiting realm. They all await this welcome."

Woman: "Your Highness, what you are saying has bothered me till this very day. I had no one to express it to because I was so afraid the same fate will befall me. I know his spirit is not resting. I am so grateful that you have acknowledged us this way. Oh, Kumkani yesizwe. Sibonga uMdali ngobukho kwakho." (King of the nation. We thank the creator for your presence/existence.) ...

## PRINCE POV\_

The family of Nalaba had given us their permission to collect the spirit. It is true that the doer forgets but the victim never will. My grandfather ruined this family's life and went home to his. I would've lived my whole life and theirs would be riddled with pain for eternity. This entire village carried on gracefully. No wonder, the fear when we came in. They were still scared. We made it back to the cemetery. Thembisa stayed behind in the car. She wasn't okay, as much as she pretended to be strong. Her tears got the better of her. The healer burnt the herbs, calling our clan names around the grave. My father was not pleased with us. When we told him this was the spirit of his brother, he wanted to scream. It took Thembisa and Amahle to explain to him how important this was. We all had to gang up on him and because he is a person of high shame, he quickly agreed. Or maybe because Thembisa asked him politely. I don't know. It was very strange how he looked at her.

King: "Mandla Nalaba. Ngilapha egameni lomndeni wakwaSikhosana. Mina ngiyiNkosi uSizwengaye Sikhosana, umfowenu. Ngicelwe ukuthi ngikulethe ekhaya." (Mandla Nalaba. I am here on behalf of the Sikhosana family. I am King Sizwengaye Sikhosana, your brother. I was asked to bring you home.) The healer gave him the small bowl. The king knelt on the ground, letting the smoke seep into the grave.

King: "Siyakwamukela njengoSikhosana. Uyakhunjulwa futhi waziswa. Ucelwa ukuthi uze ekhaya." (We welcome you as a Sikhosana. You are remembered and acknowledged. You are asked to come home.) I was quite surprised. This was not the father I knew but I'm glad for once he stepped up and did something for others.

King: "A lot needs to be done here. We need a ceremony for all of them. They need new names, and their surnames as Sikhosana. Then, we erect tombstones. Amahle, consult the elders when we get home."

Ama: "Yes father."

## PETU'S POV \_

I was feeling so much better that Siza was out of ICU. She was doing so well. The doctor was happy with her progress but wanted to keep her there for a few more days. I too wanted her to rest. The kids were doing great here in the palace. Mama Biyela was obsessed with Mia and Maya. She spent every minute of the day with them. She's started to buy them princess dresses and have tea parties. Miles was always laughing running after Sibonelo. The Biyela's had embraced me with such warm arms and I didn't know how to thank them. I pray for every member of this family every single day. They were so amazing. On top of that, Mngqobi hasn't pressurised me just because I'm living at his home. He's given me space but checks on me constantly. Tucks me into bed every night. Wakes me up with a kiss and tea in the morning. He was so sweet. I can't believe my life had changed so drastically and the future made me a little bit anxious. I know I can't just live here forever with Siza. We needed to find our feet. I know specifically, Siza never wants to rely on people. She was already embarrassed by having her children taken care of by someone other than her. A queen, no less. I know Mngqobi offered his house and it was perfect. I just hope she agrees. We can still stand on our own, while living there right? We can still start a business or get jobs. Life was going to be okay.

Petu: "Mama, can I take the babies to bed?"

Mama: "Petu, please stop upsetting me." I chuckled. She never lets me tuck the kids in. "I told you to stop asking. I don't mind."

Petu: "Okay mama." Miles was already fast asleep on his favourite spot on top of Sibonelo's chest. Sibonelo was on his phone, probably doing some work.

Mama: "How about you and Notha go and have a glass of wine and relax, watch a movie. You've been worried for a bit, I haven't seen you relaxing. Sboni will take Miles to bed."

Petu: "Thank you mama. I think just a juice will be okay since it's mid week."

Mama: "Okay sisi." Notha and I went upstairs.

Notha: "I want to take a bath first, can you give me about 30 minutes?"

Petu: "Sure babe, I'll be in the bath too." I went into my room and ran my bath while checking messages. We'd been texting on the group chat throughout the evening. Not a serious conversation just the usual celeb gossip. Zimmy had gone quiet again and I know she's probably going through something. Whenever she was going through her things she held back alot and shut herself in a corner alone. I decided to call her this time. Just in case she answers.

Zimmy: "Hi." She answered. Thank God.

Petu: "Hey babe. How are you?"

Zimmy: "I'm good love, how are you?"

Petu: "What's going on, Zimmy? You sound down."

Zimmy: "Nothing babe. Just exhausted. How is Siza?"

Petu: "She's okay. She's out of ICU but the doctor wants to keep her in the hospital for a bit."

Zimmy: "That's good. Send her my love."

Petu: "Zimmy, what's going on?"

Zimmy: "Nothing Petu. I'm just tired."

Petu: "Talk to me." She kept quiet. "Zimasa?"

Zimmy: "Uhm, I'm going out for the night. I have to go-"

Petu: "No. Zimasa, you're not going to do this again. You just said you're tired, now you're going out? Please talk to me Zimmy? I can ask Mnqobi if he can drive me to you."

Zimmy: "No Petu. You can't do that. It's at night, you can't be unnecessarily dragging Mngqobi out the house. You yourself can't be gallivanting outside. You're like a princess now."

Petu: "Zimmy, you're crying."

Zimmy: "I'm okay, I promise. I'll be fine."

Petu: "I hate what you're doing. You're always ready to drop anything for us but when you're going through something you want to be alone and shut us out."

Zimmy: "I hate that you were right Petu. I should've just listened to you."

Petu: "About what now?"

Zimmy: "It was stupid of me to think Sibonelo could possibly like me. Let alone want a relationship with me." She chuckled. "I'm a real clown honestly because what was I expecting from someone who didn't even remember my name?"

Petu: "What happened?"

Zimmy: "I overestimated my role Petu. That's what happened. I got too caught up. It felt real but it wasn't. I feel so stupid. He used me because I was available and when he was tired, he put me aside like a doll. I only realised it then that I'd been forcing things. I'd been bending over backwards for him and all he did was exist. I should've expected it. I'm okay though. I'll be fine."

Petu: "Tshomi, you're crying. It's not okay."

Zimmy: "Friend, I'm not crying for Sibonelo. I'm crying because my life is shit. I thought I was this happy girl that was so outgoing and friends with everyone but I'm not. My father has cut me off. My mother is drowning in debt. I've started this business and decided it was a good idea to fuck my boss. Now I'm scared that I may lose this one opportunity I have to put myself through school and make a name for myself because of that. If he decides to hold back funds, I will starve Petu, I could be kicked out of school. If I don't submit the loads of amount of work he gives me immediately when he wants it, he might take another portion from me. I have no choice but to be at his mercy. Do you know how fucked up that is? Do you know I read through the contract just now and if I sell my shares to a third party he can sue me? So I'm stuck." She cried. "Petu I've made alot of mistakes in my life but this one takes the cake. You see

that saying about getting in bed with the devil? That's what I'm living right now."

Petu: "Zimmy this isn't right. Surely we can tell someone. This can't be legal-"

Zimmy: "No Petu. Please promise you won't tell anyone. Please. I can't afford to lose this business. Please Petu."

Petu: "So we must just let him take advantage of you-"

Zimmy: "He's not taking advantage of me. Like I said, I overestimated my role and now I have to do real work. I can't just relax because then I was sleeping with him and getting privilege. Now that isn't happening anymore. Just, please promise me Petu?"

Petu: "Zimmy I can't keep quiet about this-"

Zimmy: "You don't understand, do you? This is all I have Petunia. I'm telling you I'm already drowning in debt. How Will i afford a lawyer to fight a Biyela Prince? Even if I do, I will lose because I signed the contract happily. Please Petu. I should've just shut my mouth." I felt so bad for her.

Petu: "I'm sorry. What can I do to help you?"

Zimmy: "Nothing. I'll need time to adjust. If I don't, I'll change my course to part time. I'll be fine tshomi, please don't worry yourself about me."

Petu: "Please don't shut me out okay? If you ever need to just vent, just call me. I'll listen. You don't have to be alone. I know right now things are falling apart but you're going to make it. Just hold on Zimmy." My door opened.

Zimmy: "Thank you my friend. I needed to hear that. Let me not keep you. I need to start studying."

Petu: "Okay. We'll talk tomorrow."

Zimmy: "Bye." I hung up and looked up at Mngqobi.

Mngqobi: "My butterfly." Until when, I wanted to ask.

Petu: "Hey."

Mngqobi: "Did I interrupt something?"

Petu: "No. Was just talking to Zimmy." I remembered the bath water. "Shit." I ran to the bathroom. The bath was almost full. I closed the tap and tried to pull the plug but the water was boiling hot. "Ouch!!" I grabbed the towel.

Mnqobi: "Babe!!" He barged in the bathroom. "What the hell's going on?"

Petu: "Nothing. My brain just fell asleep. I didn't realize the water was hot." He looked at my hand. It was red.

Mnqobi: "Is everything okay? You don't seem okay."

Petu: "I'm fine. I think I'm just tired." His finger touched my chin, pulling my face to look up at him.

Mnqobi: "I love you."

Petu: "I love you too." He kissed my lips. As much as I loved Mnqobi and I was tempted to let him take care of me but I couldn't. Not with Siza and Zimmy's situation. I know Mnqobi was kind and very sweet but I couldn't take the risk. It wouldn't hurt me to be independent by myself. My relationship with him doesn't mean I shouldn't build something for myself. My heart ached for Zimmy. I know she's downplaying how she feels about Sibó and acting tough about the situation but it was killing her.

Mnqobi: "You're worrying me."

Petu: "Just thinking about Siza. Has there been anything said about Jackson?"

Mnqobi: "He was denied bail."

Petu: "Only?"

Mnqobi: "What do you mean?"

Petu: "Nothing. Never mind." I walked back to my room to take out my pajamas.

Mnqobi: "We can't do anything about Jackson babe, we have to let the law run its course."

Petu: "Yeah, the law will give him about 4 years in prison. He'll serve less than 2 and come back to his still successful business and carry on with life when his victim lives in fear of her life and with the scars he gave her." I chuckled. "Abusers never lose anything of their life but time."

Not their life, not their money and not even their loved ones. I'll be a few minutes babe. I just want to scrub the day off me." I went back to the bathroom for a shower instead.

## Chapter 103

A week and a half LATER\*

### SASA'S POV\_

I felt a familiar cold breeze that woke me up instantly. He's been visiting every night since he appeared. He never says anything, just stands there staring with those orange eyes. I always knew it was him. Even though I would open my eyes and see nothing, I knew he was there. He wanted what he asked for and won't let go until he gets it. It's been a long and very draining week and a half but by God's grace We had collected all of the spirits of the lost princes bringing them to the palace. I woke up properly, sitting up from bed. Nkosi was still asleep. Today we had to go to the palace for the princes ceremony. Amahle had told her father that they needed to have a space in the palace where they would consult like they do at the mountain alter. They needed to welcome the ancestors into the palace properly as well. Not much was needed from me anymore and I was glad. They seemed to be on track and working well together. As stubborn as the king was, this week and few days he was just reasonable. I got out of bed, going to the bathroom. After a pee, took a shower. I was so tired. The spirit collection had taken a toll bigger than I thought. I now had constant headaches. I've never had a problem with graveyards or cemeteries so How did this happen? Why am I being affected by other spirits? And how do I make it stop? I went back to the bedroom to get dressed.

Nkosi: "Good morning." I looked at him still on bed.

Me: "Hi love."

Nkosi: "Where are you going so early?"

Me: "Meditation hut."

Nkosi: "Still having the headaches?"

Me: "Yeah."

Nkosi: "What else is bothering you?" He got out of bed, walking to me. Nkosinhle was honestly just built like a Greek god. How do you get out of bed and walk like a king butt naked? Where is the muscle stretch? The yawn? You just saunter toward me like a serpent ready to eat. I giggled.

Me: "Nothing love. I think the King keeps visiting me to remind me I owe him."

Nkosi: "Which King?"

Me: "Your grandfather."

Nkosi: "I am sorry."

Me: "It's okay. I'm going to the huts to plead his case now. At least the princes are done so I can focus on him and his ask."

Nkosi: "No. Now you focus on you. This week has taken a toll on you. You've barely eaten, you struggle to sleep. Let me speak to him."

Me: "I'd really appreciate that Nkosi." I hugged him. If Ngidumise listened to anyone, it had to be his grandson, himself basically.

Nkosi: "I got you. Right now, let's get back in bed and massage you to sleep."

Me: "Massage?"

Nkosi: "Yes, massage. Today is going to be a long day. Let me put you to sleep. Then when we come back home, I'll make love to you until your body passes out." I blushed.

Me: "Why can't you make love to me now?" He smiled.

Nkosi: "Don't mess up my plans, lady. Come to bed." He pulled me to bed and took the massage oil. I lay back in bed, giggling. He poured the oil on his hands, rubbing them together and then massaged my back slowly. His hands were nicely warm, soft and surprisingly seductive. I let my thoughts drift into nothingness while he worked my body quietly.

PRINCE POV\_

Themبisa fell asleep instantly. It wasn't even 10 minutes of this massage and she's passed out. I knew she was tired and I had no choice but to drug her back to sleep, with my hands of course. Nothing required her presence today. I know if she goes to the palace she'll want to run around like the perfect little wife. She's already perfect, she must sleep now. I took a shower and got dressed. I looked at my wife, making sure the blanket covers her properly and kissed her cheek before I walked out. Amahle was at the palace possibly getting ready for the day. I dialed her number.

Ama: "Big brother."

Nkosi: "Tell me, how can I call Papa in the meditation hut?"

Ama: "What do you mean?"

Nkosi: "The way Themبisa makes him or Mam Nonkosi appear, how can I do that?" She chuckled

Ama: "Unfortunately, that's a secret only your wife knows. She told me and I tried it but it didn't work. The healer tried, twice and it didn't work. Plus I know she didn't lie to us. So I think she's the only one who can bring them physically." I sighed in frustration.

Nkosi: "I need to speak to him. He's pressuring her to find Mam Nonkosi and I know she wants to, we all want to but Themبisa is exhausted. You know her, she won't stop until she drops dead. I've had to put her to sleep. I need to speak to him to give her some time to at least catch her breath. He's here every night and I can't even feel him."

Ama: "I don't know if this will work for now. In your herb garden there's a white flower. Pick two of it and bring it when you come to the palace."

Nkosi: "What do I do about it Now?? What if he appears during the day?"

Ama: "Then bring her here-"

Nkosi: "I want her to sleep."

Ama: "Yoh Nkosihle. There's nothing else I can do from here and I can't leave the palace today. You don't have to wake her up, just put her in the car and bring her here. I'll work while she sleeps. Or maybe you could go to the river. We have to figure something out."

Nkosi: "Okay. I'll go up to the alter first then make my way there."

Ama: "Cool." I hung up and went back to the suite. I managed to dress Thembisa in some clothes and carried her to the car. I was very gentle making sure she doesn't wake up. I sat in the back, with her on my lap while the driver took us to the palace.

I looked down at her beautiful face while she slept soundly. I touched her brown skin, feeling the smooth texture under my finger tips, warming the veins connecting in them all the way to my heart. The curved slit of her closed eyes, the curly long lashes splashed in many directions like a happy child jumping in the air. The cute button nose with beads of sweat on its tip. I kissed her slightly open lips gently. A knock on the window disturbed me. Amahle opened the car door.

Ama: "You've been parked for 10 minutes." I fell in a coma watching her sleep. Time didn't even register. I don't know how I could explain it to another person how I felt. "Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "Okay." I got out the car, carrying my wife in my arms and walked up the stairs into the door. My father stared at me. I went up the stairs to my room to place Thembisa in bed. When I put her down, she started to stir. I brushed her skin, soothing her back to sleep. I got up and walked out the room, down the stairs.

King: "What did you do?"

Nkosi: "Nothing."

King: "Did you kill her!?" He hissed.

Nkosi: "No! She's just sleeping."

King: "Oh." He swallowed. "Sleep is good." He briskly walked away. What the hell is wrong with him? I don't have time for this. I turned to Amahle.

Nkosi: "Let's do this and finish it now."

Ama: "Right." She led me to her room, shutting the door. "You have a better chance reaching him at the river." She knelt on the ground on her grass mat and crushed the white flower I gave her in a small bowl.

Nkosi: "Why is that?"

Ama: "He's roaming but the one place you could communicate with him was there, right?" She added another herb.

Nkosi: "Yes."

Ama: "She'll be fine."

Nkosi: "I know." She chuckled.

Ama: "You need to believe that. Strongly. Your power intensifies too much when it comes to her. The way you love her will make you feel possessed at times. We need to learn to control it before your next ability surfaces."

Nkosi: "Next? No, that's not possible."

Ama: "You're going to argue with me when I'm telling you what I was told?"

Nkosi: "What will be the next one then?"

Ama: "I haven't been told yet but it's dangerous. It's not from the good side."

Nkosi: "Why are they giving it to me?"

Ama: "To destroy it." ...

I had run to the river as I usually did. My mind was running as fast as I was, trying to figure which ability could be next. Praying it isn't one that could hurt my wife. I would never be able to live through that. I reached the river. Amahle had given me the crushed herb flower to put under my tongue. This was to help get the message to it's recipient. Even if he didn't come here now, he would hear this. As long as I called him by name.

Nkosi: "King Ngidumise Sikhosana. Papa. It is your grandson, Nkosinhle Mehluli Sikhosana." Then ask for his attention. "I've come to you today, to ask you to hear my plea. Please lend me your ear. Please afford me your time." State your message. "I have brought a woman into your home, as my wife. We have introduced her properly and she has been welcomed. She is now part of me. The reason you can reach her, is that. I humbly ask you Papa, please be lenient on my wife. She has been working on crossing over the spirits of the lost princes, which she has now done successfully. The task was difficult, strenuous to her health. This is a woman who will be carrying the next heir of the Sikhosana lineage please give her time Papa. She wants to help you. She will help,

I ask for time only. You will be reunited soon with Ma Nonkosi. She too yearns for you. We will bring her home Papa." ...

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

I finally sat up in bed, unable to sleep properly. I'd struggled all night long, and most of the week. I know I was stressed with work. The network was growing bigger and I'd had to update some of our servers. On top of that, there's been a spill at the vineyard but my dad was taking care of that. Bi-motive was buckling at the demand since the launch of the new Warrior car. Mngqobi and Zwe were trying to steer that ship as well. The only business that seemed to be smooth sailing was Essen-Assist. My business with Zimmy. If I didn't know any better I'd swear she was pouring her entire life into it. I opened the email she sent a week ago. A brief for an ad. I was way too busy then and this was unnecessary. Now I had a new email with the actual ad. She shot an ad. The business was already doing well, why would we need an ad? I got on the cab app, and typed the address, confirming the ride.

Sibo: "Rachel." I didn't have time for this. "Please get up." I shook her.

Rachel: "What Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "Your ride is two minutes away." She grumbled getting up and getting dressed. From the moment she arrived she started to irritate me. She was my usual call and for the first time, I couldn't even cum. I was highly stressed and sleep deprived so perhaps focusing on fixing my work problems can sort this block. I opened a drawer next to me and handed her cash before she walked out. Why can't I just have peace? My phone rang.

Sibo: "What?"

Zimmy: "Good morning Prince Sibonelo. I hope you're well. I was wondering if you'd gotten a chance to read your emails. I've made the ad and I was thinking of launching it today."

Sibo: "We don't need an ad Zimasa."

Zimmy: "Our reach has dropped by 12% in the past week. With everyone going back to work, they'd rather buy groceries on their way back. We need to nip that in the bud quickly because it hurts the very

purpose of our business. The ad highlights the convenience and how much they need us."

Sibo: "This is not even making me enough money to stress about."

Zimmy: "It has the potential to. Please look at the ad. I've also drafted an update of a new feature we could look into. Like scheduling your groceries to be delivered at a certain time. We could also expand into making hamper pack-"

Sibo: "Zimasa. This business is less than two months old. You're doing too much. Let's focus on growing what we have. No ads. No updates. Leave it as is to grow a market. You don't want to confuse people so quickly."

Zimmy: "Okay." I hung up, getting out of bed. I need to get rid of this hard on.

I arrived at home, when my family was sitting down for breakfast.

Sibo: "San'bonan." I sat down.

Biyela: "Who rocked your boat today?"

Zwe: "Lately. He's been very angry these days."

Queen: "Is it work, Sboni? Oh sweetie, you need not stress yourself, these things work themselves out. Just reach out for help. Your father has sorted the vineyard now, he has some free time."

Sibo: "I'm coping mama, I'm fine." I dished up food, asking the helper to bring me a coffee.

Zwe: "What are you up to today? Can we hang out?"

Sibo: "I've got stuff." I had to avoid Zwe. He had a way of digging information out of me and I wasn't in the mood for a lecture.

Zwe: "What stuff? Come on, It's Saturday. Let's go somewhere for a drink."

Sibo: "Uhm.. I promised Miles I'd take him to the park." This was a blatant lie. I last saw Miles on Wednesday, they were in Mnqobi's house now. Siza had been discharged from hospital.

Zwe: "Are you avoiding me?"

Sibo: "I spent all day with you just yesterday."

Zwe: "We were working."

Sibo: "We can hang out later." He stared at me. I'd find another way to avoid him. Bringing the young princes made no difference because Zwe still lectured you in front of them.

Zwe: "Fine. I'll go to the hospital then."

Biyela: "I'm available for the day. We can have a drink. Your mother is taking Maya to a baby class." I knew this would happen. Because of how close Mngqobi's house was, my mother went there everyday to check on them. And what is a baby class?

Mngqobi: "Oh, so Sboni has the kids for the day? That's good. Siza can then get some rest."

Sibo: "What do you mean? Siza has a nanny, she can always rest."

Mngqobi: "Yes but it's Siza. She's always fussing over the kids." I don't see why not, they're her kids. I ate my food, drinking my coffee.

Khaya: "Bobo, did you see the new ad Zimmy made?" She better not have gone over my head.

Sibo: "What ad?"

Khaya: "About Essen-Assist. The convenience of it. She's really good. She said she'd send it to you for approval. What do you think?"

Sibo: "I haven't seen it."

Khaya: "Well, I think it's great. It'll drive up the numbers again."

Sibo: "We don't need an ad, Khaya. The business is doing just fine."

Zwe: "It could do a lot better."

Sibo: "No it can't."

Zwe: "Haaa, Sibonelo. What's going on? This is a good idea, especially the update-"

Sibo: "The update will confuse the market, we barely have enough numbers in its introductory phase."

Zwe: "Then run the ad."

Sibo: "If you think you can do this better than me, then you take the business. I have a multi million dollar company that needs my full brain attention. Little business ads aren't worth my time. Plus this will be a waste of money."

Queen: "Haibo Sibonelo."

Zwe: "Were you not the one pushing to invest in this company?"

Sibo: "I was only helping."

Zwe: "Now why are you acting like you were forced? She dumped you, didn't she?"

Sibo: "Zwelethu!!" I snapped.

Zwe: "That's why you're acting like this."

Sibo: "We're having breakfast, Zwelethu. I told you before, there's nothing serious with Zimasa. I'm only focusing on business but moderately and not overloading unnecessary information to the public. Why is this difficult to grasp?" I got up and walked out. "And you can't dump a person you're not in a relationship with!!" I got in my car driving off.

Mnqobi's house was not too far and so I was still kind of irritated by the time I arrived. Siza was in the lounge doing something I didn't quite understand.

Sibo: "Hi."

Siza: "Prince Sbo."

Sibo: "What are you doing?"

Siza: "I'm getting the kids ready to do their hair."

Sibo: "You can do hair?"

Siza: "My kids hair." She chuckled.

Sibo: "Why not take them to the salon?" She smiled and continued with her task. "Fine, let me take them. I'm going out anyway. Maybe we can have some ice cream or something."

Siza: "Uhm, that would be very nice of you but no thank you Prince Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Why?"

Siza: "You don't have to do all of this. You've done enough and there's no way I can pay you back." I didn't want to be paid back. She was family, why didn't she understand this?

Sibo: "That's not how families work Sizani. We don't do things for each other to be paid back. Your sister is involved with my brother, looking like they'll marry. You're family." She sighed.

Siza: "Okay. I'll get the kids ready." She walked down the passage. If I let this ad run, they'll leave me alone right? Surely they should. I don't need Zwelethu breathing down my neck. I sent a message: <You can launch the ad when ready.> I sent it. She responded: <Thanks.> Just thanks like I'm a dog. I went over to her socials. No new pictures since Thursday when she uploaded a selfie smiling happily at the camera. I could see a peak of her cleavage covered by her cut shirt.

Miles: "Uncle Bobo!" He came running. I picked him up, placing my phone on the counter.

Sibo: "Hey you." His hair was growing in huge curls also covering his eyes so he had to tie it up in a ponytail.

Mia: "Hello Uncle Bobo."

Sibo: "Hi Sweetheart." I looked at Siza. "I'll bring them back in the afternoon. Is that okay?"

Siza: "Yes. Uhm, please make sure they use the gentle shampoo for them both. Mia only needs her split ends cut, her hair washed and that's all. Here are her ribbons. Miles needs a cut."

Sibo: "All of it?"

Siza: "Half of it. We're going into winter so he needs just a bit to keep his head warm."

Sibo: "Alright then." She gave me a packed bag.

Siza: "A diaper for Miles. He's potty training but I give him a break since he's going outside because he gets anxious when he's in public, so he might not say anything. There's also changing clothes."

Sibo: "Okay, this is getting complicated."

Siza: "If there's a problem, please call me."

Sibo: "Okay."

Siza: "How's Zimmy doing?" I looked at my phone.

Sibo: "I don't know, good I guess."

Siza: "I thought you were dating."

Sibo: "No. We weren't dating. It was a fling that has now ended."

Siza: "Right.. well, have a good day."

Sibo: "We're just business partners...so."

Siza: "You don't have to explain yourself." She chuckled. "Do you want to talk about it?"

Sibo: "I don't do those things."

Siza: "I don't judge." I put Miles on the ground giving him my phone on child lock. I'd had to create this feature just for him last week so he can play with my phone. Only his apps were open to him. He ran off to the lounge.

Sibo: "I like Zimmy. I do. I just ..don't know if I'm ready. My last relationship almost chewed me out. I don't have the capacity to handle that kind of emotional torment again. And I feel so pressured. My family is always asking, begging for a child, wanting me to marry. At this stage I feel like if I grabbed a lady of the street and brought her home they'd throw a celebration. Like they're trying to get rid of me." She laughed.

Siza: "I'm sure it's not that bad."

Sibo: "I thought that too but it is that bad. Then my brothers are getting married and finding love. Mnqobi is the happiest I've ever seen him, Mthunzi is happily married and always talking about how he loves his woman. I don't even want to mention the Prince, he'll make you want to borrow his manual. I know if Zwe meets someone, it's over for me. I will be alone."

Siza: "Okay, I hear you. From being around your family, I think they're reasonable and kind people. All you have to do is be open and tell them. Tell them you're not ready. You're not willing to string someone along. But nawe Sibonelo, find a way to heal from your last relationship. That's what is holding you back. What happened there?"

Sibo: "Same thing that always happens Siza. I started working when I was 15. I've built Bi-connect from scratch. That is my baby. It will always be my priority. Having that and being a Prince, it was alot."

Siza: "And it went to your head making it bigger than it already is." I laughed.

Sibo: "No. Maybe. Well, it cost me my first real relationship. She was dealing with alot of trauma, I introduced her to therapy but I wasn't there. I didn't give her what I gave Bi-connect. See, if Bi-connect had a malfunction, I ran to it. I attended to it, I made sure it was okay before I stepped back and relaxed. With her, I pushed her to therapy everytime. Her breakdowns, her attempts, I didn't attend to it. I just booked the facility and paid. She was very grateful for it but she no longer wanted to be a burden to me. So she left."

Siza: "That's sad. So how is she now? Have you seen her recently? Perhaps you're a different person than you were then." I chuckled.

Sibo: "She's happily married to my friend. The King's advisor. I need alcohol."

Siza: "Unfortunately there's none in this house and you're not taking my kids anywhere while drinking."

Sibo: "Sorry."

Siza: "So you didn't date again after that?"

Sibo: "I did. I dated a bit but that's not really my thing so I got into a relationship with another woman, Becca."

Siza: "What happened with her?"

Sibo: "Becca was exactly like me." I laughed at the memory. I haven't thought of her in a while. "She was career driven just like me. We worked well together. The problem was, we worked too well. It was more like a business than a relationship. Maybe I preferred it that way but she got bored. She met someone who made her laugh, who listened to her, someone who made an effort. Apparently booking out expensive restaurants isn't as good as being cooked for. So she called me to her house and asked me if I was willing to accommodate her love. I said no. And she left."

Siza: "So what I'm hearing from both these relationships is that, these women needed you emotionally and mentally there but you couldn't

because your first priority is something that you've built even before thinking of relationships. Your understanding of marriage is providing stability not love. Have you ever taken a break from being a CEO of this giant company? Have you ever thought of finding a hobby? Discovering yourself as a person? You've built your entire being to be a powerful Prince, why?" She folded her arms. "You wanted to take over that throne, huh?"

Sibo: "hey-"

Siza: "I'm not judging."

Sibo: "That was a long time ago. I am not that person anymore. Prince Sikhosana is doing a great job and I'm in a good position in his council. We're building a really good relationship and I won't let anything destroy it."

Siza: "Sibonelo, relax. I'm not accusing you of anything. That's the reason why you're feeling lost. You worked your way to this point and now that you're here, there's nothing of value standing by your side. That's why you're scared of going into another relationship, because you have to learn. You can't be Prince Sibonelo Biyela, the CEO, even to someone that wants to love you. Just let them in. Learn to fully love, be there and not just provide. You're allowed to make mistakes."

Sibo: "I can't just leave my company, we've just started new projects. See now, you want me to go broke? Women need gifts, Siza." She giggled.

Siza: "Just try. Have a week off. Put someone else in charge for once. Try and not be a Prince. Be Sibonelo and find stuff you like." This will be hard. I don't take breaks. I don't have off days. This is why everywhere I am, I need a signal or I'm going home. It's not up for debate. My company will be turning 15 years in some months and this will be a huge milestone but it wasn't as exciting. It was all the same. I'd spent half my life on it and the only thing I had to show for it is a beautiful bank balance. So what did I love?

Chapter 104

PETU'S POV\_

Today was Saturday, and the weather was fantastic. I'd moved with Siza to Mnqobi's house when she was discharged. We have decided to stay, and accept the help from the Biyela's. In the same breath, working for our own. We're in a safe neighborhood, Jackson won't get access here no matter how much money he has, it would never even be a fraction of the Biyela family. He can't get to Siza anymore. I can continue with school without stress, continue saving and Siza was looking for a job. Mama Biyela wanted her to go back to school funded by the family companies. I think she was going to agree. She wasn't closing herself off and shying away as she usually did. That made me so happy because she deserved this. She deserved a real chance. After my shower, I went downstairs.

Petu: "Big sis. Was someone here?" I smelt the strong cologne still lingering in the air.

Siza: "Yes, Sibonelo came to fetch the kids for a day out."

Petu: "Oh." She cleaned the lounge. "He's really good with the kids."

Siza: "Very."

Petu: "I think he likes you."

Siza: "That's ridiculous." She chuckled. "Sibonelo is a little rough around the edges but he's a good guy. I think he's just being nice."

Petu: "Really now." I rolled my eyes, going to the kitchen.

Siza: "What does that mean?"

Petu: "Nothing. Just be careful with him Siza. You're in a vulnerable space right now. You're allowed to have comfort but please guard your heart when it comes to Sibonelo."

Siza: "What does that even mean? What comfort?"

Petu: "Any Siza. We're human. I'm just saying, whatever it is you decide to do with him, guard your heart."

Siza: "I'm not about to sleep with your brother in law Petunia."

Petu: "I'm not saying you will-"

Siza: "No, that's what you're implying. I'm not a whore. I'm trying to rebuild my life and the only thing you can think of me is that I need sex?"

Petu: "I didn't say that Siza. And even if you did, there's nothing wrong with having sex whilst rebuilding your life. You're not a whore and I'll never think that of you so please never say that word again."

Siza: "I don't need men right now Petu. I am in a very dark place because of them. I'm sorry I snapped. "

Petu: "That's okay." I went over to hug her. "We're going to get through this."

Siza: "Thank you baby. Sometimes I feel so out of place here but I've never seen my kids so happy. Miles is running around, laughing. Mia sings, Petu. My child can sing. I didn't even know that." I smiled.

Petu: "And she has a beautiful voice. We'll be fine here. I'm happy that you're safe and here with me. So, what will you do today since the kids aren't here?" She laughed.

Siza: "I don't know. I haven't had time alone in years."

Petu: "Write something."

Siza: "I don't think I can-"

Petu: "Don't even. Sizani please. Write a short story. In fact, I'm asking Sbo to take the kids to the palace for a sleepover tonight. You, are going to write like you used to write for me in high school. Remember?"

Siza: "That was such a long time ago Petu."

Petu: "I'm begging you."

Siza: "Okay, fine. I'll need my laptop."

Petu: "Use mine for now. I'll ask Mngqobi when we can collect the rest of your stuff from your house but you won't go there by yourself, the Biyela's will never let you." She smiled.

Siza: "Okay but let me finish cleaning." I went to make myself a fruit salad and went upstairs to get dressed. I chose a white and orange striped pencil skirt with a slit on the side. A white crop with a cut across my cleavage but still keep it classy. I wore orange sandal heels and fixed my hair with just a little bit of makeup. Today, I had my date with Mngqobi and Nothando. Notha and I planned this outfit last night. She was really into clothes even though she was subtle about it I could see how she enjoyed putting together my outfit. Things were starting to get a little strange. We spent a lot of time together and in that time, i was getting to

know the real Nothando. I don't think anyone knows this side of her and I loved that it was only me that had access. The princess was quickly fading away and this beautiful lively girl was emerging. It was a strange feeling to always want to call her immediately when I woke up. When I was living in the palace, we slept in the same room most days because we would talk well into the night. I stood in front of the mirror and took a picture of myself, I sent it to Mngqobi. He responded immediately: <You look sexy as hell, my butterfly. Jesus. The colour combination is complimenting your skin. You are so gorgeous. Baby, uzongincisha still? Yoh I'm dying.> I laughed. He's so stupid. <Yes baby. You have to learn patience.> I sent it. I packed my handbag with my essentials and put some perfume on me. Notha called.

Petu: "Hey love."

Notha: "I'm coming to pick you up. We'll go to the restaurant together, Mngqobi has something to sort out at Bi-motive then he'll join us in a bit."

Petu: "Can I drive my car?"

Notha: "Why do you think I'm coming to you?" We giggled. "I need you to drive that car. The guard will follow behind us." I wanted to scream with excitement.

Petu: "Okay, I'm ready. Arrive already!" She giggled hanging up. I took one last look at myself and walked out.

SASA POV\_

I woke up, stretching my body and opening my eyes. How did I get here? I'd slept at the villa, I remember very well so how am I in Nkosi's room at the palace? I sat up. Not again. He sat on the chair further from the bed, staring at me. Was I dreaming? Why was I here?

Me: "Your Majesty." I bowed my head.

Nkosi: "Love." He stood up walking to me. I sighed in relief. So it was Nkosinhle. My mind was playing tricks on me.

Me: "I thought you were King Ngidumise."

Nkosi: "Oh. I'm sorry love. I didn't want to wake you up." He climbed in bed. I cuddled on his chest. "I sent him a message and I'm sure he will receive and hear it. Please let me know if he appears again."

Me: "Okay. Thank you. How did we get to the palace?"

Nkosi: "I put you to sleep, I didn't want you to do anything but rest today."

Me: "But it's an important day."

Nkosi: "Was. It's early evening. Everything was a success and you're well rested. I'm happy."

Me: "I missed it?"

Nkosi: "There was not much honestly. Each prince had an animal slaughtered for them. Father said a few words to send them off well. He announced their names and welcomed the ancestors into the palace altar. All of it went well." I sighed.

Me: "I'm glad to hear that. We've successfully completed our first task. Yay us." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "Yes, yay us. Can I order up some food so we can eat?"

Me: "I haven't even said hello to the family Nkosi."

Nkosi: "That's not necessary."

Me: "Can we at least have dinner with them then we'll come back here?"

Nkosi: "I don't want you near them."

Me: "I know love, but let's try again." He sighed, getting up.

Nkosi: "I'm only accepting because my father is convinced I've killed you." I stared at him.

Me: "Why would he think that?"

Nkosi: "He saw me bringing you in while sleeping and almost had a fit." I got out of bed and looked at the dress I was wearing. I'm pretty sure he grabbed the first thing he saw.

Me: "Love, why am I wearing a nightgown?"

Nkosi: "That's not a dress?"

Me: "No baby. This is what I put on to go to sleep."

Nkosi: "I've never seen you wear that to bed."

Me: "Because you want me to sleep naked." He laughed.

Nkosi: "It's comfortable. But this looks pretty."

Me: "I know it looks pretty, but I look like sleeping beauty." He pulled me in his arms.

Nkosi: "Do you want to wear one of my suits?" I laughed.

Me: "I must have a dress somewhere here baby." I looked through the wardrobe, fortunately I had the navy blue maxi dress. I got dressed and we made our way down to the dining hall. There was no TV in this house, Why? It was so strange. "Love?"

Nkosi: "Yes baby?"

Me: "Do you have a TV? I haven't seen one." He laughed.

Nkosi: "Personally I don't have one here. There is one in the media room though."

Me: "What is the media room?"

Nkosi: "A room that has all the news updates. There's a screen that displays the news and a media team working."

Me: "Wait ... You're telling me, there's a room where there are people watching the news 24/7 inside this house?"

Nkosi: "They work in shifts, yes. Each has a screen and they sift through the news that is broadcasted"

Me: "Wow. And that's the only TV?"

Nkosi: "I think the twins have TV's. I don't know, I've never been in their lounges."

Me: "Every person in the palace has a lounge?"

Nkosi: "Yes my love. For relaxing. It's usually designed to their liking and hobbies."

Me: "That's really cool."

Nkosi: "You don't have a lounge?"

Me: "At home? It's only one and everyone uses it at the same time. We watch TV, we talk about stuff."

Nkosi: "Talk about what stuff?"

Me: "What happened during the day, fresh gossip, just general stuff."

Nkosi: "Then what do you talk about at dinner?"

Me: "More of that. We're just always talking, telling stories."

Nkosi: "You mean you have a story to tell everyday?" I giggled.

Me: "Not everyday. But as long as we go outside, there's something to come back and tell."

Nkosi: "We don't talk here."

Me: "Because you don't have a TV and you're always indoors. At least you have a story to tell."

Nkosi: "Which is what? How I met you?"

Me: "We went to Langoluhle remember? You got dressed like a civilian and no one recognised you." He smiled.

Nkosi: "That was fun." We walked into the dinner hall. Everyone was sitting down. The King looked at me then back down at his glass.

Me: "Good evening my King, queens and princesses." No one responded. Nkosi pulled my chair for me to sit down.

King: "Good evening." He drank his whiskey. I smiled. That was the first time he's ever greeted back. He never greets back. Ever.

Nkosi: "Can I pour you some wine love?"

King: "Is she not pregnant? Why are you feeding her alcohol Nkosinhle?" I choked and coughed, lightly.

Nkwe: "Ha? Already?"

Nkosi: "Thembisa is not pregnant father."

King: "Why?" Does he HAVE to be like this? Why doesn't he have secrets? Or Gossip at least?

Nkosi: "We can go ahead and lay this conversation to rest. Thanks." He poured the wine in my glass.

King: "We need an heir."

Nkosi: "Need is abit dramatic. We'll get there, when we get there." I took a sip of my wine.

Nhlanhla: "So...Nobomi, you decided not to join us for the ceremony today? As a wife of the family?"

Nkosi: "She was tired."

Nhlanhla: "From what bhuti? We weren't even doing anything. Just her presence as a guest of the family."

Nkosi: "Ask father. Perhaps if it comes from him, you'll understand."

Nhla: "Father?" The king looked at her.

King: "Yes, Nhlanhla?" The question disappeared in her mouth after looking at her father.

Nhla: "Nothing Father." The second queen stared at me, with a look of pure hatred. I didn't need these problems, I drank my wine.

Me: "This is a really good blend." I whispered to myself.

Nkosi: "It's the same range of the wine we had on our first picnic."

Me: "It's amazing. Surprisingly light for a red."

Nkosi: "Pinot Noir, a delicate kind. Maybe I should take you to a vineyard tomorrow so we can sample a few to collect for our house."

King: "Sounds like a good trip, we can go to the Biyela farm."

Nkosi: "You don't have to come father. It's okay."

King: "I insist. You know nothing about wine. Next thing you know you're feeding her dry sour grapes."

Nkosi: "That's wine."

King: "I have good taste, I can help."

Nobantu: "Love, maybe we should let the kids have time alone."

Nolwazi: "Love?"

Nhlanhla: "Thought his name was My King." She mumbled.

King: "I'm only there to help them choose, I won't be in their way."

Nkwe: "It would be nice to visit a vineyard. We never go anywhere."

Nkosi: "Why does it have to be during my date with my wife?"

Nkwe: "I'll be helping dad, we won't be in your way bhuti." I sipped my wine quietly.

King: "Settled, we're going to the vineyard." Our starters were served.

Nobantu: "Nobomi, do you and Nkosi have regular dates?"

Me: "Yes my queen. Every weekend."

Nhla: "Dates?"

Nkwe: "Every weekend?"

Nolwazi: "No wonder he's never here."

King: "What do you do on these dates?" I looked at Nkosi, he was eating his starter, unbothered.

Me: "We just spend time. Together. We eat our favourite foods, just hang out."

Nolwazi: "That's it ? That's a date?"

Me: "It varies, my queen. We enjoy picnics alot. I like fruit picking and flower arranging. Nkosi teaches me about plants and I make flower bouquets for my friends. We have movie nights, each of us choose a genre for the night and then two movies. We get snacks, drinks and some games."

Nkosi: "I look forward to movie nights now." He chuckled.

King: "Why? You can predict almost anything."

Nkosi: "Sometimes Sasa tricks me. It's funny." We giggled.

King: "I don't get it."

Me: "Since he predicts. We choose a genre, for example Comedy. I then give him a list of titles, all of them wrong. He chooses one and it turns out to be a drama. It takes him a while to get it. It's fun."

Nkwe: "That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard."

Nkosi: "That's because no one likes you." Amahle laughed. I almost choked on my food. Problem with Amahle's laugh is it's always unexpected and menacing.

Nobantu: "What about Nkosi's interests? All of this doesn't sound like him."

Me: "Nkosi likes being in nature. We've touched alot on the plants and how he cares for them. We've hiked together and he promised to take me to the woods some time."

King: "To do what in the woods."

Nkosi: "Why does it matter?"

King: "There's nothing you can do in the woods unless you have a secret cave of adventures only known to you."

Nkosi: "Exactly that."

Nolwazi: "It just seems to me all of these activities are a distraction. You're the future king, Mehluli. The only one. You need to be focused on the country."

Nkosi: "I focus on the country, mother. Monday to Friday, 8 to 4. Having time off helps me rest."

King: "You've been doing an outstanding job thus far so it must be working."

Nkosi: "Thank you." Our main meals came to the table. The family started eating.

Me: "Maybe we could have a lunch at the vineyard? As a family. That would be lovely."

Nkosi: "I'll call Zwe after dinner to have it prepared."

Nobantu: "No Nkosi, Zwelethu is a Prince. This I'm sure we can sort as women, isn't that right Nobomi?"

Me: "Yes, my queen. I'll make the arrangements." I didn't even know where to begin. At least I don't have to cook, I just needed a menu. I've never had to prepare a lunch for a big family. A judgemental and high royal one to be specific. This would be stressful.

Chapter 105

MTHUNZI'S POV

I'd had an off day this Saturday because Nkosi was busy with a ceremony at the palace and they wouldn't be leaving until Sunday morning. I took Busi to the hospital to get her blood results. Zwe had offered to check her and did blood tests a week and a half ago. We made our way there during the afternoon.

Mthunzi: "How are you feeling?" I drove while she sat in the passenger seat, staring out of the window. A lot of the time, Busi was quiet. In our first months of dating this scared me because I thought she was upset. She just had her days of silence where she stared out of the window day dreaming or listening to music in the dark. She enjoyed her peace.

Busi: "Good. I feel so much better. I thought stopping the vitamins would give me less energy but they didn't. I'm still as active."

Mthunzi: "Do you think you'll go back to using vitamins then?"

Busi: "Probably but only recommended by Zwe. He seemed really knowledgeable when he took my blood tests. It's clear my previous doctor didn't know what he was doing."

Mthunzi: "Hm. That's good. Zwe is a great doctor. And the pill? How is it treating you? Have you felt any changes?"

Busi: "Not at all. I think I'm getting the hang of it now. Thank you baby for organizing the schedule and the alarm clocks all around me. I didn't even know you could have a timer alarm on your key chain." She giggled.

Mthunzi: "It's good technology. So, does that mean we can stop using condoms now?"

Busi: "Yes love. Dr Ngayi said to give it about two weeks to get into my system and then we should be fine. But for extra precautions, we should double protect on my ovulation week by using a condom or abstain."

Mthunzi: "Oh, Okay. Love, what would you do if a mistake happened and you got pregnant? Accidentally of course. Would you keep it?" She laughed.

Busi: "Don't worry baby, accident won't happen because we're being very safe."

Mthunzi: "Just in case, it does. What would you do?"

Busi: "I don't know. It's very uncomfortable to think about but it is a very tiny possibility. I would be horrified. So much so, I don't think my brain can wrap around what I would actually do." She looked at her shaking hands.

Mthunzi: "Why is that?"

Busi: "I think maybe it's because, it's something that I know I wouldn't enjoy. It would be extremely upsetting. And it would hurt. It would hurt because I know you would want me to keep it but I wouldn't know how to love it. I wouldn't want to participate. So it would be forcing me to do something I don't want to do, for the rest of my life."

Mthunzi: "It would get better though, right?"

Busi: "No it wouldn't. This was not an easy decision for me to make Mthunzi. Why do you think I've been in therapy for almost ten years now? It's not going away. The decision is still the same."

Mthunzi: "I hear you love." We arrived at the hospital. Mothers always fall in love with their children. I think it's the most special bond having someone grow inside of you. It would be uncomfortable for Busi but accepting it will come gradually. More so, when she sees my commitment in being a present partner and father. I'll take my child to work if I have to, I don't mind. All she has to do is give me 9 months of nurturing them inside her and I'll take over from there. We walked in the hospital, Zwe was in the reception area, reading a file.

Mthunzi: "Isn't it your day off?"

Zwe: "My brother ditched me to go hang out with his foster kids, I bore him now." We chuckled.

Mthunzi: "How are they?"

Zwe: "Fantastic. They're doing great. Hi Busi."

Busi: "Hello Zwe, how are you?"

Zwe: "I'm great, how are you?"

Busi: "Amazing."

Zwe: "I have your results, and looked at them. My intern is available to show you and explain. Is that okay?"

Busi: "Oh you want to hang out with my husband? That's okay since I'm not as important as your friend." We laughed.

Zwe: "Priorities. Yanda? Please come here." His intern walked over to us. She was a short, young looking beautiful girl with a determined look to do her job.

Yanda: "Yes Dr Biyela?"

Zwe: "This is Busi Mwelase. I gave you her file earlier on, would you mind taking her through her results?"

Yanda: "I'd love to. Please come this way Miss Mwelase-"

Zwe: "Mrs. This is her husband."

Yanda: "Oh, my apologies my Lord. Mrs Mwelase." Busi followed her to a room and I stood with Zwe talking about our usual things.

Narrated\*\*

Busi sat on the bed, in the hospital room, waiting patiently as the young doctor read her notes.

Busi: "Those are pretty shoes."

Yanda: "Thank you. I got them on sale at The Peak."

Busi: "They look comfortable. I mostly wear sneakers throughout the day because I'm always standing."

Yanda: "What do you do?"

Busi: "Business owner. I have an ice cream shop, a jewelry shop and now managing my husband's property development company. That one's more fun." Yanda giggled.

Yanda: "I would think it's the other two."

Busi: "That's why I opened them, but now they bore me. Turns out I like building things." She smiled.

Yanda: "Uhm, you have an unusually high dosage in your blood work. This was tested, and it's from an iron and c vitamin. Do the vitamins give you a feeling of being energized?"

Busi: "Yes."

Yanda: "And you feel like you need them to be productive? So you take them everyday to feel normal?"

Busi: "What are you trying to say?"

Yanda: "You're developing an immunity to the benefits of the vitamins, did you increase your dosage perhaps? I don't think there's any doctor that would make this mistake."

Busi: "I didn't increase anything, that's the dosage my doctor recommended. My husband made sure of it."

Yanda: "This isn't right Busi. This could've been lethal. Your blood work also shows you're on anti depressants-"

Busi: "What are you trying to say, doctor?"

Yanda: "I'm not trying Mrs Mwelase. I'm only asking. If you're struggling-"

Busi: "I'm not trying to kill myself." She snapped.

Yanda: "Then who is? Who is administering these drugs to you? Because no doctor would."

Busi: "Are you insinuating that my husband is drugging me?"

Yanda: "Either that or yo-"

Busi: "Hewena Ntombazana!! Ungangijwayeli uyezwa? Who the fuck do you think you are to say something that disgusting about my husband? I'm telling you that's what the doctor gave me, what the hell are you trying to say?"

Yanda: "What is your doctor's name? Perhaps I can give him a call and ask."

Busi : "Listen here, do not piss me off. DO NOT. You don't know me nor do you know my husband. So you either do your job properly or you'll fuck around and find out. Nxa." She got off the bed and walked out.

Mthunzi: "Babe?" They were still standing outside.

Busi: "Zwe, you need to train your doctors to do better. Not this nonsense."

Zwe: "What happened?"

Busi: "This girl is saying that I'm either trying to kill myself, because of my mental health, or my husband is drugging me through the vitamins."

Zwe: "WHAT?"

Busi: "Tell her she's insane before I give her the hottest slap to remind her cheeks of Satan. Angang'jwayeli Zwe. I'm trying to be a good person."

Zwe: "I am so sorry, Busi. I'll sort this out."

Busi: "Please do." Zwe walked over to the intern.

Zwe: "What the hell was that about?"

Yanda: "Dr Biyela, I studied her results all morning. There's no way any doctor could make that careless mistake."

Zwe: "And you decided to blame it on her mental health Dr Radebe! What the hell? Who gave you that information?"

Yanda: "I.. I typed her name on the system to check for any underlying conditions and possible information to help determine the use of excessive vitamins-"

Zwe: "Why bring her husband in it, Radebe? Do you know who that man is?"

Yanda: "Yes sir." She shivered.

Zwe: "And you just thought to accuse him of attempted murder instead of treating the patient? That prescription came from a doctor. Not him. If I were you, I'd head over there and apologize profusely and be dismissed for the rest of the day."

Yanda: "I'm really sorry, Dr Biyela. I thought I was helping-"

Zwe: "That help should be directed to healing and not detective work. Leave Radebe. Since you want to be a police officer inside my hospital. I expect a full apology to Mr and Mrs Mwelase and you back her at 7am sharp with your brain on the work."

Yanda: "Yes sir." He took the file from her while she walked away, looking through it again. It's not possible that Mthunzi would try to kill his wife. He was in love with her. Plus, he knew him. This had to be the previous doctor's error obviously. Doctors aren't gods after all, they too make mistakes.

Zwe: "I am sorry about that, my friend."

Mthunzi: "Don't worry about it. Everyone makes mistakes Zwe. Let me take my wife home. We'll talk soon."

Zwe: "Sure." ...

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

Usually I have my barber come to me to line up my hair every week. Today I was going to his shop, I am not sure if he did little girl's hair but we'd find out somehow. After finding parking I walked in carrying Mia and holding Miles' hand. The salon wasn't too far from the entrance of the mall. I didn't have the problems of people staring at me like I'm an alien, the way they did Nkosi. His life was difficult, his presence makes everything come to a standstill followed by singing. It was almost hilarious if not scary. I walked into the salon, because of the lockdown, they seemed to be busy now. At least there was a lady washing hair.

Sibo: "James."

James: "My Prince, I didn't know we had an appointment."

Sibo: "No, I came for the munchkins. This one needs a wash, this one a cut. Can you do them?"

James: "With pleasure. I'll attend to you shortly." I sat on the couch.

Sibo: "Miles."

Miles: "Uncle Bobo?"

Sibo: "Mr James is going to cut your hair now."

Miles: "Why?"

Sibo: "Your hair is too long and distracting your vision. Also, he's a barber, this is his job."

Miles: "What's your job?" I chuckled.

Sibo: "I own a very big company."

Miles: "Why don't you cut my hair?"

Sibo: "I would mess it up little prince. I'm not very good at cutting hair. Mia are you ready to get your hair washed?"

Mia: "Yes Uncle Bobo, did you bring my ribbons?"

Sibo: "Yes I did." I opened their bag, looking for the ribbons. Someone sat on the couch nearby. "Here they are, Pink or red? I think red." She giggled.

Mia: "Yes, red." One of the ladies came to fetch her for a wash and she went over to the sink. James came for Miles.

Sibo: "I'll wait for you here, okay?"

Miles: "Okay." He followed James to the seat. I pulled out my phone. The ad had been launched and it looked like it was receiving good engagement so far. The consumers were eating it up, sharing it. The orders were increasing as well. She'd been right. I knew she was before I even gave the go ahead. So maybe I was a bit of a jerk but I won't be doing anymore begging. I would take Siza's advice and go away for the week. I don't know where to and with whom. Nothing sadder than going on vacation by yourself.

"Beautiful kids." I looked up. The woman who had just sat down.

Sibo: "Thanks." I didn't owe her any explanation.

She: "Are you a single dad or it's your weekend?" Are you serious? That's bold.

Sibo: "Weekend." Isn't this personal information? Why would you ask a stranger that?

She: "Hm. So you're not with the mother?"

Sibo: "No."

She: "I'm Megan."

Sibo: "Prince Biyela."

Megan: "You're one of the royals? Wow. I've never spoken to one before."

Sibo: "You're not allowed to unless I approach."

Megan: "Oh. My apologies."

Sibo: "You're not from around?"

Megan: "No, I arrived last week. Transferred from Lazy Creek."

Sibo: "The South. That's cool. Why Mountain Peak then? Lazy Creek is a great city."

Megan: "I grew up there, I got bored. Plus, there's currently no stability. The economy is buckling." Lazy Creek didn't have royals living in it but it was under Mpondo's region so he used to run it. Unfortunately he's no longer a royal, or alive. So his kingdom is collapsing. What wonderful information to come across on a beautiful Saturday afternoon.

Sibo: "Ah. So what do you do?"

Megan: "I'm a Real Estate Managing Broker at Reynard Smith properties."

Sibo: "Oh, my neighbor." I chuckled.

Megan: "You own a house in Stellars."

Sibo: "My family owns all the houses in Stellars. All except Reynard's." She stared at me shocked.

Megan: "That's incredible."

Sibo: "So what do you think of Mountain Peak so far?"

Megan: "It's beautiful and so clean. It honestly feels like a dream." I smiled.

Sibo: "Do you have any friends?"

Megan: "Not yet. I have a colleague who is showing me around."

Sibo: "Maybe you should come to my club and find yourself some friends. It's on the beach line. Beautiful views, lively vibe. You'll have a good time." This girl was beautiful. The perfect medium perky breasts and a curvaceous body. She would be good company tonight.

Megan: "I'd love to."

Miles: "No. I don't like it!" I got up instantly.

Sibo: "What is it?"

Miles: "He's putting that thing in my head, it doesn't feel nice."

Sibo: "It's a clipper. It helps cut your hair."

Miles: "I don't like it."

Sibo: "Would it help if you sat on my lap? You can watch your show on my phone to keep you occupied."

Miles: "Okay." I sat on the chair, putting him on top of me. He used my phone to play a game. This was obviously a tantrum. He didn't want me to be talking to a lady he doesn't know. It was not about the clipper at all. Children are such haters.

After dropping the kids back home in the evening, Zwe was waiting for me. I couldn't avoid him any longer. I placed Mia on the ground, she ran off to go find my mother. Mnqobi had called to ask me to bring the kids to the palace instead, something about Siza needing to rest. Miles was not having this arrangement however. He stuck to my leg holding my phone.

Zwe: "Hey. Where have you been all day?"

Sibo: "After the salon, I took them to eat and get ice cream. Miles saw an arcade and lost it. We had to go inside and played what was supposed to be a few games but ended up being all the games. So I had to negotiate coming home."

Zwe: "Miles, did you have a great day buddy?"

Miles: "Yes Uncle Zwe. Did you also have a good day?"

Zwe: "Mine was fantastic, thank you for asking. Are you ready for your bath?"

Miles: "No." I held back my laugh.

Zwe: "Do you want a snack before you take a bath?"

Miles: "I don't want to take a bath Uncle Zwe."

Zwe: "Sbo?" I shrugged.

Sibo: "I think I'm being guarded not to l e a v e." I had to spell out the last word.

Zwe: "Yoh. Okay, I guess we'll hang in the lounge." I picked up Miles walking to the kitchen. He's a baby, I'm not going to argue with him about going to sleep. If you give a child a choice between various options, he won't know that he can't say no. He will choose. Well, most of the time.

Sibo: "Do you want flings or fruit, Miles?"

Miles: "I want flings." This is the same person who didn't want a snack just two minutes ago. I took the packet of chips opening them and handed to him.

Sibo: "When we're done eating our chips, you can have 10 minutes of screen time then we can prepare your bath. Which toys should we add into your bath?"

Miles: "I want my trucks."

Sibo: "Okay, do you want bubbles too?"

Miles: "Yes, I want bubbles."

Sibo: "Alright then, let's go have a seat." I took him back to the lounge and sat on the couch. He sat next to me watching his show on my phone and eating his snack.

Sibo: "How did your day go?"

Zwe: "Fine I suppose, I was with dad until afternoon, went to the hospital for a short bit."

Sibo: "Everything okay?"

Zwe: "Can I ask a very personal question?"

Sibo: "Yeah." He looked deep in thought.

Zwe: "Never mind. It's crossing a line."

Sibo: "We're basically twins. Talk to me."

Zwe: "I'm a doctor Sboni. There's some stuff I can't say."

Sibo: "Now my interest has piqued. Find a way of not saying it then."

Zwe: "I won't. Sorry I brought it up. I shouldn't even be worried."

Sibo: "You're killing me."

Zwe: "Okay, let me ask this. Do you think people living with depression, and have attempted before, do you think they'd do it in a gradual process?"

Sibo: "Do what in a gradual process?"

Zwe: "Unalive themselves, but slowly. Like drinking just the right amount dosage that won't kill you instantly but break down your body until you eventually die."

Sibo: "Hell no. That sounds painful. No. I think a depressed person would want it over quickly, with no hassle at all."

Zwe: "I thought of that. But the other probability is also not possible. Do you know of anyone who has the potential or motive to Unalive their wife?"

Sibo: "This seems like the juiciest gulp of information you have ever hinted for me. What is going on Zwe?"

Zwe: "So you don't..."

Sibo: "No. I don't know anyone who hates their wife like that. None of my friends or associates at least."

Zwe: "Me too. You're right. It has to be the doctor." He sighed in relief. I wish I could get this information out of him but I know it would never happen. My brother had a talent of keeping secrets. No matter how drunk you get him, you'll never get a word out of him. He kept Nkosi's secret for 20 years without even a hint or mistake slip of the tongue.

Sibo: "Miles, your 10 minutes is finished little prince. It's time to go bath now."

Miles: "Can I please have five more minutes."

Sibo: "Okay, only five more minutes." He looked back at the phone.

Zwe: "So what's the plan with son's biological male parental?"

Sibo: "He was denied his ticket out the cage, trial starts a month from now."

Zwe: "Must he make it to the trial?"

Sibo: "We'll see. Up to me, I want him gone by Monday morning."

Zwe: "But you're worried about the offspring."

Sibo: "Hm."

Zwe: "What good will his existence be if he terrorizes the mom? Accidents happen all the time inside the cage, Sbo. This way, she can

move on, heal and maybe find a better man in the long run. A few months of mourning is better than living in fear for the rest of your life."

Sibo: "That's right. And, they still have us. Might as well make it permanent."

Zwe: "Agreed." I let Miles have his five more minutes. After his bath, he's going to bed.

Sibo: "Little Prince, it's time to go for our bath. Do you want me to carry you on my shoulders or you can walk by yourself?"

Miles: "Please carry me up."

Sibo: "Alright then, let's go." He climbed on my shoulders. I walked up the stairs, to get him ready for his bath.

## Chapter 106

### SIBONELO'S POV\_

It took a very long while to get this boy to sleep. He didn't want anyone, not my mother, my father or even Mngqobi or Zwe. I tip toed out of the room he shared with Mia and went downstairs.

Sibo: "Wow."

Biyela: "Welcome to parenthood."

Sibo: "You're not doing a good job in convincing me to have one. I'm almost too tired to go out." He laughed.

Biyela: "We're hosting the Sikhosana's tomorrow afternoon for lunch at the vineyard."

Sibo: "Oh?"

Biyela: "Yes. Apparently Prince Sikhosana wants to choose a few bottles for his house."

Sibo: "He has a bar. Two of them. And a restaurant in his villa."

Biyela: "Yes but he wants to have some of ours too. It will be good spending the day with them."

Sibo: "Okay then. Does anything need to be done for their arrival?"

Biyela: "No, I've already briefed security. Your mother is handling everything else. You just need to pitch up."

Sibo: "Okay. Where's Zwe?"

Biyela: "Behind you." Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "Done?"

Sibo: "Yes. I just need to change. I smell like a baby." I went up to my room, changing into a black shirt and sneakers. I kept my jeans from the afternoon on and left for downstairs after putting on cologne.

Zwe: "Driving?"

Sibo: "Nope, I'm trying to get drunk." He chuckled. We went to the car with two guards.

I had my own section at the club where no one could sit. I'm not there everyday or every weekend but my table was off limits. We had the host bring the bottle and glasses.

Zwe: "The ad is doing well." Here we go.

Sibo: "It is."

Zwe: "Does this mean you will be considering the update?"

Sibo: "Probably, yes."

Zwe: "That's good."

Sibo: "I know you want to give me a lecture."

Zwe: "No I don't. I'm just having a drink."

Sibo: "She made it clear that she doesn't want me, I begged, I sent flowers."

Zwe: "I understand."

Sibo: "Can you be on my side please?"

Zwe: "Okay, tell me how you feel."

Sibo: "I don't know Zwe. I like her. I'm just not ready."

Zwe: "Okay. Then move on."

Sibo: "I tried. I called my usual girl but it just didn't hit. It's something about her sex that just drives me insane."

Zwe: "You've forgotten her before. I believe in you, you can do it again."

Sibo: "I was drunk and it was once off then."

Zwe: "Maybe you need to get drunk again."

Sibo: "How then will I find the perfect sex partner Zwelethu?"

Zwe: "Keep fucking until you do. There's millions of women in this country. You'll get there." He drank his raw shot, pouring another with some ice cubes. He was definitely mad.

Sibo: "Okay, I know you want to lecture me."

Zwe: "Not even. I'm on your side."

Sibo: "How can I talk to you if you're going to be like this?"

Zwe: "Like what? You asked me to be on your side and I am. I am not going to be the dragon that yells and lectures you everyday. You're as old as I am. You know what you need in your life. I am not going to push anymore. I am going to do as you ask, and be on your side."

Sibo: "How am I supposed to make good decisions if you're going to let me be stupid?"

Zwe: "What if you're not stupid? What if you're learning and I'm standing in your way? I've seen you with Miles. Are you going to decide next week that you don't want him climbing into your bed in the middle of the night or holding you back and crying when you have to leave him in the house? Will you tell him you need your space and he's crowding you?"

Sibo: "No! He's a child, for goodness sake."

Zwe: "Exactly. So you know commitment. You just choose where to implement it in your life. You don't need me to tell you what to do because you know, you just choose not to." Another talent of his.

Sibo: "Can you just give me advice on how to get over this sex part? I'm struggling Zwe."

Zwe: "Find someone new to fuck. Someone you don't know or used to."

Sibo: "And if that fails?"

Zwe: "Keep looking." He drank again. He's beginning to bore me. Maybe I'm the problem and I don't- I watched Megan walk in the club. She was dressed in a sexy short tight black dress.

Sibo: "My date is here."

Zwe: "Best of luck. Melo is in VIP I'll go say hi to him, I haven't seen him in a minute."

Sibo: "You're ditching me?"

Zwe: "Your date is here, I'm supposed to watch you suck face?"

Sibo: "Zwelethu. What is this now? I thought you wanted us to hang out?"

Zwe: "You invited your date."

Sibo: "She's new to the city. It's not like she'll sit with us. I just wanted her to see the club."

Zwe: "She might as well see it sitting with you. I want to go say hi to Melo." He walked away, going to Melo's table. Yes, Melokuhle was a good friend of ours. He lived in Golden Crown, CFO of a gold mine. He wasn't royal but he sure as hell moved like it. His father had connections with Phakamisa and found a way to buy into a mine. Melo has since made a name for himself apart from the mine but he loved it. He was a few years older than us but you'd never tell. I wanted to obviously go to him as well, there was so much to talk about including the mining industry now that Phakamisa is not royal. Fuck. I wouldn't have to do all this work if she could just be reasonable. I called a guard.

Sibo: "Please escort that lady over here." He nodded and went to fetch Megan. She came to my section with her colleague friend who wasn't as hot unfortunately. Something about her shyness turned me off.

Megan: "Hi again." She sat next to me smiling.

Sibo: "Hey."

Megan: "This is my friend, Lauren." I nodded, calling the waiter to take their order.

Sibo: "Have you eaten?"

Megan: "Yes."

Sibo: "You don't want anything to nibble on?"

Megan: "No. Lauren?" She shook her head. Khaya walked in.

Khaya: "Bobo."

Sibo: "What are you doing here, bug?"

Khaya: "Came to check out the scene. Bored at home and Mnqobi is with Petu. So I decided to take out Notha and Zimmy." I scanned through the club and spotted her. She was at the bar.

Sibo: "Oh."

Khaya: "We're going to join Bhut Zwe's tabl-"

Sibo: "Why?"

Khaya: "He's got plenty space there. It's only him and his friend. You look busy."

Sibo: "Get out of here." He chuckled, walking out.

Megan: "That was rude. Why did you call him that?"

Sibo: "He's my brother, that's his nickname."

Megan: "Oh. How many brothers do you have?"

Sibo: "Three. First one is wearing the white shirt at that table. This one is the third, the second is at home with his second wife."

Megan: "Do you have a wife?" I watched Zimmy walk to the table, holding a bottle of water. She looked sexy as hell in tight leather pants, a white top that held only her breasts.

Sibo: "No. Please give me a minute, I need to greet a friend." I got up walking to that table.

Melo: "Look who's here!!" He stood up to shake my hand.

Sibo: "Melokuhle the badman." I laughed.

Melo: "I go by "the baddie man" now." He laughed.

Sibo: "How are you doing?"

Melo: "I could be better. Your city has the finest women, I might pick myself a wife to take home." I chuckled.

Sibo: "We fight for our women here Melokuhle, we don't allow nonsense."

Melo: "Join us, man."

Zwe: "He can't, his date is waiting for him at his table. Isn't that so Sboni? Or we can just combine our tables, if that's okay?" I stared at him.

Melo: "Perfectly fine with me."

Zwe: "Settled. Your section is bigger so let's join you. Ladies, we're going up a section." He stood up. Why was he doing this?

NOTHANDO'S POV\_

I've never been to a club before. Mostly because I was a princess. Now that I wasn't, I was allowed to go outside but of course with guards and Khaya. I didn't want to be alone so I invited Zimmy with us. She didn't want to go at first but I had to drag her out. Petu told me to. I too had noticed Zimmy's withdrawal but she was talking in our group chat again just not as often as before. We moved to the private section where there were two ladies already sitting. I guess this was Sibonelo's date. She was pretty I guess. I sipped my cocktail, looking around. Zimmy was sitting next to me, scrolling on her phone.

Notha: "So I guess you two are really over?" She chuckled.

Zimmy: "it wasn't that serious Notha."

Notha: "Still. Isn't this weird?"

Zimmy: "Kind of, yeah but if I leave it'll be like I have drama or not over him."

Notha: "Are you?"

Zimmy: "Yep." That's a lie. "Anyway, how are you? How does it feel like being out for the first time?"

Notha: "I'm great. It's very strange but I feel safe. I'm only used to being with Petu."

Zimmy: "And how's that going?"

Notha: "It's getting better. I know you're curious to know if it's weird. It's not." We laughed.

Zimmy: "I didn't want to bring it up. I don't want to seem nosy."

Notha: "We're open. Our relationship isn't a secret. It works really great honestly. We have a routine, Mnqobi gets three nights with Petu, one with me, I get three with her. I enjoy my time alone mostly. I love reading."

Zimmy: "You don't spend time alone with Mnqobi?"

Notha: "I do. During the day mostly. We have a better connection talking or doing something together and I don't like being touched."

Zimmy: "As long as you guys are happy. It's different but healthy and good."

Notha: "Are you seeing someone?"

Zimmy: "No. I'm focusing on school and the business is taking up all my time. Now I've hired another girl to help me with admin things at least, it's a small fee I can sacrifice. I now have time to squeeze in a therapy session for this week. I want to find a way to forgive my father. I'm not ready to be part of his new life with his girlfriend. My mother's stress is mostly due to me cutting him off. If I have to be honest, he wasn't a horrible father. I was just hurt at what he did to my mother."

Notha: "How's your mother now?"

Zimmy: "She's okay. She got herself a job as a pre school teacher. When I speak to her, she sounds happy. This keeps her busy."

Notha: "That's good." Melo sat next to us.

Melo: "Ladies, hi. I didn't get a chance to properly introduce myself. I'm Melokuhle Sibida. I live in Golden Crown. I'm in town for a few days on business." I sipped my drink waiting for Zimmy to respond. She looked at me noticing my trick.

Zimmy: "Uhm, hello Melokuhle. I'm Zimasa, this is Nothando."

Melo: "Are you attending university here or working?"

Zimmy: "University."

Melo: "Oh." He looked at her. I stirred my drink a bit before I sipped again. "It's lovely meeting you, I would however like to know you better." Zimmy looked at me, bored with my stunt.

Zimmy: "You seem like a really nice guy Melokuhle but I'm not interested."

Melo: "May I ask why?"

Zimmy: "No sir, you cannot." He smiled.

Sibo: "Melokuhle, wenzani?" I was trying with all my might not to laugh.

Melo: "I'm trying to make friends-"

Sibo: "That's my brother's wife Melokuhle, let's not fight please."

Melo: "Show me which one so I know where to direct my energy then?"  
This Melo was brave. No one dared to challenge a Prince. Ever.  
Sibonelo looked at Zimmy and walked away. Melo followed him.

Zimmy: "I think I should leave."

Notha: "No."

Zimmy: "I'm not going to be comfortable Notha. This was a bad idea."

Notha: "Are you going to live your life afraid of Sibonelo Biyela? Come on."

Zimmy: "That's the thing Notha. Until you experience how scary that man can be, you won't understand. Sibonelo has a way of making everything uncomfortable and currently I'm at his mercy."

Notha: "So that means you can't talk to other men? He would be insane. That's not going to happen. You're his business partner not his child." Now I must sit by myself because Sibonelo is a big toddler? "Let's just have fun? Please. It's my first time clubbing, show me why it's nice." She chuckled, shaking her head.

Zimmy: "Okay, let's take some shots." She wrote something on her phone on her notes app. I took a peep and she hid it. Does she not know how fast I read?

Notha: "Why?"

Zimmy: "It's a secret."

Notha: "I'm good with secrets. What's HelpASister?"

Zimmy: "After the thing with my mother, I was thinking about having a women's support group. Inviting the women from all over the city who are in uncomfortable situations. Maybe find ways of helping them into

shelters, I was hoping one day I can partner with a psychologist who is willing to offer a free therapy session to them. It's just a small thing I thought of."

Notha: "I can help."

Zimmy: "Really?"

Notha: "Yes. I needed something to do and this is a good cause. I'd love to help." I need something to do with my time and money. After what happened to Siza, how many women go through that? What measures are in place for them since they're not related to royals? Maybe also involving police presence. Something needs to be done about their apathy. This will be a good cause.

## SASA POV\_

I woke up Sunday morning, stretching slightly. We came back to the villa late last night. We figured we'd have to come here anyway because I needed clothes. Rather just wake up here then. I had called Queen Biyela yesterday. She was happy to have us at the vineyard for lunch. She said she would organise the decor and the chefs but I'd have to choose the menu. It took a lot of thinking from me. I was beyond stressed. Amahle said I shouldn't worry about anything and give them leaves and sand. I know she was trying to be funny. All the girls were busy, so I couldn't exactly get an answer. I'd decided on chicken livers in peri peri sauce and caramelized onions for a starter. The main would be creamy samp and beans. Butter and cinnamon pumpkin cooked in sugar. Spinach in a cream cheesy sauce. Diced beetroot cubes sprinkled with vinegar. Potato salad with boiled egg pieces, sprinkles of parsley and bacon bits. Sweet corn boiled and served with a small cube of butter. I made sure to make an important note for them to consider using vegan safe products for Amahle. The meat options were fried chicken, a lamb curry and beef stew. It would be an option for whatever the person feels like eating. For dessert, my brain was fried. I called Busi to order ice cream from her, I wanted the Kings Love flavour. The chefs would then make a chocolate brownie to serve it with. Now after all that was sorted out, I had slept like a baby. It was the day. I looked over at Nkosinhle. He was fast asleep still, his chest bare. The blanket only covered below his waist. I wanted to kiss his toned abs. My husband

was so gorgeous I couldn't believe it at times. I went under the covers, finding his dick fully erect. I licked it, slowly putting it in my mouth. He groaned. I sucked on him, stroking him at the same time. I could feel him waking up, he pulled off the covers looking me with sleek orange gaze.

Nkosi: "Come here." He pulled me up to him. I straddled him, smiling sweetly. His fingertips brushed my thighs all the way to my clit. He sat up to kiss my lips. I adjusted, to fit him inside as I sat. His dick slowly penetrated into me, stretching me out. I numbed, holding on to his head. He guided my waist, holding me with both his hands, helping me bounce on him. I got dizzy almost immediately, he reaches this spot and rubs on it, making my whole body his. He groaned, kissing on my skin.

Me: "Nkossi." I cried. My clit was repeatedly kissing his skin, while I bounced on him. I was pouring wet ready to climax, he held me still and stood up, carrying me to the dresser. He placed me on it and stroked in and out, my legs hanging on his arms. He kissed my lips and looked me in the eyes. My climax hung higher and he was reaching it. His pace kept the same, kisses on my face, looking into my eyes. "Ohhhh." I moaned, panting out of breath. He pulled out and put back the tip only then stopped. I throbbed for him. "baby please." I begged, thrusting toward him. He pushed it in slowly, moving faster to the same pace.

Nkosi: "Like this."

Me: "Yes!!" His thumb touched on my clit, rubbing it in a circular motion. My vision blurred as climaxed, my body seizing to a throbbing still. He didn't stop, prolonging my orgasm until I couldn't breath. He picked me up, walking to the bed. He flipped me over, pulling my hips up to him and he entered. He stroked into me, growling. His fingers grazing my skin softly, leaving a tingling sensation as he pumped into me. He traced all the way up my back and held my ribs, fucking harder than before.

Nkosi: "Ohhh Fuck..." He groaned, pushing deep inside and came, letting out low growl. I tried catching my breath. My legs shaking at the remnants of my orgasm. He pulled out, groaning.

Nkosi: "Now I don't want to go anywhere. We should spend the day in bed. Doing this." He lay in bed next to me. I giggled.

Me: "I think that would be a good idea." He kissed my lips and looked at my face again.

Nkosi: "I love you."

Me: "I love you too."

At about 11 in the morning we got ready. With difficulty. Nkosi couldn't stop kissing me. Everywhere. My neck, my hands, my back. I was trying to choose an outfit and he was busy with me.

Me: "Sthandwa Sam, what will you wear?"

Nkosi: "I have a shirt and jeans ready." He hugged me.

Me: "Okay but I need to get dressed." He nibbled my ear. I chose an emerald green floral strappy satin cowl midi dress with a modest slit on the side. I would wear it with black single strap heels. I got dressed, Nkosi finally put on his clothes. He looked so handsome in a white shirt and jeans.

Nkosi: "You want to kiss me, don't you?"

Me: "Only a little bit then we go." He pulled me to him, I kissed his lips. "Now we go." I whispered on his lips.

Nkosi: "Hmm.." he kissed some more. I had to pull away. He chuckled. We finished getting ready finally. I took my small purse walking to the door.

Nkosi: "Mrs Sikhosana, why are you leaving me behind?"

Me: "Because you're playing, we're going to be late." He came up to me and scooped me up in his arms, walking out. I giggled. "What are you doing?"

Nkosi: "You're my heart, so I'm carrying you everywhere I go." I laughed.

Me: "You are so cheesy." He stopped, looking at the entrance. The king was standing there, ready. This was awkward.

Nkosi: "Father." He placed me on my feet. King Sizwengaye was dressed in a full emerald green suit, tie and shirt. On one shoulder, hung a matching fur. Black shiny boots, and a hat with two green feathers. He stared at me. This was awkward. Why are we in matching colours?

King: "We're late."

Nkosi: "It's only 12. Why are you... Why are you dressed like that?"

King: "I'm going to a lunch in a vineyard, why are you dressed like you work there?"

Nkosi: "It's not a fashion show, I'm going to taste wine and eat food."

King: "If you say so, can we go?"

Nkosi: "Where are my mothers?"

King: "They're on their way to the vineyard. I came to fetch you." What does he mean?

Nkosi: "Fetch us? We know the way." Sizwengaye looked very bored. A humming sound buzzed over the building.

King: "There, time to go." We walked out the building, the helicopter landed on its pad ready to go...

## Chapter 107

### SIBONELO'S POV \_

I barely got any sleep as usual and this time was because I was irritated. Actually Mildly angry so I sat out in my patio since early morning. Last night went left. Melo was determined to piss me off and he knew it. After a few drinks he'd gone to introduce himself to Jimmy. He didn't stop. He kept talking to her every once in a while. Making sure she was comfortable and her drink was filled. She started laughing at his jokes at some point. Melokuhle is not funny. He's stupid. I looked at my phone checking her social media once again. I'd made sure Khaya takes her home. The guard had reported back too. Abo Melo basjwayela amasimba. Her latest story post was less than an hour. She was in church? I went back to watch last night's stories. She had videos singing with Nothando, a few laughing pictures, another video of just Nothando, next video of her acting shy to the camera. The next video highly disgusts me. Melokuhle was in it, smiling like a fool. Yes it was a group video but good God. My phone rang. This damn idiot.

Sibo: "Melokuhle." I answered.

Melo: "Sibonelo. Are you still mad? What happened bra? I didn't approach your brother's wife."

Sibo: "I'm not mad."

Melo: "Good. Zwe told me I can call you. The other girl, Zimmy. She's your business partner I hear, I didn't get her number. Do you mind sharing?" Melokuhle doesn't respect me, does he?

Sibo: "And why do you think I'd do that Melokuhle?"

Melo: "What would be the problem Sibonelo? I thought you were with the colored chick."

Sibo: "Leave Zimmy alone Melokuhle."

Melo: "Kungcono silwe ke mngani wami. You're not giving me something to work with here. She's not your girl, not your brothers, pho yini inkinga?"

Sibo: "Melokuhle, you're not going to win this fight."

Melo: "Is she your girl?"

Sibo: "Yes, she's my girl. Leave her alone." I hung up, feeling a fire in my chest.

Megan: "Hey." She walked out, dressed in my shirt only. She was a very sexy girl but I couldn't get rid of the sick feeling in my stomach.

Sibo: "Hi. Your cab is a few minutes away."

Megan: "Are you serious? I just woke up. You won't even offer me breakfast?"

Sibo: "I have a family event to get to, please get dressed."

Megan: "And what's with the foul mood?"

Sibo: "What foul mood Megan, I'm telling you I have somewhere to be kanti yini inkinga yakho?"

Megan: "Woah.. okay." She walked back in the house.

Sibo: "Nx." How could Zwe do that? I thought we were brothers but no, he let Melokuhle act a fool. What was he hoping to achieve? The sooner I get to that palace and give him a piece of my mind. I booked the cab and went inside the house. Megan was dressed in her outfit from last night. I took out something from the drawer to give her.

Megan: "I'm not your whore, Sibonelo. When you're done having a tantrum, call me." She left her business card and walked out. Once the cab drove off, I left my house driving to the palace. I arrived in less than 3 minutes, parked and stormed into the house. Zwelethu was on the couch watching TV.

Sibo: "Why did you do that Zwelethu?"

Zwe: "Good morning to you too, Sibonelo. You don't look like you had a good night."

Sibo: "I had a fantastic night thank you very much! But why are you encouraging Melokuhle to Jimmy?"

Zwe: "They're both single. Melo is great, he'll treat her well."

Sibo: "You're doing this to spite me?"

Zwe: "Spite you? I don't have to do that. I have hobbies. Did you give him her number? I don't have it."

Sibo: "He's not getting a damn thing and if he's serious about living, he'll go back home." He took out his phone, sending a message.

Zwe: "I'm sure Khaya has it." He looked at me.

Sibo: "What are you doing?"

Zwe: "Getting her number. You've moved on Sibonelo. You're not going to cock block her unless you have something to offer?" I stared at him, trying my all not to jump for his phone. "Thought as much." His phone beeped. "I was right, Khaya has sent it." This wasn't even worth it.

Sibo: "Fine. Take her to him. If he wants to fuck my leftovers then that's his business."

Zwe: "Bitter." He sent another message and placed down his phone, looking at the TV. I went up the stairs. Where was Miles? He's usually running around at this time.

Sibo: "Mama!" I met with our housekeeper. "Where are the children?"

She: "They left with their mother, my prince. As well as Princess Nothando, and the princes." I nodded, going to my room to bath and get ready for lunch.

I walked out my room after getting dressed. Hold on, did I even moisturize? My brain was blank, I don't even know what I'd done in the bath. I needed to get over this. I double checked myself and walked out. Downstairs, my father was sitting with Zwelethu.

Biyela: "Where is Mngqobi?"

Zwe: "He went to church with his wives. He'll be back soon."

Biyela: "Why didn't you go to church?"

Zwe: "God and I have an understanding."

Sibo: "Where's mum?"

Biyela: "Good morning Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Morning Baba."

Biyela: "Your brother tells me Melokuhle is in town." I looked at Zwe.

Sibo: "Yes he is, where is mum?"

Biyela: "Your mother is busy at the vineyard. Come sit with us." I didn't want to sit with them, I wanted to go to my mother. I sat down, pouring a drink. "What new projects does he have now?"

Sibo: "I don't know father, I didn't speak to him."

Biyela: "Why is that? You're friends."

Sibo: "He's Zwelethu's friend."

Zwe: "Since when? Also, why did you lie to Melokuhle? He says you told him Jimmy is your girlfriend. Ngamtshela ukuthi unamanga ke mina. She doesn't want you." It's fine. I don't care anymore.

Sibo: "I'll find you at the vineyard." I walked out the house.

KHAYA'S POV \_

I hadn't been in church since my mother was alive and I was a kid. I never really cared for it but today Mngqobi dragged me here. He was dragged by Petu and Nothando. Church was Siza's idea. We'd picked up Jimmy on our way too. The service was filled but we managed to find an empty row to sit. Mngqobi carried Miles, Petu had Mia. Jimmy held baby

Maya. I watched the small band play a song, a guy stood on stage singing.

"Why do we do the things we do,? When it hurts you. I'll never understand why. We're at a place in our lives, where we're tired of all the lies and the pain we feel inside. We want to make it right. I have nothing else to give except my life. Please accept this offering. I present my body, my sacrifice. Holy. Yeaah. I'm running back to you. With my hands lifted high. I give you my heart, and I give you my life. I don't mean to be emotional but sometimes I cry, when I think of all the pain that I've caused you inside. But you still love me." The church with him, there was a screen that had the lyrics of the song to help the sing along. It would take too much of me to start singing. So I just read the lyrics. 'Seven times seventy. You forgive me. And you do this daily. I don't ever want to take, advantage of your Grace and the sacrifice you've made. I got make it right. I have nothing else to give except my life. Please accept my offering. I present my body, my sacrifice. Holy. Yeaah. I'm running back to you. With my hands lifted high. I give you my heart, and I give you my life. I don't mean to be emotional but sometimes I cry, when I think of all the pain that I've caused you inside. But you still love me.' the band was amazing. The drums hit a beat that felt good in your soul. The lyrics were a bit dramatic for me but they too felt nice.

Guy: "Come on church, let's all join this part." The church sang along. "Your love is unbelievable, your love is so amazing, your love is unconditional." Even though I wasn't singing, the beat had me moving my head. "At the end of the day, he loves me." He sang. "At the end of the day, at the end of the day, he loves me. Let's sing it until you believe it, let's go." The church sang again: " At the end of the day. At the end of the day. He loves me."

Guy: "Doesn't matter who don't like it, you'll still love me! Wave your hands! And at the end of the daaay???!"

Church: "At the end of the day. At the end of the day. He loves me!"

Guy: "Even if it's been a bad day?"

Church: "At the end of the day! At the end of the day, He loves me!"

Guy: "And I don't mean to be emotional but sometimes I cry, think of all the pain that I've caused you inside. I don't mean to be emotional, it makes me cry, but you still love me." I sat down holding my head in my hands. It hasn't even been 30 minutes and I'm already crying like a child.

The words were true. As much as I tried to ignore them. For some reason I felt God had forsaken me and left me to fend for myself. I'd pushed everyone away but all along I had a family. I had people who were ready to love me. It's been difficult recovering from my childhood but I was slowly letting go.

## PETU'S POV \_

God restores. One thing about him, he will break you down and restore you back again. There was so much to be grateful for. I still missed my mother dearly, more so today. Crying was not something I was particularly fond of. Today my tears were much of giving thanks. I had my sister, she was alive. We were rebuilding our life with the help from the Biyela family. There was nothing else I needed but my heart did ache. For my father. As much as he disowned me and treated our mother horribly, I couldn't find it in me not to hurt for him. Couldn't he at least try to love us? Did he not want to hang on to his family? His blood? Wow.

Singer: "I want you all to leave today with this message. I want you to wake up every morning and affirm yourselves with these beautiful words. 'The wonderful grace of Jesus. Greater than all my sins. How can a song describe it? Where shall my praise begin? Taking away my burdens, setting my spirit free. The wonderful grace of Jesus, always reaches me.'" the song started playing. I rocked Mia to sleep, she was dozing off in my arms. "The wonderful grace of Jesus. Deep as the rolling sea. It runs to the most forgotten. It runs through eternity. It says I'm a child of heaven. It says I'm forever free. The wonderful grace of Jesus. Jesus... It says I'm a child of heaven, it says I'm forever free. The wonderful grace of Jesus. And it's beautiful, wonderful, powerful. ALL the grace, it found me." I closed my eyes saying a closing prayer.

Petu: "We thank you Lord, for leading us into your house of worship. We thank you for the mercy you've had upon our lives. We thank you for the friendship and familial bonds we have created. Indeed your amazing Grace has reached us. We thank you Father. Amen."

We made it back home from church. Siza had woken up early to cook before we left. I doubt she got any sleep because she'd been writing since yesterday morning. Once she starts, she doesn't stop.

Siza: "Thank you guys for coming with me."

Zimmy: "I enjoyed it so much. I haven't been to church in years. This one resonated with my soul."

Petu: "Me too. Nothing felt forced. Just focused on worship and prayer." I helped Siza warm up the food.

Siza: "What do you guys think? Will you be joining us again?"

Khaya: "If I don't have plans, I don't see why not. It's a vibe."

Mnqobi: "It's okay to admit you enjoyed it." We laughed.

Khaya: "Yes I enjoyed it, happy?"

Mnqobi: "Very. What do you think love? You've never been to church right?"

Notha: "I have a hangover, it was the worst place to be in. I felt like I was being punished." We laughed.

Petu: "How do you have a hangover? I told you to drink water before falling asleep, love. Zimmy don't you have a hangover?" I took out headache pills and water from the fridge.

Zimmy: "No, babe."

Notha: "I did drink water. Zimmy is a pro." I gave her the pills and water. Zimmy was changing the baby and Miles' diaper.

Petu: "Baby, aren't you supposed to go to the vineyard?"

Mnqobi: "I forgot about that!"

Khaya: "And mina I'm hungry. I'm smelling very nice aromas. I'll fight you Mnqobi if you tried to get me out of this house before I eat." We laughed.

Mnqobi: "Ei, and Zwe just sent a message. Okay let's have a starter here then go there for dessert."

Siza: "Fortunately, we're done. Petu, dish up for them first." I took the plates to dish up.

Khaya: "We'll be back later mos?"

Mnqobi: "Yeah, we'll put up the grill to make some braai meat."

Notha: "I hope that 'we' is only you two."

Khaya: "Why?"

Notha: "Who else do you want to invite Khaya?" Khaya looked at Zimmy, hiding a smile.

Zimmy: "Ya no, I'm going home then."

Khaya: "I'm kidding."

Zimmy: "I know you Khaya. I'm not in the mood, please. Last night was enough."

Petu: "What happened last night?"

Notha: "There's a guy from Golden Crown that likes Zimmy. Someone's brother was sour about it."

Mnqobi: "Who's someone? I'm someone?" I giggled, giving him his tray of food.

Siza: "Oh no. Sour how?"

Zimmy: "He had me followed back to Res." I felt my back hairs stand. That seemed scary.

Khaya: "It was a guard and I was taking you home. He was there for me."

Zimmy: "You and I both know that's not true."

Siza: "You two need to sit him down. This is a bit excessive. What happens if Zimmy wants to move on? What if she likes Golden Crown guy?"

Zimmy: "I don't."

Siza: "Not the point."

Mnqobi: "Sboni is harmless. He just wants to make sure she's safe. That's all."

Siza: "As long as that's all it is. Naye he must communicate with Zimmy and not just creep her out like that."

Mnqobi: "I'll speak to him." The guys ate their food and left soon after, rushing to the vineyard. We decked the table, Zimmy made us cocktails and we all sat down to eat. Her phone rang.

Zimmy: "Excuse me ladies." She answered her phone. "Hello?" I took a sip of my drink. "Uhm, where did you get my number?" We looked at her. She put the phone on loudspeaker.

Guy: "I asked a friend of mine. I don't want to waste your time Zimmy. I did say I'd like to get to know you better."

Zimmy: "And I believe I said I wasn't interested."

Guy: "Is it because of Sibonelo? I will handle Sibonelo, he won't bother you."

Zimmy: "No, Melo. I don't want to be in a relationship, or fling or anything. I don't have the emotional space to start something romantic."

Melo: "Oh. I understand that. Would a friendship also be too much? I don't want to just cut contact with you." Zimmy looked at us, with a 'what now' look. We also shrugged. "Still there?"

Zimmy: "I can manage friendship."

Melo: "I'm glad to hear that. In fact, I'm dancing right now." She giggled.

Zimmy: "I didn't see you dance last night." he chuckled.

Melo: "I was shy." She laughed.

Zimmy: "Okay then."

Melo: "I'll be in Mountain Peak until Wednesday, is there a day you'll be available so we can have lunch or dinner?"

Zimmy: "I don't know Melo."

Melo: "I'll make it good, I promise. There's this small restaurant in eMoyeni. It's a little rough, but the atmosphere is pure. They serve the best African food and on top of it, they have artist hour. Young upcoming rappers and singers showcase their talent. It's a beautiful place."

Zimmy: "Okay. We can go on Tuesday."

Melo: "Perfect. I'm looking forward to seeing you Zimmy."

Zimmy: "Enjoy the rest of your day." She hung up.

Notha: "I like him. He's as bold as lucifer. Imagine fighting a whole Prince. No, he's a boss."

Siza: "He seems sweet but Zimmy you need to buck up now. Stop being so scared. He must not feel like he can dance on your head. This sweet shy girl must hide away in front of men, show them the lioness that roars back. You can't let Sibonelo break you down into a little girl." ...

SASA POV\_

The helicopter landed on the pad in the vineyard. It was a little further away from the building but everyone could see us. We waited until the engine switched off before the door was opened. Nkosi stepped out first, holding his hand out for me. I got off careful not to fall. The king got off after me.

King: "Good, everyone is here." He walked in front of us to the beautiful Victorian styled building. There was a group of people, a band, playing the violin on the grass. Who set that up? A BAND? For lunch?? Everyone sat on the large patio, staring at us.

Biyela: "My King. Good day."

Sikhosana: "Thank you for having me. Have you met Thembisa?"

Biyela: "Yes, my king. Good day Mrs Sikhosana. My Prince." I bowed.

Nkosi: "King Biyela, how are you?"

Biyela: "I'm very well My Prince, thank you for asking. Let me lead you to your table."

NoSikhosana: "Don't worry about that Biyela. We're here to taste some wines. Can you direct us there?"

Me: "I'll follow shortly my King, I'd like to greet the queens." I quickly walked away. Queen Biyela stood.

Queen: "Hello Mrs Sikhosana." Enveloping me into a hug. I giggled.

Me: "Hello Mama. How are you?"

Queen: "I'm well. How are you?"

Me: "Great." She smiled. "My queens, good day." I bowed.

Nolwazi: "Thembisa." She said coldly.

Nobantu: "You don't want to keep your father waiting dear."

Me: "Oh yes." I walked in the building where King Sikhosana looked around while Nkosi and King Biyela had a conversation. He looked at me. His eyes were no longer cold when he stared at me. It didn't feel any better but it was different.

King: "The winery is underground. I thought you might want to see how the wine is matured and made."

Me: "I'd love that, my king." He walked to the stairs and I followed then stopped to look at Nkosi. Why wasn't he following? He nodded, urging me to keep going with a smile. Erh, no. He came to me.

Nkosi: "You'll be safe, love. He's wearing a brand new suit. This is a very big deal for him." I giggled.

Me: "We look like twins."

Nkosi: "He won't admit it but he loves it." He touched my cheek. "He needs this."

Me: "Okay." He kissed my forehead. I followed the King. The underground winery looked fascinating. It's like we time travelled back to the 60s.

Me: "This is so beautiful." I softly touched the drums filled with wine. "It's like being in the past. Also a dark realization of how unequal things are."

King: "What do you mean?" I looked at the paintings on the walls.

Me: "I visited Bakhoyo village with Amahle. It felt exactly like this, except, it was bare, un nourished and neglected. I didn't see life in it but just this room, in the same time period, has enough life in it to nurture that entire village."

King: "Do you always talk like that?"

Me: "Like what?" I looked at him.

King: "Like you're reciting poetry." I giggled, looking at the set table of wines.

Me: "how many wine variations are there?"

King: "More than 10 000, only a few dozen have made it in popularity. There are five main types and we have them here." He moved closer to the table. "Do you know what the five are?"

Me: "I can guess. Uhm, red wine, white wine, rose. That's all I know."

King: "That's good. There's also sparkling and fortified, also known as dessert wine." He took the small plate from the table.

Me: "Oh."

King: "Cheese, goes well with wine. Cleanses your palate. Taste." I took one small cube and popped it in my mouth.

Me: "That's not a cheese I expected." He poured the first wine, then stood directly in front of me, looking into my eyes.

King: "It's not cheddar. When we sample wine, We don't do it like alcoholics. There is etiquette and order. It's always whites, before reds. Reds are heavier in taste. We do light body before full body. Young vintages before the old. The youngs are softer, lighter, easier. So fragrant." I took the glass from him. "To fully experience the wine, you have to see it." I looked at the glass. Using his finger, lifted my hand higher toward the light. His oranges eyes sparkled in the dimness. "Swirl it."

Me: "What if I spill it."

King: "Don't think about spilling, just enjoy the swirl." I gently swirled the glass, the liquid danced inside it. "Sniff it. Tell me what you smell." I brought it to my nose and took a whiff, looking at him.

Me: "Oohhh. Its fruity." I giggled. My stupidity sometimes.

King: "Take a sip." I sipped it. "And savour."

Me: "I beg your pardon?"

King: "Don't tell me you swallowed it."

Me: "but you said I must sip." He chuckled.

King: "I thought I said, we don't sample wine like alcoholics."

Me: "It's only a sip."

King: "Until you drink all the sips, and I have to carry you out of here."

Me: "That would very disrespectful."

King: "Exactly." He smiled. I've never seen him smile before. It was so strange. I sighed and looked at my empty glass.

Me: "What a coincidence we're dressed the same, hm?" I smiled.

King: "It's not a coincidence. I told you."

Me: "I do not recall that, my king."

King: "Last night I asked you what colours do you associate with royal, elegance and nature. What did you say?"

Me: "Green. Oh my God."

King: "I agreed, and specified emerald as it's a precious stone. Much like you." I heard footsteps coming down. Nkosi walked in. He stared at his father.

Nkosi: "Father."

King: "Mehluli." He sipped his wine...

Chapter 108

NKOSI POV\_

I felt an uncomfortable tight squeezed in my chest as I spoke to King Biyela. My heart was in that basement.

Biyela: "My Prince, let me not keep you. Please enjoy the sampling." Whether it was coincidence, or he could feel I'm panicking, I was grateful to not have to dismiss him.

Nkosi: "We'll speak soon King Biyela." I walked down the stairs into the underground winery. My father stood in front of Thembisa, holding a glass of wine. A low growl trickled my soul. What the hell is he trying to do?

Nkosi: "Father."

King: "Mehluli." He sipped his wine with a menacing look. Was I imagining things? Surely I must be.

Nkosi: "What are you doing?"

King: "Sampling wine." I walked over to Thembisa standing behind her.

Nkosi: "Well, let's sample then." He poured another sip for me. I wasn't interested in the stupid wine. He was trying to steal my wife. He thinks I don't notice what he's doing or.... He just doesn't care. He poured the second wine in Thembisa's glass.

King: "This takes it up a notch. Its bolder than the light white we just had. Do you remember how I taught you?" The way he looked at her made my hands shake, the promise of fire emanating off them. She held her glass up.

Sasa: "Yes, look at it, swirl, sniff and sip." She took a sip.

King: "Don't swallow..." She nodded. "Savour it." He placed a cup by her mouth. "Spit." She spit the beverage. He dabbed the drips of it from her mouth using a napkin.

Nkosi: "Father." I hissed. His eyes slid over to look at me.

King: "Do you want me to teach you too?"

Nkosi: "I think we can take it from here." He looked at Thembisa then walked out.

Sasa: "Hey baby." She hugged me smiling. My anger disappeared with her touch. She obviously didn't notice my father's game. Thembisa is used to affection from her own father, this wouldn't alarm her because she thinks it's innocent. I didn't know how to tell her without scaring her.

Nkosi: "Love."

Sasa: "Are you okay? You look worried."

Nkosi: "I'm fine baby. Are you fine? My father wasn't making you uncomfortable?"

Sasa: "No. I made him chuckle though. I didn't know I wasn't supposed to swallow it." Chuckle?

Nkosi: "Okay. Which one do you like so far?"

Sasa: "I liked the first one. Let's taste some more." I took some cheese and place it in her mouth before pouring her another sip of wine. She tasted the remaining three. Seemingly to enjoy herself.

Nkosi: "So..." I pulled her into my arms. "Which ones are we going with?"

Sasa: "I like the first three." She kissed my chin. I kissed her lips, slowly forgetting where we were. Sucking the taste of wine on her lips. My

hands slid down her back, curving out on her ass. I growled, ready to take her, right here. Her dress slid up, making it easy for me to pick her up holding her against the wall. I undid my zip, pulling her thong aside and struggled myself in. She moaned in my mouth. Her scent swirled all around me, making me dizzy. She tightened around my dick as I drove into her. My body shivered in hunger, pumping into her harder.

Nkosi: "Thembisa.." I groaned. She held on to me, moaning quietly. "So ...wet." I mumbled, kissing her neck. I itched to release, holding her tighter, waiting for her to climax first.

Sasa: "Bite me." She moaned. I growled, struggling to hold back. My teeth grazing on her neck. "Nkosi..." She cried. I felt her body tremble, her tighten and throb then the warm juices trickling out. I let go my body, releasing deep inside her, shutting my mouth as the roar tried to escape, letting out low growl. My body shaking.

Nkosi: "Fuck. That felt so good." I kissed her face. "I'm so glad I married you." She held my face.

Sasa: "I'm also glad you're my husband but uhm.. we spilt the wine." I looked on the floor

Nkosi: "Shit." It was just a few bottles, thank goodness. It would be awkward to explain how a barrel of wine fell over. I pulled out of my heaven, placing her on the floor that wasn't wet. "We'll start in the bathroom, stand there, I'll carry you out." She giggled. I zipped up my pants then picked up my wife walking out.

After freshening up in the bathroom, we walked out the building where everyone was. Thembisa refused to have me carry her out, holding her hand wasn't enough for me. I wanted her to live in my arms. I kissed her hand pulling her into an embrace before reaching the door.

Sasa: "baby.." she smiled.

Nkosi: "I just want to hold you all the time."

Sasa: "I know that but we're with family now, they're going to get irritated with us and kick us out."

Nkosi: "I'm counting on it." She giggled walking away.

Sasa: "I'm hungry Nkosinhle." I chuckled walked out behind her. Everyone looked at us.

Queen Biyela: "Ahh, newly weds. What an amazing bond you two share. Reminds me of my time." She giggled.

King Biyela: "Indeed my queen. I remember it was the happiest time of my life." He smiled. Is it possible that they know what we just did? That would be embarrassing.

Queen: Nobomi, come sit with the Queens, my love-

King: "She's a lady, she can sit with the princesses."

Queen: "Of course my King, my apologies."

Nkosi: "Why can't she sit with the Queens father?" I know what he was doing. The available chair at the princess table was in his direct eye line.

King: "I just said. You're a Prince, therefore you sit with princes. Why must she be with the Queens, unless you want her to be my wife?" A sizzle of anger flared through me. Zwelethu held my arm, to sit.

Thembisa went to the princess table and sat next to Amahle. I sat down with Zwe. Everyone continued with their conversations. The band playing a beautiful harmony.

Zwe: "And then?"

Nkosi: "It's a long story."

Zwe: "We have about 30 minutes."

Nkosi: "I think my father is in love with my wife." He looked at me.

Zwe: "Why do you think that?"

Nkosi: "Just the way he looks at her makes me so uncomfortable. He's so... affectionate and soft with her. Look at him dressed in the exact colour as her."

Zwe: "I don't know Nkosi, what if maybe he's just getting used to her. He's only ever been exposed to You, the twins and Amahle. Thembisa is different from you, she's bubbly and sweet. Maybe he's intrigued."

Nkosi: "Look at him, does he seem intrigued?"

Zwe: "Hm..I see. I don't know Nkosi, have you talked to him?"

Nkosi: "And say what?"

Zwe: "Just ask him. Does Thembisa know?"

Nkosi: "No. She just thinks he's finally accepting her. She thinks this is fatherly. Unbeknownst to her, my father is never affectionate or soft. Nor does he smile and chuckle at the drop of a hat."

Zwe: "I think you and him need a sit down. This doesn't look safe Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I need Amahle. She can fix this. Anyway, why is Sibonelo angry?"

Zwe: "How do you know tha- Never mind. He's upset because I gave Jimmy's number to our friend who wants to date her."

Nkosi: "Why would you do that?"

Zwe: "Sibonelo isn't emotionally available for Jimmy. She's a sweet girl and all he's going to keep doing is hurt her. He can move on and play with his other girls. Melokuhle on the other hand is ready and willing to be a present partner to her."

Nkosi: "So why is Sibonelo angry?"

Zwe: "He's throwing a tantrum because he's not getting what he wants. That being Jimmy. She refuses to be his toy."

Nkosi: "He's in love with her."

Zwe: "No he's not, I know him. He's being Sibonelo. He'll be fine. Give him a week. He's already found himself a new girl anyway."

Nkosi: "Oh. Mthunzi, how is Busi?" He looked up at me.

Mthunzi: "Great my Prince, recovering really well. She goes back to her work fully, tomorrow."

Nkosi: "That's good." Why was my sister staring at Khaya? What was she trying to do? Actually I had enough problems of my own. I can't deal with this.

SASA POV\_

The table was set and we could now, sit for our lunch. It was indoors, decorated beautifully. I had to thank Queen Biyela for this stunning arrangement. At the head of the table obviously sat the King. On his left,

Queen Nobantu and Nolwazi, then the princesses. On his right, sat Nkosi then me. Amahle sat next to me, then Mthunzi. King Biyela sat on the other end, his right being Zwelethu, Sibonelo and Khaya. His left was Queen Biyela, Mngqobi and Zinhle. Our starters were served. I hope no one is allergic to peri peri, I did ask. Amahle was having a butternut soup.

Nolwazi: "What am I looking at?"

Nhlanhla: "Feces I presume."

Nkosi: "That's chicken livers. Please be respectful, we're with company." I quietly ate my chicken livers and soft bread, and they were banging. They weren't too hot, which was great but that little sizzle.

King: "Interesting flavours."

Me: "The peri peri isn't overpowering the overall taste. The chef did a great job."

Nkwe: "Is this something that you eat in your village often Nobomi?"

Me: "Yes. My father owns a few hundred chickens. We supply most of our village. I've learnt to cook them in plenty different ways."

Nkosi: "Did you give them this recipe?"

Me: "Yes, it's my father's favourite."

Queen: "It's amazing sweetheart."

Nkosi: "I wish you'd baked the bread. This one isn't like yours."

Nobantu: "Nobomi can bake?"

Nkosi: "Yes mother. Best bread I've ever tasted. Baby, your mother told you to bake me a cake." I giggled.

Me: "I will bake you one this week."

King: "Is it the bread we had at the villa for dinner?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Biyela: "What else can you bake Thembisa?"

Me: "Scones, cakes, I haven't learnt to decorate them but they're pretty tasty."

Queen: "I should invite you over one of these days so we can bake together and have some tea."

Me: "I'd love that, mama."

Biyela: "Mama Biyela makes the best scones in life, you'll have a good time."

Nkwe: "Is the invitation open? I'd love to learn how to bake."

King: "Only if you behave Nkwenkwezi."

Nkwe: "I will, daddy. I promise." She smiled. The waiters came to take our orders, seeing that there's variety of meat and vegetables, everyone can choose what they want and not waste.

King: "Thembisa." I looked up at him.

Me: "Yes, My King?"

King: "What do you recommend I eat?" Nkosi stared at him. All of us did. I was stuck. Why would he ask me that?

Me: "Uhm, I highly recommend the fried chicken. The vegetables are all amazing, instead of the rice, you can have the samp." I looked at the waiter. "Did the chef make both creamy samp and the one mixed with beans."

Waiter: "Yes Your Highness."

Me: "The creamy samp, my king." He looked at the waiter.

King: "I'll have that." This was very embarrassing.

Me: "Love which one will you have?" I touched Nkosi's hot hand. He looked at me.

Nkosi: "All of them." He smiled.

Me: "We'll have to get a wheelbarrow to carry you out of here then." He laughed.

Nolwazi: "What wine will we be pairing with this Nobomi?" Oh God, I was not good with pairing wine with food.

Me: "Uhm. I'm not sure, my queen."

King: "You can take a guess, with the meat. If it's red meat..."

Me: "It will need a full body red."

King: "Good, I'm having chicken, so I will drink what?"

Me: "It's tricky."

Nkwe: "It's white meat. It's not that hard."

Me: "But it's not a light meal. So maybe a light red."

King: "Fast learner." He smiled.

Nobantu: "Seems like the lesson earlier was fruitful."

King: "Very."

Nhla: "Seems like father has a new favourite."

Nkosi: "And it's still not you." Amahle choked. Can I change my seat? I want to go sit with the Biyela family. These ones are not peaceful. Our food was brought to us, starting with the king. After getting my plate, I excused myself.

Nkosi: "What's wrong?"

Me: "I have a surprise for you." I walked away, going to the kitchen. I had ordered a case of these to be brought here and chilled. I took two out of the fridge and went back to the table, I handed him the glass bottle.

Zwe: "Yoh, you've killed him."

Nkosi: "Coke???" He smiled and kissed me. "I love you more than life."

Me: "But not more than coke, I understand my love." He laughed.

Nolwazi: "Everyday? It's just giggles and kisses? All day?"

Queen Biyela: "New love is so sweet." She smiled.

King: "What is that?"

Nkosi: "It's soda."

Nolwazi: "It's unhealthy." Nkosi opened the bottle.

Nkosi: "It's better in the bottle, drink it."

King: "It's sizzling."

Nkosi: "Just drink it." The king looked at the bottle and took a sip.

King: "Do they have another flavour? I don't like it."

Me: "Not here, my king. I'll have to look for the store that sells the vanilla and the cherry flavour."

Nkwe: "Is there a healthier less fizzy alternative?"

Me: "The No sugar? Absolutely."

King: "Amahle what's your favourite?"

Ama: "I don't drink soda father. I prefer gin." I choked laughing with everyone else. What a stupid child.

Nobantu: "Nobomi, what are we having for dessert?" She was only halfway through her meal?

Me: "I asked for brownies. And, ordered from a friend of ours that owns an ice cream shop, custom made ice cream."

Nkwe: "You have a friend that owns an ice cream shop?"

Me: "Yes. She's Sir Mthunzi's wife. Khaya took me there once, remember Khaya?"

Khaya: "My favourite place. They have the best ice cream in the city if not the country."

Nkwe: "Maybe you can show me too one of these days. Is that fine father? Can Khaya take me to an ice cream shop?"

King: "Yes, he can."

Nhla: "Oh my God, there's a glitch. Father can I please have your Rolls Royce?"

Ama: "That's mine."

Nobantu: "A vacation."

Nhla: "Five million then?"

Nkwe: "A mall please." We laughed.

King: "Can I eat? Before you start pecking me apart like vultures. Maybe I can exchange with Biyela. Can I have the boys instead?"

Biyela: "I'm sorry my king but no." Our lunch had started off a little shaky but we had a good time. Everyone was laughing. That's all I'll ever want.

Chapter 109

## SIBONELO'S POV \_

Finally we'd made it back home in the evening. The lunch at the vineyard was nice. Our families seem to be blending and that was amazing. I sat in the lounge, drinking my whiskey, watching the TV. I don't know what I was watching but it was distracting at least. I was trying to resist the urge of touching my phone because I know I'd want to check what she was up to. The fact that she's a few streets away had me reeling. I could drive up, or even walk to Mngqobi's house and see her. I wasn't going to though.

Biyela: "So, Khaya. You have a date with a princess?" Khaya laughed.

Khaya: "That was very shocking. I was not expecting her to ask."

Zwe: "Do you want to go?"

Khaya: "Now that I have permission, yes."

Zwe: "She's a Sikhosana, young prince. They're bound to be difficult to handle."

Khaya: "Don't worry Bhut Zwe, I have all the training. Right Bhut Sbo?"

Zwe: "Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "Hm?"

Biyela: "What's wrong?"

Sibo: "Nothing. I'm going upstairs, I need headache pills-"

Biyela: "The medicine cabinet is right here in the kitchen." I got up and walked up the stairs to my mother's room. She was in bed, looking at her tablet. I took off my shoes and got in bed.

Queen: "What's wrong baby?"

Sibo: "I have a headache."

Queen: "And what else."

Sibo: "Zwelethu gave away my girlfriend to his friend."

Queen: "Why would he do something like that?"

Sibo: "He obviously doesn't like me."

Queen: "Now you know that's not true. Zwelethu is your brother. What happened?"

Sibo: "I don't want to talk about it mama, I have a headache."

Queen: "Come." She hugged me. "tell me why Zwelethu did that."

Sibo: "Remember the girl I told you I liked. Well, we had a bit of a fight. She then cut off contact with me. Zwe told me to beg her and I did what he said. I bought her flowers, I wrote a note. She told me that she doesn't want my begging or anything else. We must keep everything professional. She doesn't want to be involved with me."

Queen: "But Sibonelo you know better than to sleep with people you work with. No matter how much you like them. Look how irrational your business decision making has been? You've been stressed and awful to be around. And I know you've made working with you very difficult for her."

Sibo: "I'm sorry."

Queen: "Why are you sorry to me? You didn't hurt me. I'm just disappointed. My love, you need to be honest with yourself. How then did this get to Zwe giving her away?"

Sibo: "We went out last night and she was there. Melo likes her and he asked me for her number, I refused. He then told Zwe and Zwe gave it to him." She kissed my head.

Queen: "Maybe it's for the best. Hm? You're not ready for a relationship Sibonelo, are you?"

Sibo: "Yes, but why can't she wait?"

Queen: "Wait for what? No that's not fair. She's a human being too. She doesn't deserve being strung along to no end. There's no definite future with you. She can't trust that after waiting, you'll choose her. So why must she wait? What are you willing to sacrifice now, to show her you'll be committed to her?"

Sibo: "I have a headache mama."

Queen: "You're being childish is what you're doing. No girl deserves you Sibonelo. You forget how handsome you are, and you can be sweet, you're driven, ambitious and a Prince. You hold high status and most importantly, incredible success. Who wouldn't fall in love with you? Now

you want to hurt these girls because they don't know where they stand and you're ready to discard them as you please? I'm sorry my angel but no. Perhaps we've pushed you but rather do what you were doing before until you're sure you want to commit. Now I'm not asking you to whore yourself out Sibonelo please." I chuckled. The bedroom door opened.

Biyela: "No! Out. Hawu??"

Queen: "Please sthandwa. He's going through enough."

Biyela: "He's 29 years old! He's not going through it in my bed. Sibonelo!"

Queen: "Please leave my child alone?"

Biyela: "Sibonelo I'm going to drag you out of that bed."

Sibo: "I'll see you tomorrow mama." I got up, putting on my shoes.

Queen: "No. You're my child, you'll stay in my comfort until I know you're fine."

Biyela: "No he will not! He's basically breastfeeding at this point."

Sibo: "It's fine mama, I just need to go sleep." I walked out. I didn't even want to be in this house anymore. I got in my car and drove to the club. There's always someone available to impress me there.

I walked in the club, as it was starting to buzz. Even on a Sunday, people were ready to drink. I sat at my table waiting for my drink. I looked through the club, seeing nothing impressive so far. Phila placed the bottle and glass on the table. I took out my phone against my better judgement. This will not help me at all but I just couldn't resist. Her page had two new pictures. She had a new short wig on. Her modest black satin dress hugging her body, a white blazer on her shoulders. Is this what she wore to church? She looked gorgeous as usual. Mnqobi walked in, and sat on the couch next to me.

Sibo: "What are you doing here?"

Mnqobi: "Mom told me to come look for you."

Sibo: "You can tell her I'm fine and entertained. She shouldn't worry."

Mnqobi: "Can't lie to a queen." He chuckled.

Sibo: "Please leave, Mngqobi. You have two wives waiting for you at home."

Mngqobi: "They're fine. My brother needs me." He took the bottle, pouring a drink. "Zwe told me to get you drunk. He says you don't want him near you."

Sibo: "He's right about that."

Mngqobi: "Still mad at him?"

Sibo: "Yes. I'm furious at him. Imagine passing her around like she's meat. No man." I took the drink he gave me, gulping it down.

Mngqobi: "Sooner or later she'd move on, Sbo."

Sibo: "Still. It's not right what he did."

Mngqobi: "Sbo, you have to be honest though. Would you have given Zimmy the relationship she needs?"

Sibo: "And Melokuhle will?"

Mngqobi: "He's grea-"

Sibo: "If I hear how amazing he is one more time, I will fucking burn this place to the ground."

Mngqobi: "Okay. Sorry."

Sibo: "So what do I do then Mngqobi?"

Mngqobi: "Find your reason to commit. Not just a person but a reason. Learn to not be in control all the time. Just let go."

Sibo: "You're always in control, you have two wives."

Mngqobi: "I almost lost them and you held me down, remember? I'm not always in control either because I let myself feel. Love is not about control. It's a mutual partnership. Something to be worked on everyday. It's not perfect. Stop treating it like a business deal. There's no routine, there's no rules. Just let it be." His phone rang. He looked at the screen. "Your mother will kill everyone for you, lucky favourite child." I chuckled, taking the call.

Sibo: "Mama I'm fine."

Queen: "Then come home Sibonelo."

Sibo: "I will, I'm with Mnqobi."

Queen: "Okay. I love you."

Sibo: "I love you too." I hung up. "Siza advised me to go on vacation but it sounds sad to go alone."

Mnqobi: "So you want to take me? I'm flattered. You're paying right?" I laughed.

Sibo: "Eh Mnqobi. If I take you, you know Zwe and Khaya will come. Now it's no longer a vacation, it's just chaos."

Mnqobi: "Maybe you need some chaos. I'll plan it."

Sibo: "Fine then. Make it adventurous, nothing romantic. If I see one flower petal, I'm out." He laughed.

Mnqobi: "Okay. Don't worry. I'll only send the bill."

Sibo: "Send it to Zwelethu. He owes me." We laughed.

## PETU'S POV\_

We had such a wonderful Sunday. I switched from gin cocktail to wine. Jimmy's cocktails were very strong, I couldn't go past one glass. She drank them with Nothando. This one doesn't learn. She always cries of hangovers in the morning but the way she drinks? I giggled, getting up. I put some water in the fridge to chill and be ready before she sleeps. I took out some headache tablets as well. I checked if there was enough food and there was. She'll have to eat a bit, drink those pills and finish that liter of water before she passes out. Tomorrow is Monday and she had school. I went back to sit down with them.

Zimmy: "Ladies I need to get going. It's late."

Notha: "Why don't you just leave in the morning?"

Zimmy: "Notha.."

Petu: "Notha is right, it's late. What will you sit and do by yourself there at Res?"

Notha: "Also, how about we start planning your project?"

Siza: "Ooh. I love projects, what's it about?"

Zimmy: "Guys." She was suddenly shy.

Notha: "Come on, tell them."

Zimmy: "Okay. I wanted to start a women's support facility or group. I don't know how yet. I wanted to rent a space where we can meet up once a week and give support. Those who need can be provided for. I was thinking of all the people in the disadvantaged homes in need of basic supplies during this winter month. I already checked and there are a few shelters for women and children. They're supplied for by the Throne. But what about the women and children who can't yet make it out of their homes? Those that need encouragement?"

Siza: "This is amazing and thoughtful. I could've used something like this. I still would. I'm battling with feelings of guilt of keeping the children away from their father. I haven't had the heart to answer his calls. I'm dealing with so much anxiety for the upcoming trial. On top of it all, I don't think I hate Jackson. I know how it sounds. I know I sound stupid. It's just... It's difficult. He wasn't always so bad. And he's a great father. I just..."

Zimmy: "You're not stupid Siza. You can't be expected to simply switch off from him. You shared a life with him, children. See, this is why we need this. We need to keep motivating you and comforting you in these moments so you don't feel the need to go back to him."

Notha: "So how do we start?"

Petu: "Make a poster and have it shared on socials. Maybe we can make an email for rvsp so that we know how many people to expect."

Notha: "We also need to put a cap on this. We can't forget that we're affiliated with a high royal family. What will happen if the entire city shows up?"

Petu: "True. How then do we sift through this?"

Siza: "Why don't we start by giving talks in communities? From there, people can share their stories, we note everyone's email or number and then invite them."

Zimmy: "That sounds even better."

Petu: "Which community do we start with?"

Zimmy: "eMoyeni where you grew up. Siza, will you be able to give a talk?"

Siza: "It will be difficult but yes. If it will help, I can do it."

Zimmy: "I can contact the community leader and book the hall."

Siza: "Why don't we do it at the church?"

Petu: "Even better." We made some notes on how the talks would go and everything else.

Notha: "How is your writing going?"

Siza: "Challenging, but great."

Petu: "What is your story about?"

Siza: "It's something I've never written before. Fantasy and mystery. Notha offered to read the manuscript." I looked at Nothando. She giggled.

Petu: "You do know she tricked you into writing something she enjoys, right?" We laughed.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

After a beautiful day at the vineyard. We had left for the palace after picking up changing clothes from the villa, I needed to speak to my father and Amahle. I led Thembisa into our room, placing the bag on the chair.

Nkosi: "Today was amazing. Thank you baby."

Sasa: "I only planned it, love. Please remind me to send a bouquet to thank Queen Biyela for helping with decor and the chefs. They're really amazing."

Nkosi: "Tomorrow. Now you rest." I sat her on the bed, walking to my bathroom. I ran the bath, adding a soothing salt and oil to help her relax then went back to the bedroom. She was unpacking the bag.

Nkosi: "I asked you to rest Mrs Sikhosana." I led her back to bed, sitting her down.

Sasa: "I only wanted to pack my clothes properly love."

Nkosi: "I have a room helper for that." I knelt on the floor, undoing her shoe's tiny buckle. I took them off and rubbed her ankle.

Sasa: "Oh, that feels good." I massaged her feet gently, making sure the aches are gone. I took off her dress, kissing her skin then picked her up, walking to the bathroom. I helped her into the bath tub, sitting her down.

Nkosi: "Now you can soak yourself in the bath, I'll bring some fruit."

Sasa: "You're so sweet." I kissed her lips.

Nkosi: "Rest, think about nothing, I'll go speak to Amahle and father but I'll be back soon."

Sasa: "Okay then." I left the bathroom and bedroom. There was a kitchen on the top floor as well because the main kitchen was too far away downstairs. The staff were busy cleaning. I picked the fruit from the bowl.

Nkosi: "Please, prepare these." One washed their hands and chopped the fruit efficiently, placing it in a bowl. I took it to Thembisa, finally she was relaxing, with her eyes closed. I placed the fruit next to her, kissing her head before I walked out. I started at Amahle's room, knocking on her door.

Ama: "Come in." I opened, walking in.

Nkosi: "Hey." She was in bed with her large white fur cat. I never see it outside this room, for a while I thought it was dead.

Ama: "Hi." I sat on the chair and sighed.

Nkosi: "I need to talk about father." She giggled. "It's not funny."

Ama: "It kind of is. You got set up."

Nkosi: "Amahle what's going on? Am I imagining things? The way father is acting is very uncomfortable."

Ama: "But this was bound to happen Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "What are you talking about? He has his own two wives!"

Ama: "Nkosinhle. Thembisa is treasure blood. A companion of a king. Her blood attracts kings. It's not something that he or you can control. King Ngidumise unfortunately didn't think this part through. This is why

she was named Nobomi, in an effort to dissuade father. It could work but I doubt it. The two bloods are strong together." Oh my God, is that why the healer always says 'the Kings heart' when he praises? No, HELL NO.

Nkosi: "Amahle, I need you or the ancestors to come up with a solution. I'm not sharing MY wife!!"

Ama: "You won't have to. I'm sure he won't kill you-"

Nkosi: "Are you insane!?! He's already threatened to replace me!!" My entire body flared with flames.

Ama: "You're burning my furniture, please Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "Amahle. Solution. Now." I growled.

Ama: "Please calm down."

Nkosi: "WHY!!!"

Ama: "He's not going to hurt her. Just calm down." I switched off, pacing the charred floor. "Now you've scared my cat and burnt my furniture in less than 10 minutes. Please go to bed. We'll figure something out. I swear. He won't touch her. Or you."

Nkosi: "He better not, Amahle. I'm not going to give another warning."

Ama: "I believe you. Just, at least understand? Please understand that this isn't something he chose. It is the way destiny is set, according to our family history. I researched through at least 10 kings before Papa, and he was the first to find a treasure blood in three generations. So about five kings, before his father had this love. This unfortunately, was an error. We'll find a way around it but I can assure you, there's no risk. Also, try not make your bites visible or bleeding. He will possibly freak out."

Nkosi: "Amahle.."

Ama: "Please Nkosi. We can fix this." We better fix it. I am not willing to share my wife. I will kill him if I have to.

Chapter 110

Five days later.

## SASA'S POV\_

On Monday, we had gone back to the villa. I had a feeling Nkosi was mad about something but he refused to tell me. Maybe he'd had another fight with his father, I don't know but it doesn't involve me. So I haven't butted my head in. I've been focused on my assignment and classes this whole week, I was getting tired too. I woke up this Friday morning with the full intent of doing something for myself. Anything. Perhaps a few hours in the garden, reading a book. Nkosi had a few meetings. He wasn't in bed so I assumed, he'd left already. I got out of bed, walking to the bathroom. My stomach felt itchy or hard. I looked at it and laughed.

Me: "You've got to be kidding me." I stood in front of the full length mirror staring at the painting done on my stomach. No wonder I was feeling feathers and butterflies in my sleep, Nkosi was painting on me like I'm his canvas. I didn't even know he could paint like this. I draped a cloth around my waist and another tying my boobs then took my phone and captured a picture. This was beautiful. I looked like art. I sent the picture to him. He responded: <my beautiful wife.> I didn't want to wash it off but what could I do? I replied: <Husband, how am I supposed to wash now?> I sent it. He replied: <It's water paint baby, you can bath or you could wait for me, I'd love to bath you." I giggled. This one is crazy. <You'll bath me in the evening my love, enjoy your meetings. I love you.> Nkosihle would leave that meeting with the speed of light if I even entertained him and I want to bake him a cake today as a surprise. He can't be here. I took a bath and got dressed in a brown body fitting simple maxi dress with long sleeves. I could attend the one class I had and then go to the kitchen. After getting dressed, I sat down in my work desk and set up my system, attending the class. We hadn't begun yet, so I went through my notes. Our virtual system was great. We had a text option to ask questions we need clarification on. Depending on the lesson, which is stipulated at the beginning of the session, it's either interactive or strictly teaching. If it's interactive, the lecturer answers our questions as they appear. If it's only teaching, the questions are recorded and the lecturer answers them individually and publicly for everyone to read the information after the end of the day. Our lecturers

were quite efficient. Our university was honestly the best, I can't lie. My husband did that. I giggled to myself. 80% of my class was virtual. They were starting to join and the lesson would begin shortly.

After my class, I checked my notes and attended the group discussion on the topic. After about half an hour, we adjourned. I went to the restaurant kitchen.

Me: "Hello Melanie, can I use the kitchen? I want to bake."

Melanie: "Yes Your Highness. I'll prepare it for you."

Me: "Thank you." I went to go fetch myself a bottle of water, thinking of meditating since I haven't done so in a minute. My dreams were not as clear these days. I slept peacefully but nothing was happening. In case, I was missing something, perhaps a 10 minute meditation session would help. I collected my things, making my way to the hut. I entered and covered my shoulders. After lighting the candle and burning the leaves, I sat and breathed the purity. Without even uttering a word, just positive thoughts, light, goodness. I thought of all the good things I needed in my life. A happy husband, extra energy to pour into my school work, more emotional capacity for me to carry the new family I have joined. Love in the Sikhosana palace, health and peace for my family at home. Success for my friends in their various projects and joy in their personal lives. Just everything to go well. After the peaceful session, I left the hut and made it to the kitchen once again. I hadn't baked a cake in such a long time so it took me a bit to remember my steps. I decided on a chocolate and red velvet cake layer cake. Just a two layer cake. Chocolate was my mother's personal favourite and Red velvet was my sister's. My dad loved all of them. I could manage making two medium cakes because there was two huge ovens, one would be sent to the palace. I made the cream cheese frosting while they baked then placed it in the fridge. I cleaned up, while waiting. My timer went off and I took the cakes out to cool off. I was looking forward to my book, honestly. I'd have a bowl of popcorn and juice, sitting in the shade. A perfect Friday afternoon. I continued with my cakes, laying the filling on the first layer then carefully placing the second putting the cream on top and on the sides. I had some more left over, so I looked for a piping bag and made a few swirls on top. That's the best I could do. Once done with my two cakes, I put them in the temperature controlled fridge. Washing my hands and going

to fetch my book. I collected my popcorn and juice, going to the garden and relaxed on the couch under the trees, starting my story. Peace.

Two hours later, so enchanted by my book, I felt someone staring at me. No doubt it was a pair of orange eyes. Nkosi was supposed to be at work, I know him and dodging on Fridays. I looked up but it wasn't Nkosi. I sat up.

Me: "My King, good day."

King: "Thembisa."

Me: "I'm sorry, I didn't notice you arrive."

King: "What are you reading?" He walked closer to where I was, standing only a few feet away.

Me: "Uhm... Just a fictional story."

King: "Fictional? What is it about?"

Me: "It's a romance about uhm, people from different worlds."

King: "There's only one world. How can they be from different worlds."

Me: "In the story, there's more than one. There's an underworld. See, the main character, comes from the underworld but she is on a mission to learn more about the new world. In her world, it's called the Rupture, a female species called Uppers are in control. They control the governing, and the people. Problem is, they treat men as slaves and more of them, the men, are dying. So, this lady is of high status in her world. She's one of the world leaders, they decide they need new subjects so they want to go borrow, aka kidnap, males from the new world. So she gets to the new world, knows nothing of it. Unbeknownst to her, the new world is governed by men. Something that enrages her in a sense. Her status, money and everything is of no value here. Except her body, she quickly realizes. To this extent, she needs to find a way to lure men using her body. So that's the story." I just realized I was babbling again. No King wants to hear of such stupidity. "Can I make you some tea?"

King: "Yes." I got up and left for the kitchen. He was probably here for Nkosi and I was about to bore the hell out of him. At least, he can entertain himself by being quiet and doing nothing. Of course his guard stood near me, watching me make the tea. You really think I have the

energy to poison this man? Sir please. I do not need this trouble. I took the tray back to the garden, placing it on the small table, I'd also refilled my juice.

Me: "How many sugars do you take, Your Majesty?"

King: "Two." I poured two teaspoons for him and handed the cup and saucer bowing. "Thank you." I sat in my spot and continued reading. He stirred his cup of tea, taking a sip. "So what did she do?"

Me: "Uhm. That's where I am my King."

King: "Read it to me."

Me: "Okay." I started the third chapter from the beginning. "I was at a loss. How could this be? Is it possible that some had escaped to form this world? But how? Was there a leak in our leadership. Our subjects cannot afford this kind of power. I walked through the street, deep in my thoughts of how to tackle my new predicament. In return for bodily favours, I earn a few notes of money to sustain my living. I do not even like this species, my mating is only..." Why do embarrassing things only happen to me? The main character has never embarked on her sexuality, she has to start now?

King: "She only mates with women?"

Me: "Yes." I decided to continue. "I do not even like this species, my mating is only with women of my regard. Not slaves. Only the strongest males are chosen for reproduction. These ones, all of them, were weak. A group of them walked toward me, hissing and calling out as an animal would. They surrounded me in an effort to trap me. "Hey!! Get away from her!!" A strong deep voice shouted from across the street. The group dispersed, uttering shameful apology to the voice. As I said, weak. I looked at where the voice came from. "You okay? You shouldn't be walking alone at night. This part of the city is dangerous." He says. I'm intrigued at how he commanded authority. This is the strong male one would mate with in an effort to reproduce. "Ma'am? Are you okay?" I had learnt the basic of the language of the new world. Articulation was the problem. "OKAY." I reiterated. He didn't look convinced. "Let me work behind you to see you safely home, go ahead." He says. I don't move, still intrigued. This male is commanding me to keep me safe? "Ma'am, I do not have all night. Walk." He says more dominantly. I start to walk, shamefully because I wanted to. Conflicted because this would earn him 10 lashes in my world. I turned the street and waited around the corner,

he turned bumping into me. Not a shiver of fear in his eyes. "Why aren't you walking, lady?" He asks. His tone low and hunter-like. I studied his face, taking in his strong facial features. His eyes a domineering brown with a sleek hint of danger. "I go home." I reply. "As you should. So walk." He responds. "With you." I say." The King laughed.

King: "This is interesting. Does she have any power to fight off threats? She seems so sure of herself from the time she was intercepted by a group of men. Does she have abilities like me?"

Me: "No, my King. Her only ability is connecting to her world, in case she needs to go back."

King: "That's a little useless. Tell me, where did you learn to read?"

Me: "From school, my king. And also in my spare time, going through novels. I spent alot of my high school nights, reading. It's only when I got to University I didn't have that time."

King: "You have a beautiful voice. Very calming to listen to. Please continue."

Nkosi: "Father." I got a fright, when did he arrive and why can't I hear them? He walked toward us.

King: "Mehluli, good day."

Nkosi: "What are you doing here?"

King: "I came to spend time with Thembisa."

Nkosi: "WHY."

King: "She's all alone while you pander around the city-"

Nkosi: "ARE YOU SERIOUS?! I'M WORKING!!" I stood up.

Me: "Nkosi!" He huffed in frustration.

Nkosi: "You need to leave."

Me: "Haibo, Nkosi. There's no need to be harsh."

Nkosi: "Baby, I am no where near harsh, trust me."

Me: "Okay but please. Your father was kind enough to sit with me and read. He's not bothering me." He was still vibrating with anger that I didn't understand. "Do you like it when he threatens and hurts me instead? I thought we were working to get to this part. Spending time as

a family, and being kind to one another. Now I don't understand why you're acting like this."

Nkosi: "Baby, I'm not trying to hurt you."

Me: "Okay, would you like to sit with us then and read?"

Nkosi: "I'd love to do that my love, but maybe later. I want to speak to father for a little bit." He kissed my head.

Me: "Okay." I took my book, walking back inside the villa. What on earth was happening? Why was he suddenly so angry at his father? And why can't we talk about it? Nkosinhle loves spending time with me but he's not a jealous man. So I don't understand, today he has to sit me down to explain what is up because this is not normal any more. Spending time with the King was fun. He engaged me just like my father does when I blab about my stupid things. He's trying, perhaps Nkosi just wasn't used to it yet.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

The familiar feeling was back. The squeeze in my heart. I stood up.

Mthunzi: "My Prince?"

Nkosi: "I have to go."

Mthunzi: "We're in the middle of a meeting." I walked out. "Nkosinhle!!!" He followed me to the car. "What is going on?"

Nkosi: "I have to -"

Mthunzi: "I know that but tell me why?"

Nkosi: "When my blood, a Sikhosana, is near Thembisa, I can feel it. My father is in that villa."

Mthunzi: "How do you feel that Nkosinhle?" I was already strange enough and Mthunzi would never judge me but I'd never admit to biting and marking my wife. Never.

Nkosi: "I just know."

Mthunzi: "Okay. Let's go. We'll finish in the villa." The car drove off, to my villa. We were just half an hour away and I was shaking. "He's not going to hurt her Nkosi. There's guards there, they'll protect her."

Nkosi: "I shouldn't have left her alone."

Mthunzi: "That's impossible. You have to work, she has school. You can't carry her everywhere."

Nkosi: "Maybe I can work from home?"

Mthunzi: "Tell me why you're worried. Did he try something?"

Nkosi: "Remember I told you and Zwe about Thembisa being treasure blood?"

Mthunzi: "Yeah. Something about her village birthing companions of the throne?"

Nkosi: "Exactly that. There's a problem no one in my lineage has come across and they thought it was funny to experiment with me."

Mthunzi: "What is that problem?"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi, treasure blood attracts a King's blood. Doesn't matter which. Any Sikhosana King."

Mthunzi: "Oh no."

Nkosi: "My father expressed having to battle strange feelings, when he confronted his own father. The strange feelings are him falling in love for the first time. Something that apparently, he cannot control. I feel like I'm going insane."

Mthunzi: "Before we go insane, how safe is this for Thembisa?"

Nkosinhle, I've seen how off the hinges you go for this woman. You're always ready to burn things to the ground and tear them apart. Your father on the other hand his own horrifying abilities. This is an innocent person, who doesn't have the ability to control either one of you. On top of this, he has tried to hurt her before so how safe is she alone with him?" He tapped the driver's shoulder. "Step on it."

Driver: "Yes, my Lord." He increased the speed, with a royal siren on to clear the roads.

Mthunzi: "This is bad."

Nkosi: "Amahle doesn't seem to think so. She thinks this is funny and harmless."

Mthunzi: "Does she have a solution to make it stop?"

Nkosi: "No."

Mthunzi: "But we have to trust that she wouldn't let harm come to Thembisa, right?"

Nkosi: "Yes. She'd never let that happen but that doesn't help me." We arrived at the villa, indeed his cars were here. I walked in, following her scent to the garden. They sat on the couches, talking. He was laughing. I marched over to them, ready to explode.

Nkosi: "Father." I hissed. He looked at me, suddenly bored. The nerve?

King: "Mehluli, good day."

Nkosi: "What are you doing here?" I had to keep breathing steadily to control my anger.

King: "I came to spend time with Thembisa."

Nkosi: "WHY."

King: "She's all alone while you pander around the city-" everything switched off.

Nkosi: "ARE YOU SERIOUS?! I'M WORKING!!" Thembisa stood up, touching my arm.

Sasa: "Nkosi!"

Nkosi: "You need to leave."

Sasa: "Haibo, Nkosi. There's no need to be harsh."

Nkosi: "Baby, I am no where near harsh, trust me."

Sasa: "Okay but please. Your father was kind enough to sit with me and read. He's not bothering me." I calmed, but still enraged. She was holding me. It was difficult to be angry in her touch. "Do you like it when he threatens and hurts me instead? I thought we were working to get to this part. Spending time as a family, and being kind to one another. Now I don't understand why you're acting like this." My heart softened. She obviously didn't understand. Telling her this, would break her. I needed to neutralize my father, not traumatize her.

Nkosi: "Baby, I'm not trying to hurt you."

Sasa: "Okay, would you like to sit with us then and read?"

Nkosi: "I'd love to do that my love, but maybe later. I want to speak to father for a little bit." I kissed her pretty head.

Sasa: "Okay." She took her book, walking away. I stared at my father, waiting until Thembisa had entered the building and not in audible range.

Nkosi: "The very least you could do is be respectful. To me, and to my wife."

King: "Is getting to know her not respectful?"

Nkosi: "You and I both know it's not true. Father, I am trying the best I can to be understanding and respectful of you. I understand it can't be your choice but so help me God, if you ever even tried to take my wife not even your ancestors will be able to stop me from erasing you."

King: "Do you really think that's in your best interest?" He stood up. "I'm not trying to harm Thembisa but so help ME God, if you talk to me like that again? We will have a very different conversation. Also, do you really think Thembisa will continue to unconditionally love you once you kill me? Because if the past is anything to go by, you'll spend your eternity in a roaming realm with her hiding from you." Something in my brain ticked, Mthunzi pulled me back with all his strength while I fought him off, roaring. I'm going to break each and every one of your bones. The King dropped to his knees, his bones cracking one by one as he screamed.

Chapter 111

SASA POV\_

I heard screaming and roaring from outside. I jumped up, running to the garden. The king lay on the grass, Nkosinhle standing on top of him, breathing angrily.

Me: "NKOSINHLE!!!" I knelt next to the King feeling his pulse. It was light. "What have you done?" The King wasn't responding. I couldn't tell

if he was dead or dying. Oh my God. My hands were shaking, my brain trying to think. Zwe. I don't know how but he had to get here asap. I ran back to the room to fetch my phone. I dialed Zwe's number, running back to the garden. The guards just stood around useless as hell. How could Mthunzi let this happen and why were they stuck in limbo?

Me: "Zwe? Please come to the villa. The king is hurt. Badly."

Zwe: "Where's Nkosinhle?" I looked at him.

Me: "He's here."

Zwe: "I'm on my way."

Me: "His pulse is weak Zwe, what do I do?"

Zwe: "I'll be 10 minutes, Sasa. I'm taking the helicopter." I hung up and dialed for Amahle.

Ama: "I'm on my way." She answered.

Me: "Okay." I hung up. Blood had started to seep out his mouth and nose. I put a cushion under his head, so he doesn't choke. I looked at Nkosi. What was he thinking? What could get him so angry? He's not a violent person so what was this about? Honestly I'm disappointed but obviously this wasn't as small issue as I'd believed. This was not the kind husband I had gotten used to. Mthunzi held him back to the house. I looked down at the King, the bones in his neck visible under his skin. My hands were still shaking, imagining the pain. I touched his neck again feeling for his pulse.

Me: "The will of God surpasses all human understanding and decision. May you numb the body as the consciousness seeks healing, awaiting help." I whispered. A small sound groaned from him. "Please hold on." He groaned again. "Shhh. Only listen to the sound of my voice. I'm right here. Help is coming." I thought of a song to sing in hopes he could focus on my voice and the first that came to mind was one I'd listened to all week. "Starry, starry night, Paint your palette blue and gray, Look out on a summer's day, With eyes that know the darkness in my soul. Shadows on the hills, Sketch the trees and the daffodils, Catch the breeze and winter chills, In colors on the snowy linen land. Now I understand, What you tried to say to me, How you suffered for your sanity. How you tried to set them free. They would not listen, they did not know how. Perhaps they'll listen now. Starry, starry night. Flaming flowers that brightly blaze. Swirling clouds in violet haze, Reflect in

Vincent's eyes of china blue, Colors changing hue. Morning fields of amber grain, Weathered faces lined in pain, Are soothed beneath the artist's loving hand. Oh, now I understand. What you tried to say to me. How you suffered for your sanity, How you tried to set them free. They would not listen, they did not know how. Perhaps they'll listen now..." I continued to sing quietly, feeling the warmth in his hand.

Zwe: "Thembisa." I looked up.

Me: "Hi." He knelt on his other side.

Zwe: "What happened?"

Me: "I don't know. I was inside, Mthunzi can know better. How is he?" He felt for his pulse. A worried look crossed his face as he swallowed the lump in his throat.

Zwe: "Barely alive." A chilling cold went down my back. He undid his suit jacket and shirt, placing the stethoscope on him. "Need to get him to hospital." Amahle ran up to us. She knelt by her father's head, holding it with both hands.

Ama: "Thembisa, please go to the herb garden and pick Igazi lomfula. It's orange with white stripes. Take the one that has a closed mouth and only tear it from the root. Run." I ran up to the herb garden, searching the garden thoroughly until I spotted it in the corner. Only a few and all were opened. One small one in the corner was still closed, thank God. I carefully extracted from its root. I took it back to Amahle. She squeezed the plant, two drops of liquid dripped out and on to his mouth. "There. Now, the hospital. I'm coming with." Zwe called the guards to put him on the stretcher, and they jogged to the helicopter. Amahle got in with them, in no time the helicopter lifted off, flying away. I went into the villa. Nkosi was sitting on a chair in the restaurant, I knelt in front of him. The anger still emanated off his skin but it wasn't heat this time.

Me: "I know you didn't mean to do this. This isn't you." He looked into my eyes.

Nkosi: "It is me."

Me: "No. I refuse to accept that. I won't allow that to be. You're kind, Nkosi. Please tell me what happened? What could your father do that was so horrible you wanted him dead?" I touched his face. "Please tell me my love?"

Nkosi: "Okay." He looked away. "He's in love with you." My heart stopped.

Me: "What are you talking about?"

Nkosi: "Your blood is of treasure, his a king. He cannot control it. Destiny connects the two. They didn't expect it with two kings at the same time. It's the first." My whole body felt cold. Everything. The spending time, getting to know me. The matching outfits, the winery, the food suggesting, him asking me to read to him, I sang for him thinking he was dying. God, he might be. And this is why

Me: "Oh." I struggled to breath.

Nkosi: "I didn't want to scare you." Too late. "I thought we could neutralize the way he feels. Amahle said he wouldn't hurt you. I know he wouldn't."

Me: "How... How do you know that?"

Nkosi: "The way I feel about you.. anything that hurts you I will rip to shreds. Even if it's myself. He might feel the same." I felt dizzy and sick all at once. I stood up, stumbling a bit. He caught me in his arms.

Me: "I'm gonna need a minute."

Mthunzi: "Tell her." Nkosi shook his head.

Me: "There's more?"

Nkosi: "It's nothing-"

Mthunzi: "Nkosi."

Me: "Tell me so I can process this all at once."

Nkosi: "I have a new ability. It... It did that to him."

Me: "What is the ability?"

Nkosi: "I only... I thought of breaking all the bones in his body and it happened. I didn't touch him." I stepped back from him.

Me: "You broke all the bones in his body without touching him?" I looked at Mthunzi. He too had a dislocated shoulder. "You tried to hold him back?"

Mthunzi: "Yes but I'll be fine." I was in stunned shock, beginning to reel and spiral. Yes, my husband could turn into a tiger. He could ignite fire

off his body. He could whisper, seep into your thoughts and memories, control your movements. But now he could break every part of you. Meaning he can stop your heart, all your organs shut down, on his command. With just a spark of anger. This was the most dangerous man alive.

Me: "I need to.... A minute. To adjust." I stepped back, trying to gather my thoughts. Put my brain back together. It was too much information all at once, it needed to be categorised by importance. The king was in a possible coma. Someone needed to tell Zwe of these injuries so that he knows what to fix. The family needed to be informed just in case. Oh God, I don't need that. I can't. "Amahle. I need to call Amahle." I dialed her number, putting the phone against my ear. She didn't answer. I sent a message explaining his possible injuries so they know where to start. "We need to go to the palace. Do you need help with your arm, Mthunzi?" He shook his head.

Mthunzi: "I just need a corner wall to pop it back in." I forget he's a soldier trained to numb his own pain.

Me: "Okay. I need to get a jersey so we can leave." I walked to our room.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

The ride to the palace was silent. I didn't expect this is how my day would go. My anger had slipped from my mental grip. The new ability was as Amahle had explained, dangerous. How can I destroy this? These were my thoughts, it's not something I could actively control. The look of fear on Thembisa's face made my heart shiver to a cold. She was now scared of me. More than she's ever been before. Realizing how scary this ability can be, does she think I'd ever hurt her? I would never, not in a million years. I felt a soft, warm touch hold my hand. I looked down on the seat. She was holding my hand. I looked at her, her eyes closed, resting on the head rest. Even in her tire she still held me down, still held my hand. I had to be the luckiest man alive. We drove into the palace, parking our cars. We got out of the car, walking up the stairs to the entrance. I don't know how I was feeling. I don't know if I was guilty, or sad or still angry. My mothers were in the courtyard. Both in their elements and thoughts. First mother was reading. Second mother having a cup of tea watching the fencing sport performed by two

professionals she hired on occasion when she's bored. They both looked up as we entered.

Sasa: "Good Day my queens." She bowed.

Nolwazi: "What's going on? Why does she look like that?" She asked me. Thembisa did look worn out, if not scared.

Sasa: "We have terrible news, my queen. The King had to be rushed to hospital, he has fallen ill." They both stood up.

Nobantu: "Ill? With what? The king is never sick."

Sasa: "I uhm...we aren't sure yet. We await an update from Dr Biyela. He's attending to him."

Nolwazi: "You did this? Your father would never just be sick Mehluli, what did you do?" Honestly, I couldn't even answer her. I don't know what I was thinking coming here.

Nobantu: "Well? Speak!!"

Nkosi: "We had a disagreement."

Nolwazi: "About what!!" I looked at Sasa.

Nkosi: "Nothing we can't sort out, Mother."

Nolwazi: "You want to kill him, don't you? Ever since this slut came into your life, you've been dead set on overpowering your father!!"

Nkosi: "Don't call my wife that." Thembisa held me back.

Sasa: "Let's go. Now." She led me out.

Nolwazi: "You're weak Mehluli!!! Your father was right about this stupid love!! You have given the throne to a whore that will destroy us all." She screamed.

Sasa: "Keep your thoughts blank. Pure. We're walking out. Focus. Breath. Breath." She held my hand, having to drag me out into the car. My whole body was trembling. "Drive!!" The guard started the car and pulled away immediately. "Look at me.. breath." I breathed, looking into her eyes. The blinding rage subsiding, her face refocused. My wife. "There..." She hugged me. "We need to leave the villa, we're going to take what we need and go to our own house. I don't trust your family to not come after us and we need to keep this at bay."

Nkosi: "Okay."

Me: "We're going to be okay. You're going to be fine, okay? Just let me in." I nodded. Feeling a soft kiss on my cheek. My anger quickly melting away. Warmth. Love. I held her body tight on top of me.

Nkosi: "Please don't leave me."

Sasa: "Not even in death, my love." ...

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

The weather had drastically begun to change outside. Today was the day I was supposed to leave with my brother's for vacation. We can't realistically get a full week. I'd probably go crazy. So we'd settled on leaving Friday afternoon coming back Monday afternoon. This way we only miss one day of work. I was waiting on Zwe, he had gone to the hospital for a last checkup. Mngqobi was at his house with the girls and children. I don't know about this weather hey? Maybe it's just Mountain Peak? Our vacation was on a private island that only Zwe knew of. What he described seemed exciting, no lie. The activities outdoors was something to look forward to. I tried dialing his number, it was off. He must be busy. I walked into the palace.

Sibo: "Mama."

Queen: "Lounge." I walked to the lounge. She sat there with my father, watching TV. "Hello."

Sibo: "Good afternoon parents."

King: "What got you in a good mood?"

Sibo: "I'm going on vacation."

Queen: "In this weather baby?"

Sibo: "I'm sure it's not serious mama, we can make it out of here before it storms."

King: "As long as you're safe Sibonelo. Where are you brothers?"

Sibo: "Zwe is at the hospital. Mngqobi and Khaya are with the kids." A clap of thunder hit the sky. "You cannot be serious."

King: "Perhaps you should postpone. This doesn't look good." Right then, the rains poured. Great. Just great. Will I ever catch a break?

Sibo: "Okay. I don't mind postponing. It won't rain for the rest of my life. I can find something else to do."

King: "Let's play a game of chess. We haven't done that in a while." I cannot believe my Fridays are spent playing games with my parents like I'm a toddler.

Sibo: "Can I get a drink?"

Queen: "No." I haven't been allowed a drink in a week too. Like a child. Since Mngqobi brought me back drunk from the club, I've been banned. Yes, by my own parents. I was looking forward to this weekend. I sat down, my father bringing out the glass chess board. "Sweetheart, won't the kids be safer here? These rains are scary."

Sibo: "They'll be fine mama, Mngqobi's house is secure and warm."

Queen: "I miss them."

Sibo: "Okay, I'll ask Mngqobi to bring them for the night." I sent a message to Mngqobi. My phone rang just then. Zwe, probably seeing the weather.

Sibo: "Brother. I see the storm, we can postpone."

Zwe: "Not just that. Are you home?"

Sibo: "Yes, what's wrong?"

Zwe: "I just landed in Oceans. The King is in a coma, don't gasp." I gasped. My parents looked at me. "Okay, if your parents are looking at you. Tell them he had a stroke. I won't be home anytime soon. Things are critical. This information does not leave the three of you."

Sibo: "Okay." He hung up.

King: "What's wrong? What happened?" I stood up looking down the passages to be sure no helper was coming this way.

Sibo: "The King is in a coma, apparently he had a stroke." I whispered.

Queen: "Oh my God!"

Sibo: "We have to keep this to ourselves. For now."

King: "This is terrible. No wonder the weather, oh Dear God. This is how it was when King Ngidumise left us."

Sibo: "We can't think like that Baba. Zwe already says things are critical. Let's have a bit of hope." My heart was racing. The nation was not ready for this. Things will fall apart. We're still building from the few weeks of lockdown, another shutdown would crush us.

King: "What do we do, in the meanwhile."

Sibo: "I hate having to plan for the worst but perhaps we should. Again, only among us. Not even the young princes must find this out yet."

King: "Okay. Let's plan a statement. In case by the evening, the country needs to be informed. Then take it from there." I nodded, fetching my laptop. How was Nkosi doing through this? Fuck. It was months from his own coronation. Who would crown him? Has that happened before? My stress came back ten fold. Would it be insensitive to contact him? Maybe let me reach Mthunzi and just ask if everything is okay or if there's anything I can help with. I sat back down with my laptop and dialed his number.

Mthunzi: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Hey, uhm.. is everything okay?"

Mthunzi: "Not really. The king is in hospital. There's no update on his condition yet."

Sibo: "What can I do?"

Mthunzi: "For now? Please guard the internet. We don't need a leak to rattle the nation. Surely by now, someone could have said something or spotted him at Oceans."

Sibo: "Okay. I'll put a tag on the network to watch through the information being shared."

Mthunzi: "Thanks. Oh and if anyone asks you where Nkosinhle or Thembisa is, you don't know. At all."

Sibo: "Oh. Okay." He hung up. That wouldn't be a lie, I didn't know where they were but why was their location suddenly a secret? Oh my God. Did he do this? Did Nkosi kill his father?

## Chapter 112

### SIBONELO'S POV

The weather had gone from bad to worse within the hour. The internet was abuzz. Rumors had started to spark. I'd already take down and permanently banned the account that started it. A Helicopter and hospital shut down was a tell sign that a royal was hurt. It was only still a rumor though because Oceans was beyond private hospital. It was specifically for only royals and people we assign under us. Mngobi walked in the house, the kids walking with him. Khaya followed in carrying the baby, covered in her pink blanket. He handed her over to my mom. Miles ran up to me.

Sibo: "Hello my little prince."

Miles: "Hello Grandpa, hello grandmama. Hello Uncle Bobo."

King: "Hello my sweet boy."

Miles: "Look at my boots." He showed me his green boots.

Sibo: "Those are the snazziest boots I've ever seen. Do you think I can get a pair?"

Miles: "You can borrow mine."

Sibo: "I don't think they'll fit me."

Miles: "I also have matching socks." This was a trick to take off his shoes so he can run around. This kid is so predictable it was cute. I helped take off his rain boots and placed him on my lap.

Sibo: "Did you have a good day?"

Miles: "I did. I went to school."

Sibo: "Really? What did you do at school?"

Miles: "We did colours in a book. Then had a nap then we had our snacks. The teacher gave me noodles."

Sibo: "Do you like noodles?"

Miles: "No."

Sibo: "What do you like so we can tell your teacher to prepare it for you?"

Miles: "I like mash potatoes."

Sibo: "And what else."

Miles: "And chicken."

Sibo: "Okay, I'll write your teacher a note okay? Mia how was school?"

Mia: "It was great. I had so much fun."

Sibo: "Did you make any friends?"

Mia: "I did. Jessica and Timothy."

Sibo: "Timothy is a boy?"

Mia: "Yes Uncle Bobo." She zipped off her boots, struggling them off on the floor. Mngqobi wasn't helping the poor baby.

Sibo: "Tell him I'm watching him. Hawk eyes."

King: "Sibonelo! He's a 5 year old. Mia, come here let me help you."

Sibo: "I don't care how old he is. Mngqobi, have they eaten?"

Mngqobi: "I have no clue."

Sibo: "What did their mother say?"

Mngqobi: "Khaya?"

Khaya: "Hm?" Are they high? How do they leave with children and hear no instruction from their mother? I took out my phone calling Sizani.

Siza: "Prince Biyela."

Sibo: "Hi. Have the kids eaten? Mngqobi and Khaya have no idea." She laughed.

Khaya: "I was focused on carrying the baby."

Sibo: "You're a liar." He laughed.

Siza: "The kids ate when they came home from school. They only need a snack now. Please guard Miles, he's not allowed liquids from this hour. He's potty training."

Sibo: "I remember. Alright Siza. What are you guys doing there?"

Siza: "We're planning Zimmy's new project. Hopefully tomorrow doesn't rain this badly. People tend to shy away from going outside in this weather." My interest piqued.

Sibo: "Project? What is the project?"

Siza: "Uhm... I shouldn't have said anything."

Sibo: "Hawu, yini manje? We're friends. Tell me."

Siza: "It's not my place Sibonelo. I can't do that."

Sibo: "Okay fine. I understand. Have fun ke."

Siza: "Thank you, bye." I hung up. What project was this? I'd stayed away from her page all week specifically because I found out Melo was taking her to some dingy spot in the township for a date. I didn't want to know if she went and definitely didn't want to know if she enjoyed it. I had banned Zwe from telling me anything related to Melokuhle. I didn't want to hear it. Miles was now interested in my laptop so I needed to find a way to distract him and work. I got up, taking him to the kitchen.

Sibo: "Do we want biscuits for a snack? Or cheese puffs?"

Miles: "Cheese puffs please." I picked up a packet for him and the two options for Mia to choose going back to the lounge.

Mnqobi: "So there's talks, about a royal in hospital. Who is it?"

Sibo: "Could be anyone really-"

Mnqobi: "No, Bhut Sbo. This is Oceans. We and the Sikhosana's are the only royals. Is it one of the princesses? Is it the King? The Prince??"

Sibo: "We're not sure of anything yet."

Mnqobi: "Sbo, the country is already in panic at the prospect of another shutdown."

Sibo: "Mnqobi I know as much as you do." I gave my phone to Miles on lock and opened his chips. He sat quietly next to me. "Mia, do you want biscuits or chips?"

Mia: "Can I please have biscuits?" I handed her the packet, going back to sit down. I took my laptop once again, working. A half vibration kept going off next to me. I looked at Miles. He was watching his show. My phone rang. This child swiped decline.

Sibo: "Hewena Miles mfan' omncane!" Mngqobi fell over laughing. I wasn't even interested in remembering his last name at this moment, why was he declining my calls?

Miles: "It's my screen time."

Sibo: "I won't disturb your screen time, I just want to answer my work call."

Miles: "No. You're going to leave."

Sibo: "I'm not going anywhere, I promise. Let me answer the phone." Zwe would've spilled over to my father if he can't get hold of me. I checked the number. Not saved and not sure who it could be. I dialed it back.

Sibo: "Sibonelo Biyela?"

Caller: "Hey you." Miles was right by declining. I hung up.

Sibo: "Keep hanging up, mntanam. Watch your show. Bayahlanya laba." (These ones are crazy.) I looked back on my laptop. Going through my emails. Zimmy had only updated me on our business twice and sent her report in the morning today. Nothing about a project. I went over to her page, I just need to see what it is. I'm not stalking but I couldn't ignore the new pictures. She looked beautiful and happy in all of them, smiling. It was no longer a party girl page just gorgeous, happy woman. Was she changing her image because of Melo? So quickly? No ways. I focused on the poster before I started to lose my mind again. She was planning a women's talk? For what? The poster only invited women to a church, offering a talk. That's it. Was this really about her interest in church or she was taking Melokuhle seriously? He's obviously a pretty respected guy but she wouldn't quickly fall for him in a week? She barely knew him.

Miles: "Uncle Bobo!" He whined.

Sibo: "What is it?" He handed me the phone tired of swiping declining. "You're disturbing my child." I answered.

Caller: "Then stop ignoring me, maybe?"

Sibo: "Do I know you?"

Caller: "It's Megan. Save the number. Are you busy tonight?" What the hell was this now? Ngiyalingwa yini? (am I being tested?)

Sibo: "Yes. Stop calling me."

Megan: "When can I see you then?"

Sibo: "Megan, ngicela singajwayelani. Asazani. Please don't irritate me. Stop calling my phone." (Please let's not disrespect each other. We don't know each other.) I hung up and stared at the phone. It rang again. This demon. What would I do with this now? I declined and blocked the number, switching my phone to Emergency mode. Only three numbers could reach it. My father, Zwe and Mthunzi. What psychopath did I invite into my life? What the hell?

SASA POV\_

Once we'd reached our house, I took Nkosi to bed. He needed some rest. I didn't want him anymore stressed than he was. I switched off our phones because only Mthunzi knew where we were and if we are needed or there's an emergency, he would come. The house was surrounded with heavily armed guards. I helped Nkosi take off his clothes, leading him into bed.

Me: "Are you hungry baby?" He shook his head. I got in bed with him. He climbed on top of me, resting his head on my stomach. "Do you want to talk?"

Nkosi: "Not really."

Me: "Okay." I brushed his head with my fingers and closed my eyes. I needed to block my stress if I wanted him to fully relax. My energy would be heavy. So I sang. "It started out in spring time, against the golden skyline, you spoke to me at last. It started out intensely and with it all my senses

I kneeeew. I'm sure I knew, The only reason God gave me eyes was to see you. The only reason God gave me ears was to hear your voice. Say, I will al... I will always love you. And when the wind gets cold, I'll wrap my arms around you..." He closed his eyes. "We shared our dreams, endeavors and many things, we never could tell a soul before. I saw you smile through the tears that fell to the floor

I'm sure I knew. The only reason God gave me hands was to hold you. And he finely tuned the drums in my ears just to hear your voice. Say, I will al... I will always love you. And when the wind gets cold, I'll build a

fire to warm your hands, I'll wrap my arms around you." He breathed steadily with a slight snore. Perfect. I closed my eyes to rest my thoughts as well.

I walked down the stairs in the palace. The baby was crying somewhere in the lounge. I walked in, Ngidumise sat there staring at nothing. I stood over the baby crib, looking at my beautiful baby boy.

Me: "My beautiful little Prince. Hello." He stopped crying and stared at me. "What's the matter baby?" I brushed his beautiful smooth skin, his orange eyes staring up at me. "Mommy is right here. I love you so much. Let's get you changed so I can sooth you to sleep. Okay? I'll be right back." I looked at Ngidumise. Still unaffected. Seeing nothing. Hearing nothing. I walked over to him, kneeling beside his chair. "My King, I'm still here in spirit. Please hold our child." Fresh tears rolled down his face. My heart tore at the sight of his heartbreak. "My love I'm begging. Please hold our child. Please Nkosi yam enhle." He got up, walking out.

Ngidumise: "Someone change that child!" He ordered, disappearing up the stairs to his room. I walked over to my baby and watched over him as the helper came in. She took him up to the nursery and changed his diaper. She didn't sing for him. She didn't even try to cuddle him. Even as she fed him, he lay on his pillow, not held in warm arms. My soul was breaking. Why was my son being treated so horribly? He was a prince, a child loved by his mother and father. Why was his father doing this to him? To us? After burping him, he was placed in his cot and a musical box played for him before she walked out. I turned it off, bending over my baby's crib. He stared up at me in wonder.

Me: "I'm your mommy, my little Prince. I may not be living in your world but I love you so much. I will be here every step of the way. You're not alone baby. Mommy is here." I kissed his forehead. He reached up to hold my face, smiling. "You know who I am, don't you? You're smiling, baby." He giggled. "Do you want me to sing for you? Okay. Let's think of a tune that you would like. What would an artistic, creative, loving little boy want to listen to?" He giggled. "Starry, starry night, Flaming flowers that brightly blaze. Swirling clouds in violet haze, Reflect in Vincent's eyes of china blue, Colors changing hue. Morning fields of amber grain, Weathered faces lined in pain, Are soothed beneath the artist's loving hand. Oh, now I understand, What you tried to say to me. How you

suffered for your sanity. How you tried to set them free. They would not listen, they did not know how. Perhaps they'll listen now..." I sang. He bit on his fist, listening intently. "Do you know this song was written for Vincent Van Gogh in reference of his 1889 painting called the Starry Night? He was an artist. One who's work is of high value but sad thing is, he died poor and depressed. He never sold while he was alive but his work became famous after he died. Such an injustice to the world we live in. Which is why we say, give people their flowers while they still live. What you do in life, my son, always appreciate the work of others. Whether physical labour or simply their time. I see an artistic person in you. You are so full of colour. You are already destined to be great, in your path leave room to appreciate beauty as you go. It's time to sleep my little baby." He yawned, stretching his little body. I sang softly until he fell asleep.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

I woke up from the nap I'd suddenly fallen into. Thembisa's embrace was magical when it came to my stress. I got up from her, careful not to wake her up. I covered her body with the thick white fleece and walked out the room to the kitchen. It was dark, so I switched the light in the kitchen on. The kitchen clock says it's 20:26pm. I took my phone, switching it on then dialing for Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "My Prince." At least I was still a Prince, not that it mattered.

Nkosi: "Hi. How are you?"

Mthunzi: "I'm fine. How are you?"

Nkosi: "Blank. I don't feel anything. That's not normal, is it? I don't feel bad for what I've done."

Mthunzi: "He provoked you. Yes, you acted irrationally but this is a new ability and as with all your abilities, they kind of just spring up when you least expect them and you can't control them. You can't be blamed for that. How is Thembisa?"

Nkosi: "Perfect. She's heavily stressed but still making sure I'm fine."

Mthunzi: "That's good. Zwe called about an hour ago. Your father is stable but still in a coma."

Nkosi: "Does he think he'll survive?"

Mthunzi: "He said it's still early to tell but he's staying positive."

Nkosi: "Okay."

Mthunzi: "Get some rest Nkosi. I'll handle everything else. There's food in the house I'd brought in while you'd gone to the villa for your things, I'll deliver more tomorrow. Take this time to just spend with your wife and don't worry about anything. Okay?"

Nkosi: "Okay. We'll talk tomorrow." I hung up. Thembisa walked into the kitchen. "Hey.."

Sasa: "Hi baby." She hugged me. I held her in my arms, grateful to still have her. She's all I need and ever will need. "You haven't eaten. Let me cook something for you, baby." She let go of me, opening the fridge. "I even baked you a cake today but we forgot it at the villa."

Nkosi: "Really? Mthunzi must bring me my cake tomorrow."

Sasa: "What do you want to eat? There's lamb shanks, seafood, a full chicken, do you have any preference?" I wasn't hungry but I'd let my woman take care of me.

Nkosi: "we can have the lamb shanks."

Sasa: "Okay, let's check the vegetables."

Nkosi: "What can I help with?"

Sasa: "You can put together the television and connect it baby. So we can watch a movie when I'm done."

Nkosi: "I wouldn't even know where to begin."

Sasa: "You can build futuristic technology universities but can't put together a TV? Please sthandwa sam, have a bit of shame." I laughed.

Nkosi: "I've never had to build a whole TV baby."

Sasa: "There's an instruction booklet in the box love." I went over to the lounge area where the TV was still in its box. "Please don't tear the box apart." I chuckled. Maybe she knows me too well. I carefully opened the box, pulling out the TV.

Nkosi: "It's already put together."

Sasa: "No it isn't love. Is there a mount on the wall?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Sasa: "You need to put it on there. It holds the TV on the wall." Really? I've never been interested in learning about decorating a house or putting stuff up so I never thought of how the TV mounts on the wall. I looked at the back of the TV, discovering where each placement goes and connected it on the mount, screwing it in. It held the TV, firmly with no threat to break. I plugged it in, switching it on. "Are you doing okay there baby? You're a bit quiet."

Nkosi: "Yes. It's mounted. I'm trying to connect it to the internet. Wait, I don't know if we have internet." This house was barely lived in, why would it have internet? I called Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "Yes my prince." He answered.

Nkosi: "Do I have internet?"

Mthunzi: "Yes, there's fibre. It's in the corner of the lounge just switch it on. It's already been connected."

Nkosi: "Oh, got it." I hung up and switched it on. Immediately firing up the internet. I went back to the kitchen, Thembisa was chopping the vegetables.

Nkosi: "I'm finished."

Sasa: "Thank you love."

Nkosi: "What can I help you with?"

Sasa: "Okay, I see you're determined to be busy with me. Please put some water in a medium sized pot." I looked through the cupboard, taking out two pots. They both looked medium sized but which one was more medium? There had to be a measurement. "Any one of those two, love. Both are perfect." I put one away, filling the other with water.

Nkosi: "How much water?"

Sasa: "Half the pot baby." I closed the tap, bringing the pot to her. "Please place the potatoes inside." I took the raw chopped potatoes, putting them in the water. "You can switch on the stove, putting it on medium heat then place the pot on it to boil." I looked at the stove.

Nkosi: "It doesn't have buttons."

Sasa: "It's electric, love."

Nkosi: "I'm not sure what that means." She giggled, walking over to the stove.

Sasa: "This is the on button, it just needs your finger tip, then press the key like button to unlock the stove, then you press this dot to switch on the plate, then this plus sign to increase the heat." I watched her click on the flat surface and the plate warmed up, I placed my pot.

Nkosi: "Last time I used a stove, it had knobs."

Sasa: "A lot of modern houses have become electric. I like it for safety, but it's not economic. Knob stoves are not necessarily difficult to find but they are a bit unfashionable." She giggled.

Nkosi: "There's fashion in the kitchen?"

Sasa: "Like you wouldn't believe. Interior design is very serious baby. This is a modern kitchen, probably done in the past year or two." I wasn't a kitchen person, I've never had to be in a kitchen except for the time I went to fetch fruit for Thembisa. The last time I saw the villa kitchen was when it was just completed.

Nkosi: "What's next?"

Sasa: "The meat is spiced and going in the oven. I'll make the sauce. All you have to do is boil the broccoli and cauliflower blend. Not for too long because it's nice crunchy. Please get a small sized pot."

Nkosi: "Okay." I took out three small pots, putting away two. This one should be fine. I poured half water in the pot and switched on the small plate on the stove. I placed the broccoli and cauliflower in the. Placed the pot on the stove.

Sasa: "At this rate, you'll be cooking for me in no time."

Nkosi: "You're an amazing teacher." I hugged her.

Our dinner was ready and Thembisa was dishing up. She took so much care in scooping the creamy mashed potato from the pot, placing it on the plate. She gently scooped the broccoli and cauliflower, placing it as well then sprinkling black pepper and salt on it. She placed the lamb, then poured the mushroom sauce slowly and sexily. I was suddenly hungry. How did she do that?

Sasa: "Our food is ready love. What would you like to drink?" She opened the fridge.

Nkosi: "You." She giggled.

Sasa: "I'm serious love, there's juice and beer. Why beer? I've never seen you touch it." I noticed how she'd avoided the wine completely. It obviously reminded her of him.

Nkosi: "I'll have a beer." She looked at me.

Sasa: "Really?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Let's drink beer." She laughed.

Sasa: "You're on your own there sthandwa sam. I am having a juice." She brought the two beverages. I took our plates to the table and we sat down. I was really hungry, unable to wait any longer so I wolfed down my food. Everything tasted so perfect. I wasn't sure how to eat it and had a bite each at the same time. It was only minutes that I'd wiped my plate clean. I wasn't even embarrassed. I hadn't eaten all day and this tasted good.

Sasa: "Would you like some more baby?"

Nkosi: "Yes please." Perhaps cooking the meal with her had opened up my appetite but I can't deny this tastes amazing. She brought me back a second plate, that I ate more like a prince.

Sasa: "So I had another dream." This is why the absent thoughts. Her energy had been confusing since we woke up, I thought she was still hurt from what happened this afternoon. She had waited until I finished eating to tell me this.

Nkosi: "About the past?"

Sasa: "Yes." She took a sip of her juice. "This time it was after Mam Nonkosi's death. I think about 4 or so months. I was her spirit. King Ngidumise was fully neglecting the bab- your father.

King Sizwe would cry unattended to for hours while his father sat next to him. No one was allowed to touch him unless ordered to change him. Nonkosi, comforted the baby. As a spirit. The baby would see her, she would sing for him and tell him beautiful stories about artists and their art. I've been obsessed with this song for over week, repeating it all day. I sang it, without thought, as it's the first song that came to mind when I

was trying to keep him awake. It's the song she used to sing for him as a baby. I know the song is really old, but this is so....strange." This is probably why my father was so obsessed with artistry. He collected art and was so proud to show it off, not forgetting to pay in full for it. The only personal charity he had apart from the Throne was an art gallery for underprivileged artists. It was incredibly successful.

Nkosi: "So what happened? If he grew up seeing Mam Nonkosi's spirit, how is it that he knows not of love?"

Sasa: "I don't know if he grew up seeing it, love. He was a four month old baby in this dream. Also, she was a spirit. Not human or seen by any other."

Nkosi: "Do you think I was wrong?"

Sasa: "Wrong how?"

Nkosi: "By thinking my father is in love with you? What if he was seeing his mother again?"

Sasa: "You weren't wrong Nkosi. Your father only ever addressed me as Thembisa. He wasn't seeing his mother. I think, your father doesn't know how to differentiate love. He's never known love in its pure form. He knows it as either blood relation, which is familial or romantic, like with his wives. He doesn't understand that he can love someone who is not of his blood without romance. He's only ever done that, with his wives. Anyone else he loves, are his children, his blood. He doesn't know where to fit me in. We don't know what he is or was thinking therefore cannot assume but this is the best guess I have so far." So this is what's happening in that pretty head. Solving my life and family as usual.

Nkosi: "Do you know how much I love you?"

Sasa: "Unfortunately, I do." She giggled, getting up. "Let's lay down and watch a movie. We need to properly rest, taking our mind off things. Have you heard from Zwe?"

Nkosi: "No, Mthunzi heard from him. He says he's stable but still in a coma." She nodded, collecting the plates taking them to the kitchen.

Sasa: "Can you please fetch the fleece baby?"

Nkosi: "I'm hot enough my love. Don't worry." She laughed.

Sasa: "You can't burn my couches Nkosinhle, please. I love them." I chuckled, going to pick up the fleece in the bedroom. I came back to the lounge, settling on our couch, her laying on top of me.

Narrated\*\*

Amahle sat on the chair next to her father's bed, holding his hand. At least his pain was numbed and he was still alive. Zwe walked in the room, standing on the other side of the bed.

Zwe: "Hey."

Ama: "Hi."

Zwe: "His test results are back from this afternoon, he was bleeding internally. He's stable now but I don't know what the next few days hold for him." She pulled up her sleeve.

Ama: "He's going to survive if you use my blood. Between Nkosi and I, I'm the one with the healing properties."

Zwe: "Will this be safe for you ? Amahle you were shot just a few weeks ago."

Ama: "This is safe for me. And him. There's no time to waste." He sighed, leading her to the private section. She sat on the chair.

Zwe: "Please take off your top, I don't want anything to restrict the blood." She took off her top, extending her arm.

Zwe: "How long?" He touched the scars on her arm.

Ama: "How long what?"

Zwe: "How long has it been since you've stopped self harming?"

Ama: "Years. The scars would reopen themselves even after I stopped. It only properly healed after Thembisa took me to the mountain." He cleaned her skin, preparing to insert the needle in her vein.

Zwe: "That's good. That you stopped. You've saved lives."

Ama: "Not that many. Only those aligned with mine."

Zwe: "Any life saved is important." He smiled, inserting the needle, letting the blood draw from her. Once the extraction was done, he removed it applying a bandaid on her.

Ama: "That's a waste."

Zwe: "Habit." He chuckled. "I managed to clean out the pooled blood and stop most of the bleeding. I don't know if there's more I can do. My only hope is in your blood, Amahle."

Ama: "It will work, trust me. Do it now." The queens walked in the room.

Nobantu: "How is my husband?"

Zwe: "Good evening, my queens. He's stable. He had internal bleeding we've managed to stabilise, the surgery in the afternoon was successful. I'm about to transfer blood into him, to help him heal, he's in shortage from the loss. You can wait in the private room across the hall, I'll let you know when I'm done."

Nolwazi: "I'm standing right here. I'm not going anywhere." Zwe nodded. "Who's blood is that?"

Zwe: "It's Amahle's."

Nolwazi: "That's dangerous. Have you even tested if it will be a proper match."

Nobantu: "She's his daughter!!"

Nolwazi: "Mehluli is his son yet he's the reason he's laying in this bed!! Take caution Dr Biyela. As a doctor, I would expect you to test all samples before using something that might harm the patient gravely."

Zwe: "Testing the sample would waste time we do not have my queen. It would be easier to see if he reacts to it and have it removed rather than waiting until it's too late."

Nolwazi: "If you put that blood in him, I will make sure the throne sues you and your entire family for what it's worth."

Zwe: "I'm doing what is best for the patient."

Nolwazi: "This is NOT a patient. He is KING. I will not allow you to put his life in danger for your experiments. This is irreversible!"

Zwe: "In this case, the proxy of the throne has to make this decision. The first lady."

Nolwazi: "You dare insult me!! Nobantu, tell this boy he is not going to put our King's life in danger!"

Nobantu: "Do it."

Nolwazi: "Nobantu!!"

Nobantu: "She is of his blood. He will heal. We have no time to argue within ourselves. Dr Biyela knows what's best."

Nolwazi: "If my husband dies because of your negligence, I will make sure you all suffer for the rest of your lives!" Zwe prepared the IV, inserting the needle, letting the bleed seep through the tube. The machine beeped, he watched it as it steadily came back to normal. His heart rate was fine, blood pressure, all his vitals back to normal. He waited, sure his plan had worked. The king was fine. Stable. He would have to be monitored closely throughout the night. Zwe looked at Amahle. She stared at the King quietly, her face blank of any emotion. Did it work? She stood quietly without a sound. He looked back at the monitor, all seemed well, medically. The King opened his eyes. Everyone jumped a step back. He stared straight at nothing. His eyes no longer a bright golden orange, but a shocking jet black.

## Chapter 113

### PETU'S POV\_

Today was supposed to be our first women's talk at church. It was Saturday morning. I was so nervous because of the rain but it stopped sometime in the middle of the night. It was still gloomy so I wasn't sure if it's done. I looked next to me. Mngqobi was sleeping still. He'd come back late, probably snuck out of the palace. My door opened, Nothando walked in.

Notha: "Hey." She whispered.

Petu: "Morning love."

Notha: "When did he get here?"

Petu: "Around midnight." She got in bed on his other side. I giggled.

Notha: "Are you nervous for today?"

Petu: "Yeah. What if people don't show up?"

Notha: "I'm hoping they don't. I'd be happy with less than five people, I'm already anxious." Mngqobi woke up.

Petu: "I know but we need to spread the word."

Mngqobi: "Butterfly. Ukhuluma nabani?"

Petu: "With your wife." He looked beside him.

Mngqobi: "Hi love. Wait... Am I in trouble?"

Notha: "Ask yourself, why you're always in trouble?"

Mngqobi: "I haven't even done anything wrong baby. Ninjani? Yoh, I'm so tired. I think my brain is fried."

Petu: "Why? Is it about the trending topic of the royal in Oceans?"

Mngqobi: "Yes. I know Sibonelo knows. He always knows. Zwe didn't come home last night, and he's in Oceans. So obviously something is going on."

Petu: "Do you think it's bad? What if it's Sasa? Oh my God, what if-"

Mngqobi: "Calm down baby. The King wouldn't try that again. They spent a bit of time together on Sunday. He spoke to her more than anyone else. They seemed....close."

Notha: "Close?? That's suspicious Mngqobi. The Prince barely speaks. Why would his father, be close to his wife??"

Mngqobi: "All I'm saying is, I think Thembisa is okay."

Petu: "How long till we find out who's at the hospital?"

Mngqobi: "This morning surely. Before you go to your woman's talk, please wait for the announcement. In case, there's a lockdown or restriction."

Petu: "At least the talk is mid afternoon."

Mngqobi: "Good. We'll know by then." He yawned.

Notha: "What will you be doing today?"

Mngqobi: "Depending on this announcement, my love. I have to go back to the palace before they get to breakfast."

Petu: "Will we see you today?"

Mnqobi: "Maybe later tonight but I'll call throughout the day. Good luck on your lady chats." I giggled.

Notha: "You're just jealous you're not invited."

Mnqobi: "I am jealous vele. Maybe you'll be gossiping about me there."

Petu: "What makes you think we don't gossip about you here?" Notha laughed.

Mnqobi: "Hawu? And say what about me, baby?"

Notha: "Don't worry about it. Have a good day."

Mnqobi: "Eh? Let me go to work before I start crying." He kissed my lips, climbing out of bed, kissing Nothando's head. I watched him get dressed. "Okay, I'll call soon. Please don't leave the house without guards, at any point today. Nginyanithanda. I'll see you soon."

Petu: "Love you too."

Notha: "Bye." He walked out, closing the door.

Petu: "What time is it?"

Notha: "Just after 7. I want to get up at 8." I cuddled into her, covering with the blanket. It was so cold. Winter was slowly creeping in. "How does it feel?"

Petu: "What?"

Notha: "Breaking your virginity. Did it hurt?"

Petu: "It did but not unbearable and not for long. It was just uncomfortable the first time. Are you thinking of doing it?"

Notha: "Yeah. I don't know if I'd like it though."

Petu: "You shouldn't feel pressured. Also, talk to Mnqobi about it and his expectations. Don't just assume for him."

Notha: "Will it bother you? That we're doing it?"

Petu: "I don't know. I was jealous at first. It's just different now, we've spent all this time together. We have a routine. We're all participating in the relationship and I feel appreciated alot. And respected. I don't think it would bother me because I have prepared it might happen."

Notha: "Okay. When do you think I should do it?"

Petu: "Maybe a weekend away. After you speak to him, let's plan it."

Notha: "A whole weekend?"

Petu: "Yes. You need to feel comfortable and have some rest. You deserve to feel special. This is a big thing."

Notha: "Now I'm more nervous than ever."

Petu: "Also, you need to be on contraceptives. We can do that on Monday."

Notha: "Okay." I don't know how I feel about Notha and Mngqobi going away together to break her virginity. It's not hurtful, it's not upsetting. I'm just... I'm going to miss them. Notha was here a lot of the time. She preferred to sleep here rather than the palace. Even though, not in the same room with me at times but still in the same house. So, maybe we were a little attached to each other. Was this weird? This isn't how polygamy works. That I'm sure of. "Do you have any tips?" I giggled.

Petu: "Just kiss him. He'll lead you."

Notha: "I've never kissed anyone."

Petu: "You're joking?"

Notha: "Nope."

Petu: "Part your lips just a little bit." I held her face to look at me, kissing her lips. She kissed me back following my lead. "There. Easy. How did it feel?"

Notha: "It's okay." I smiled.

Petu: "Don't worry about anything. He'll be gentle." She hugged me, closing her eyes.

Notha: "I'm not worried. I feel safe with you and him." ...

SIBONELO'S POV \_

It wasn't as rough a night at least. I managed to get some sleep. Barely. Miles was a power ranger in his sleep. Half the time he's hanging off the

bed. He definitely needs a crib, this isn't right. I sat at the breakfast table, pouring my coffee. Khaya came downstairs, dressed and ready. It's a Saturday but he knows it's a possible work day and has geared up. Mngqobi walked in the house. So he sleeps out now? This is a Zwe conversation, I do not have the mental capacity. He sat down.

Sibo: "You do realize your mother will notice you're wearing yesterday's clothes?"

Mngqobi: "I'm going up just now Sboni. I need a coffee. I'm tired."

Sibo: "That's what happens when you get yourself two wives. Bazok'reya to come short. Awulaleli." (They will ride you) Khaya giggled. "Leave women alone Mngqobi Biyela." I can't say I don't envy him. I really do. Even if it's just one. How is Mngqobi this serious about life? I was a bum specialist at his age.

Mngqobi: "That's not what happened Sboni. I got there late and fell asleep. I only said hello this morning and left them in bed."

Sibo: "Them who? Mngqobi are you not scared of women? Uthi Where??"

Mngqobi: "They're only taking a nap. It's no big deal-"

Sibo: "MNQOBI BIYELA." I looked at Khaya. "He left two women in his bed to come sit here with us. I feel honoured just to be in his presence. Mngqobi?"

Mngqobi: "Sboni." He drank his coffee.

Sibo: "Father should take off his crown and give it to you." Khaya laughed.

Mngqobi: "You're being silly."

Sibo: "I have so many questions but out of respect, I'll just let it stress me for the rest of my life. Yoh, Mngqobi! You are my inspiration. What do you use to bath? Is there a substance you aren't telling me about? Mngqobi, give me your sangoma's number." Khaya fell off his chair laughing.

Mngqobi: "I'm going to get dressed." He got up, walking away.

Sibo: "Mngqobi wezitha zakwa Biyela! My King." Khaya wheezed on the floor. "You're going to choke wena, get up." I laughed, eating my breakfast. My father came down to breakfast.

King: "Zwe isn't back?"

Sibo: "Not yet. No updates either." He sighed, looking very stressed. I don't know why but no update sort of gave me hope. I know my brother, he's a magical doctor. He'll do everything he can. Yoh I don't need this stress. We have decided to go public and give out a statement sometime today. After Zwe's go ahead at least. Nkosi still hasn't resurfaced. Yes it's been only one night but still. My phone rang. Zwe. Finally.

Sibo: "Hey."

Zwe: "Hi. Uhm... The King is okay."

Sibo: "Okay how? Okay he'll live or okay things are still shaky?"

Zwe: "The first one." I sighed in relief.

Sibo: "Okay. We need to release a statement for the nation. Do we need to lock down?"

Zwe: "No. Only let them know he suffered a minor stroke, he is in recovery and doing well. There's nothing more to say."

Sibo: "I can hear it in your voice, there is."

Zwe: "Not for the public, no. But this... It will be a bit strange. You'll see. We will talk during the day. Please send a guard to bring me changing clothes."

Sibo: "I can come."

Zwe: "That's not a good idea. There's a bit of tension."

Sibo: "Of what?"

Zwe: "There's a divide and I'm not sure what is happening. It's just easier to stay away for a bit."

Sibo: "Okay. We'll talk later." He hung up.

King: "Well?"

Sibo: "He's alive. Recovering well."

King: "Oh thank the heavens."

Sibo: "We need to tell the nation about his hospitalisation and that's about it. There's no need to lock down."

King: "That's good. I am so relieved. Let me tell your mother, she was so stressed." He got up walking back to his bedroom.

Khaya: "Who was it Sbo?"

Sibo: "The King. I'm sorry I couldn't tell you yet, bug. We had to keep it under wraps until more information was available. It was no need to worry everyone all at once."

Khaya: "That's okay. He's going to be fine?"

Sibo: "Yes, Apparently." Miles came down the stairs running up to the table. "Mntanam, please don't run unless you're chasing your favourite girl. You can't be falling for no reason. Princes don't live like that." I picked him up, placing him on my lap.

Miles: "Good morning."

Sibo: "Hi my angel. What did you dream about?"

Miles: "I had a dream about daddy. Where is he?"

Sibo: "He went on vacation, little prince."

Miles: "Is he coming back?"

Sibo: "Absolutely. What do you want him to bring for you so I can let him know?"

Miles: "A dine-sor."

Sibo: "Dinosaur? Okay. I'll ask him to travel 65 million years into the past and bring you one." I tickled his ribs. "What colour do you want it?"

Miles: "Greeeen." He laughed.

Sibo: "Green Dinosaur coming up. Let's go make your porridge so that you eat and have strength to ride your dinosaur when it's here." He giggled.

Breakfast was done. Miles refused to bath, I had to bribe him. It was mid morning and the announcement would be made in an hour. I figured I'd be the one making it. As part of the royal council, I was the spokesperson. Khaya drafted the short speech. Mngqobi organized the press to be at Bi-connect conference hall. It was detached from the main building and could be used for media briefings. Zwe had updated

again, the king was doing much better but he hasn't spoken. This wasn't for the public to know. We were about to leave for the conference hall. I had no other commitments today, after this address, I'm coming home.

Sibo: "Are we ready?"

Miles: "Uncle Bobo!"

Sibo: "I'll be back soon. I'm going to work."

Miles: "You're not coming back soon."

Sibo: "I promise."

Miles: "No."

Sibo: "Let's go, so you can see. But when I speak to the camera, Khaya is going to hold you okay? Will you behave?" I had no worry about Miles because he's very well behaved if you explain to him what's going on. He knows when it's time to play. When he hears the word Work, he keeps quiet and busies himself.

Miles: "Yes Uncle Bobo."

Sibo: "Do you have a nappy on? We don't have time for accidents today."

Miles: "Yes I have one."

Sibo: "Perfect. Where's Mia?"

Mnqobi: "She's with mum and the baby. They're having a tea party in the garden." We walked out the palace driving to the conference hall. The media had arrived already. I hope we can get over this quickly, I forgot to bring this one's snacks. I handed him over to Khaya while I was connected to the mic.

Gerry: "We're live in five, My Prince." I nodded, going over my speech standing at the podium. Five minutes of preparation and finally, we went live.

Sibo: "Good morning our beautiful nation. I am Prince Sibonelo Biyela, I have come to address you on behalf of the throne. Yesterday afternoon, we had an unfortunate incident. Our King suffered from a minor stroke. He was taken to Oceans medical facility to be attended to and I am delighted to express that he is recovering well. We are blessed to have his strength fight off this setback. I ask that you all are patient with the

throne with updates. In meantime, no lockdown has been implemented but I caution you to move safely and necessary. The Oceans boulevard is off limits until further notice. The throne thanks you all, for your support, your patience and your prayers. May you continue to celebrate his health peacefully. Thank you." I walked off the podium to the back media room. The mic and wires were removed from me while I checked my phone. "Young Princes, let's go." I took Miles, and we walked out to the cars. My day was done outside, I could monitor the media from home. The cars drove us back home. I received a new email, opening it. <You look so sexy in that royal suit. Let me help you take it off.> What the hell? Megan Souly. What is wrong with this girl?

## SASA POV\_

I woke up to feather tickles on my belly. I looked down. Nkosi was focused, holding his paint brush, painting, going back to dip in his palette and gently stroke the paint on my body. He was so focused, he didn't notice I was awake. I watched him for a minute before he looked up. Those gorgeous orange eyes will forever render me weak.

Nkosi: "Good morning my wife."

Me: "Good morning my husband. We're doing this everyday?"

Nkosi: "You weren't waking up, I was bored."

Me: "What time is it?"

Nkosi: "Almost 11."

Me: "What?! I never sleep in that late."

Nkosi: "You're tired baby. It's okay."

Me: "What are you painting?"

Nkosi: "Me." I laughed.

Me: "But you can't see yourself baby."

Nkosi: "I don't have to. I know what I look like. Do you want to see?"

Me: "Yes please." We got out of bed. My sheets had paint on them now but life is about chaos. As long as he's in a happy place, dirt doesn't

matter because it can be cleaned. We stood in front of the mirror. He painted a tiger on my belly.

Me: "Okay, that's adorable." I kissed his lips. "I love it." I need to buy him a few canvases and paints. He obviously loved painting.

Nkosi: "Thank you."

Me: "Have you eaten?"

Nkosi: "Yes, I made a sandwich."

Me: "Really? By yourself?" He laughed.

Nkosi: "You're silly. I know how to make a sandwich. Can I make you one?"

Me: "Yes please." He kissed my head then walked out. How can I wash my body without removing this beautiful painting on my belly. It was really detailed and precise. He was madly talented. This seemed to be something he shared with his father because he loves art. Why then don't they bond over it? I brushed my teeth, washing my face then got the cover up cloth for my bottom and a scarf for my boobs. After getting dressed like I'm on an island I made my way to the lounge. I passed the kitchen and peeped in. I knew this sandwich business would be extra. Everything he did had to have order, and look aligned. The same person who played with paint on the bed. He looked up.

Nkosi: "Hello."

Me: "Hi baby. I'll be in the lounge."

Nkosi: "Okay love." I went to the lounge, switching on the TV. There was a text broadcast on the bottom of the screen. Prince Sibonelo had made an address regarding the king's health. Apparently he was recovering from a minor stroke. Well, that's better than telling them he had a fight with his son. I'm glad he's getting better. Perhaps this will be a new leaf for both of them but Nkosi needs to find a way to control his thoughts. This ability was not to be played with. And it seems, it's uncontrollable. Almost as if he's a completely different person.

Nkosi: "Done baby." I got a fright. "Hey..what's wrong?"

Me: "Nothing love. Just thinking. Heee, I haven't even called my dad. He must have seen the address on TV." I accepted the tray from him.

Nkosi: "I spoke to him this morning."

Me: "He called you?"

Nkosi: "No, I called him." Okay.

Me: "Thank you baby. Are they well?"

Nkosi: "Yes. They're doing well. Zanele apparently is the celebrity at her school so she has a guard to escort her." I laughed.

Me: "That's funny. She's probably having the time of her life."

Nkosi: "Indeed. Your father's goats are also selling out. He's not happy about that. People keep calling for more but he says they're too young to sell. So, he's decided to venture into cows." How long was this conversation? They seemed to be best friends.

Me: "That's nice. Cows are good."

Nkosi: "That's what I said. The community center construction is under way. He said he'll send pictures later today. I'm thinking of assigning him as construction manager. This is still only the first project. There's the shopping center coming up in the next few weeks."

Me: "He'd be delighted but will probably need help. My father doesn't like to keep all opportunity to himself so if you want him to say yes, ask him to appoint a few other people to work with him in managing the projects."

Nkosi: "Thank you for the advice baby."

Me: "How's your dad?"

Nkosi: "Fine I guess."

Me: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Baby."

Me: "I know you didn't mean to do this. I'm sure he understands it was a mistake."

Nkosi: "It wasn't a mistake. I'd probably do it again."

Me: "Nkosihle! Can you not hear the name coming out of my mouth? You're the good king. This is not you."

Nkosi: "Love. I know how much you adore my family even though they treat you like trash. I know you want peace and love and bubbles and everything happy but that's not going to happen. My family is cold, it is

unwelcoming and very unkind. You can't change that overnight, love. Or in a few weeks. So please don't exhaust yourself."

Me: "I know I can't change your family but we've made progress Nkosi. I'm not saying everything will be amazing but we're trying. Mistakes are bound to happen. I'm not expecting an embrace any time soon or ever. I just want a peaceful home and a stable throne."

He was no longer looking at me but my belly and it didn't seem like he could even hear me. He zoned out. What am I going to do with him? He knelt on the floor in front of me, holding my waist still staring at his painting. Yoh, I don't know now. "Babe?"

Nkosi: "Okay. We'll try. I love you."

Me: "Thank you. I love you too."

Nkosi: "iNkosiyokuthula." I giggled. (King of Peace)

Me: "Yes, Nkosi yam enhle yokuthula, I need to eat, I'm hungry." (My good peaceful King).

## Chapter 114

### NOTHANDO'S POV\_

The woman's talk was still on and the weather had cleared up. This made me happy as well as nervous. I grew up as a princess, surrounded by guards and now I was no longer a princess. It didn't feel as different because of my involvement with Mngqobi but this would be an official event without him beside me. I was struggling to figure out who I actually was apart from Princess Nothando. I had seen some nasty posts on socials referring to me as a chancer that would rather cling on to royalty than her own family. It would've hurt if it was true but it wasn't and I don't care what they think about me. We were all dressed. I'd styled Petu and myself. Jimmy came over already dressed but looking rough. Was she drinking last night? But Jimmy never has a hangover or looks rough. This was new.

Petu: "Okay, everyone is ready? The car and guards are outside. I opted for a V-class to take us so we're all in the same vehicle. Zimmy are you okay?"

Zimmy: "Not at all. I got food poisoning last night. I ate nervously all day. I've never had so much attention on me before."

Petu: "It's normal. Don't worry about anything. I'll pack some waters for you. At any stage you feel sick. Just let me know, I'll take over."

Zimmy: "Thank you so much, friend."

Siza: "What's got you so nervous, babe? You're always in public and clubbing. People love you."

Zimmy: "Yeah but that's drinking and hanging out. This is serious. Will they take me seriously? Not too long ago I was being accused of pimping girls out to Khaya."

Siza: "Don't think like that, Zimmy. This is a good initiative and will help alot of women. Don't be nervous."

Zimmy: "Thank you. I need the toilet." She hurried to the bathroom.

Notha: "She's really nervous, shame."

Siza: "At least she'll only do an introduction. I'll talk from there." Zimmy came back after five minutes and drank some water. She was sweating. I was now worried.

Zimmy: "Okay, I'm good. Let's go."

Siza: "Here. Munch on these." She gave her biscuits. We went to the car, leaving for church.

## PETU'S POV\_

We arrived at the venue, a few ladies had already sat down. The talk was going to start in about 30 minutes time. Zimmy had her mic put in. She looked much better now, I was glad. We waited while the church hall started to fill up and the time was now. As nervous Zimmy was. She looked determined. I watched her walk up to the stage.

Zimmy: "Good afternoon, ladies. Welcome to our first ever HelpASister supportive talk session. My name is Zimasa, you can call me Zimmy. I'm here with Petunia, Sizani and Nothando." She introduced herself with only her name so that she doesn't have to call Nothando by her last name which would spark more social media bullying. Zimmy was a very attentive friend, honestly. Most of the posts were blocked but Nothando refused to have her name muted permanently. She wanted people to write all they want and get it out of their system so she can build herself without holding on to a name. It was heavily brave of her, I have to admit.

Zimmy: "As a society, we need each other. For support, for love. Holding each others hands through situations. I've come to understand that alot of the time, it is difficult to break out of a cycle of abuse. During that struggle, you need a place of comfort. We can talk all day about leaving the situation but truth of the matter is, that is never easy. I would like to introduce to you, a lovely young woman, who has a story to tell. She is what I would regard as a sister, she is kind, loving and gorgeous. Please warmly welcome, Sizani." We clapped as Siza walked up to the podium to give her talk.

Siza: "Thank you. Hi ladies. Uhm, I'm Siza. A mother of 3 little angels. And also a wife." She cleared her throat. "I never really get to talk about me. I don't know how. Uhm... I met my husband in my early twenties. He is an older man. He is influential and Rich. I fell in love with how he took care of me not just financially but emotionally too. I was his angel. I lived a trophy life. When I fell pregnant for the first time, he was delighted. It was only a year later that his affection started to decrease. This had me fighting for a place in his schedule constantly. After our second child, he started to beat me. I remember the first time. I had been sick for a while the baby was only seven months. I forgot it was his conference and didn't prepare for him. He came home to me sleeping. When he asked for his things and discovered I hadn't done my job, as he called it, he lost it. He beat me until my child started screaming, alerting the neighbors. I forgave him." She wiped her tears. "When he came back. He bought me the most beautiful necklace and took me on vacation. You would think, while on vacation as an apology, you're safe... It took one disagreement in less than 24 hours before he smashed my head into a wall. We were in a foreign land. I had no one. I had no choice but to keep my head high enjoying my vacation. Just so that he spares my life." Zimmy handed her a tissue. "I don't want to stand here and talk about all the years I've

covered up bruises. I don't want to talk about lying to my family and friends. I don't want to talk about why I kept forgiving him and stayed. I want to tell any woman out there, I understand. And if you need me to hold your hand, I can do that. It took my sister's persistence to drag me out of that situation and I still almost lost my life. I understand. I understand that you're scared to leave because you might die. I understand you're scared to stay because you might die. The world is so unkind. The blame will always be put on the woman. Why did she, why didn't she. I am so sorry. I am sorry that all I can do, is hold your hand."

...

## MTHUNZI'S POV\_

I was in my lounge, checking the perimeter of Nkosi's house on surveillance. There were tags all around, as far as 100 meters away to prepare for attack. So if something passes the tags, the guards are immediately alerted to stand on attack mode. There wasn't any animals around the area but I wouldn't be surprised if a wild boar or stray came by. The cameras were around stretching even further than the tags. Nkosinhle's safety was no joke to me even though he was probably the least vulnerable person on earth. Especially with his new ability. I touched my shoulder, still feeling some pain from dislocating it. I dialed for Zwe.

Zwe: "My Lord."

Mthunzi: "Dr Prince. How are you?"

Zwe: "I'm well, how are you?"

Mthunzi: "Great. How is the King doing?"

Zwe: "Great. Give me a second." He shuffled a bit, probably finding a private space. "He's doing amazing for someone who had broken all bones in his body and was bleeding internally. Amahle told me to transfer her blood into him and it seemed to have worked. His bleeding stopped instantly, the x-ray showed less injuries than when he came in. His vitals are stable and in great health."

Mthunzi: "But? Something is wrong isn't it?" I could hear the slight panic in his voice.

Zwe: "Not wrong per se. Perhaps unusual."

Mthunzi: "I'm used to that. What is it?"

Zwe: "Apart from not saying a word, his eyes are black." My heart slowed a bit before returning to normal.

Mthunzi: "What does that mean?"

Zwe: "It means, the orange eyes he had have now turned jet black. Not brown, not gold, pure black."

Mthunzi: "WHAT."

Zwe: "Exactly. I don't know what that means. Throughout history, I haven't read of this."

Mthunzi: "Do you think maybe he lost his powers?"

Zwe: "Is that possible?"

Mthunzi: "If they can give new ability surely they can take them away."

Zwe: "Yoh. I don't know Mthunzi and I'm not going to ask him. He doesn't look to be in a good mood." He's never in a good mood.

Mthunzi: "Okay, I'll do a bit of research. Is the family still there?"

Zwe: "Yes. The second queen is angry at me. The first queen and Amahle haven't said a word else. Do you think maybe, Nkosi should come?"

Mthunzi: "I want to say no, to protect the king but I don't know Zwe. Nkosi is still pissed and is not calming down. Before he sees his father, we need to get a handle on that new ability."

Zwe: "What is it?"

Mthunzi: "He just switches and thinks of what he wants and it happens."

Zwe: "Fuck."

Mthunzi: "Exactly. Thank you for the update Zwe. I'll talk to Sibonelo then perhaps Nkosi."

Zwe: "Alright, my friend. We'll talk soon." I hung up, dialing for Sibonelo.

Sibo: "Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Hi Sbo. I just spoke to Zwe. The King is doing well, healing as well. Thank you for the address earlier this morning. I've been following the news."

Sibo: "It's a pleasure. Uhm Mthunzi. Will Nkosi be addressing this issue? Questions have started to rise about his absence."

Mthunzi: "I'll talk to him today."

Sibo: "Alright then, no worries."

Mthunzi: "Tell me, can your network recover hidden or deleted digital history from the past?"

Sibo: "That's very tricky Mthunzi. I don't know, I don't want to lie. Can you tell me what you're looking for so I can try?"

Mthunzi: "This doesn't leave your mouth."

Sibo: "Sure."

Mthunzi: "Please look for anything related to a Sikhosana royal and pure black eyes instead of orange." The line was quiet.

Sibo: "Sikhosana's don't have black eyes. They're all orange. The twins are brown but no one, has ever had black."

Mthunzi: "That we know of until now. It has to have happened before. Can you try and look?"

Sibo: "I'll try my best. It might take me a while."

Mthunzi: "No rush...yet. "

Sibo: "That sounds like a rush. Let me get to work then."

Mthunzi: "Thanks my friend. Again, please don't mention this to anyone."

Sibo: "Trust me. I'll keep it to myself."

Mthunzi: "Sharp." I hung up, massaging my shoulder. An alert went off my phone. Busi's pill. I got up getting her some water and a snack, walking to the bedroom. "My love?"

Busi: "Hi baby." She looked up from her e-book reader.

Mthunzi: "It's time." I took the fertility pill from her container, handing it over. She drank it.

Busi: "Thank you."

Mthunzi: "What do you want to eat tonight?"

Busi: "My husband." I chuckled.

Mthunzi: "After you eat your husband, what will you eat baby?"

Busi: "How about we order in? I feel like fried chicken."

Mthunzi: "Okay, I'll order that. How are you feeling?"

Busi: "I'm feeling fine...come join me in bed. For a special nap."

Mthunzi: "In a minute, love. Let me grab some water." Busi was ovulating this week, it would be my first try and I needed to make it count. I took the male fertility pills I'd been taking out of my bag, swallowing one with some water. It would be a better chance if both of us were fertile.

Narrated\*\*

The King lay in bed in his hospital room, having not uttered a word. After all checks Zwe had done, he found no evidence of his injuries affecting his speech. He had closely monitored the King all night but his condition instead, improved. Nolwazi walked in the hospital room. Nobantu was sitting on the chair, holding the King's hand.

Nolwazi: "Perhaps we should change his clothing. This fabric looks disgraceful. I brought changing clothes. Help me by holding him up Nobantu."

Nobantu: "His bones are crushed, how are you thinking of moving him around to be stylish?"

Nolwazi: "He looks like a peasant. You KNOW he hates that!"

Nobantu: "Well, until he opens his mouth and says he wants to be changed then it won't happen."

Nolwazi: "What is with you? Hm? Why do you hate him?"

Nobantu: "You're asking me that?"

Nolwazi: "Is there anyone else I'm talking to? I don't get you Nobantu, in fact, I think you're very hateful. You let Mehluli do as he pleases, fully disrespecting his father and you never reprimand him. So I'm here

wondering if perhaps it's not your plan to kill our husband so you can have that delinquent run our country. It's one thing to hate me, but to hate your children's father? Your husband? You are just as bad as the person who led him to this bed. You obviously taught him."

Nobantu: "Okay."

Nolwazi: "Okay is all you're going to say because you know I'm right."  
Amahle walked out the room, Zwe was in the private lounge, eating.

Ama: "Hi."

Zwe: "Hey." He wiped the corners of his mouth. "Can I order you something to eat?"

Ama: "No thanks. Is there a way you can get my mothers out of the hospital?"

Zwe: "Unfortunately no. They're in their right to be here, I can't throw them out."

Ama: "They're arguing on top of my father."

Zwe: "What?" He got up walking out. The two women still bickered in the room. "My Queens, I apologize for disturbing but I suggest this conversation be had in a more private space away from the King. He is still recovering. He shouldn't be distressed."

Nolwazi: "I'm not going anywhere."

Zwe: "I want to make sure the King is discharged by Monday latest, my queen. We don't want anything to prolong his recovery. I really do wish he is under less stress. May we please consider his comfort in this time."

Nolwazi: "Monday?"

Zwe: "Yes. With the recovery he's been showing in the past 20 hours, I'm sure we can have home by then."

Nolwazi: "Here are his comfort clothes, something he can change into if he wishes. Please keep him warm, Sizwe hates cold temperature."

Zwe: "I will personally attend to it, my queen." She walked out, followed by Nobantu.

Ama: "Thank you."

Zwe: "Not a worry. Are you also leaving?"

Ama: "For a bit yes. He wants to be alone."

Zwe: "You can also read thoughts?"

Ama: "No, but I know my father. I'll be back in a few hours. Thank you Zwe. Also, tell Sibonelo to keep his guards on him permanently. No matter where he goes."

Zwe: "Uhm, okay. Is there a problem?"

Ama: "He needs his security." She walked out. Zwe walked to the bed, standing next to the King. He still stared at nothing. "My King. I am pleased to see you recovering so well. I know you must be in some pain so I will be administering some meds to help." In an effort to have him either disagree or acknowledge, but there was no response. Zwe carried on with his job. Why is he not talking? He thought to himself. Perhaps he was still in pain around his neck, the man did break every bone in his body. Once he finished with the pain meds, he turned around to look back at the king, his heart jumped to his throat. The King stared back at him standing on both his feet.

## Chapter 115

### SIBONELO'S POV\_

This was way too interesting to not invest my full brain on to. On the other hand, I wanted to know how the talk with the ladies went. Weird, I know but it's something Bi-connect could invest in or be their sponsor. We never know. One of my company's visions is giving equal opportunities to women. So perhaps there's a way I can help. Okay, that's not true. I wanted her back. It's pointless trying to fight it. I missed being in my house with her watching those stupid shows. Also, I got invested, did Naomi really divorce her cheating husband? I doubt it.

Sibo: "Nx. Women are such boring beings." I mumbled, taking my phone out to send a message. Why can't we just vibe and build from there? I had a new message on my phone. <Hey sexy. I was thinking we could have a drink. Your club or my house?> Not again. This was becoming very uncomfortable. What did this girl want from me? I went on my laptop, my hacking system, searching her name. Megan Souilly. No

criminal record. No charges. Her financial records were also in good health but was her brain? She comes from a middle class family, born and raised in Lazy Creek. She studied in their university for both her degrees. I checked her association, friends, lovers, everything. She's had two relationships public. Both lasted a little over a year. She seems normal. Why then is she obsessed with me? It left a bitter taste in my mouth. I wrote a text back: <Hi Megan, listen. I probably wasn't clear enough but I honestly just wanted one night with you. I have no intentions of seeing you again, or sleeping with you again. I am not interested in you at all. Please stop contacting me. Thanks.> I sent it. Phew. Can you imagine. I received another message: <I know you want me. You're just shy. Trust me I can be discreet. You said it yourself you want me in your life while making love to me. We can take it slow.> Oh I'm in hell. I was thinking of... Fuck. That was directed to the person I was thinking about while fucking. Zwe is busy and I need him. He needs to make this stop. Let me just do my work and leave psychopaths alone. I don't need this. Jackson had appealed his bail. So obviously he wants to skip the country. He knows he's not safe here because Siza is in our family now. Perhaps he should be granted his bail. I'm sure Miles and Mia would love to see their father for the last time. Since Zwe was busy, I had to plan this one myself. After giving the go ahead to the judge, I organized hidden security all around his home. He won't notice it until it's too late. I know he will start at the house and take what he needs, that being his documents and some clothes, then skipping the country. He'll find me waiting for him inside the house. Once he leaves, no one will hear from him again. Zwe has been itching to get rid of him. Next on my agenda for the day was my new research. What did this mean? The king now has black eyes? I'm sorry but I'm not interested in seeing that. I knew Zwe was hiding something in this situation. What does this mean? Is he blind? I hopped into my server to recover archives from as far back as the 50's. King Ngidumise's times. I spent over a little less than 40 minutes reading about him. People were so scared to even utter a word about this King that there was hardly any information about him. Granted, he never went anywhere or spoke to anyone but damn. I looked at his pictures, shivering with cold. But this is Nkosi? The stare, the disinterest, the danger in his demeanor, his exact face. This was him.

Sibo: "What in the reincarnation?" There was only two pictures of him and his wife. She looked beautiful. There was a soft nature about her

smile. How are these two cold men bagging the most kindest of women? Honest to God. You can tell how soft spoken this woman is by looking at her pictures. Is that why they named Sasa with the same name? Nothing juicier than Sikhosana business, I can say that confidently. I clicked on the name of his predecessor, King Bhekizizwe. Another pair of orange eyes. The picture was in black and white but the description says the same. I sighed, reading through his adventures. He was a little more busy than Ngidumise. I went through at least three more kings before and nothing mentioned black eyes. This was a little frustrating but I loved research so at least I wasn't bored rather fascinated. I took a different angle in my search: Sikhosana Black Eyes. Two articles came up but it was about the orange eyes. Questioning how many people in the world had that colour eye. Then other statistics of other eye colours. I looked through the search results, more articles about the Sikhosana reign. They've been on that throne for centuries. A lot of these were transcribed because obviously technology like this didn't exist 100 years ago. People used newspapers then. There was a very old library in the city. At least 100 years old, what if they had more archives? I searched for their website and it didn't mention any archives but I called the number.

Librarian: "Good day. This is Mountain Peak Library, how can I help you today?"

Sibo: "Hi, you're speaking to Prince Sibonelo Biyela, I am looking for archives, say from 100 years ago, as old as the library. How can I access them? They're not on the website."

Librarian: "Uhm. The archives have been locked, my Prince. They are inaccessible."

Sibo: "How do I unlock them?"

Librarian: "It's a long legal process."

Sibo: "And I'm a very patient man. Give me all the steps and I will make sure to thank you kindly." She giggled.

Librarian: "Okay. First you'll need the application form where you fill in all your details. It includes things like your personal profile, occupation and the reason for your request. You will also have to write a motivating letter and get a police clearance. This will be submitted to the judge of the throne. I think the registry receives it first but this could take a month before it reaches the judge, I can do my best to put your request on the top of the pile so we're looking at a week possibly. Once he receives the

request, he will appoint a board for an interview with you. I am unsure what will be asked there unfortunately, no one has made it that far. I think it is only after the interview you will be given a yes or no."

Sibo: "Yeah, you were right about this being a very lengthy process. Let's begin. How do I get the forms?"

Librarian: "You don't have to come all the way to the library, I can email them to you. Please provide your assistant's email?"

Sibo: "You don't want mine? You think you'll be tempted to say hi sometime?" She giggled.

Librarian: "No my Prince, yours is fine as well."

Sibo: "Alright then, do you have a pen and paper?"

Librarian: "Yes my Prince."

Sibo: "it's sibonelobiyela@bconnectmp."

Librarian: "Got it. I will send the form in a minute as well as the steps once again."

Sibo: "Thank you sweetheart, what's your name?"

Librarian: "My name is Nomzamo."

Sibo: "Thank you Nomzamo for your wonderful service."

Librarian: "You're welcome my prince, have a good day." I hung up. In just a few minutes, I received her email. All the steps and the four page form. This was serious. Clearly, the archives were interesting. I had to pass this process. I thanked Nomzamo once again. What a sweet girl. I clicked on her email profile. She looked pretty, smiling at the camera. 24 years old, holding a historian degree, and manager of the oldest library in the country. I've found Zwe a wife. Zwe is obsessed with history. Her being this pretty, helped only a little bit. My brother loves beautiful women but his true love is the brain. That's why he's a neurosurgeon. I hope she's not married, boyfriends are easy to get rid of at least. What am I saying? Anyone is easy to get rid of but let me hold my horses. Perhaps I should let him have his love story without interference. I was so damn excited. I'd ask him to hand the forms in personally at the library specifically to her. It would be up to destiny if they find each other attractive but I'm crossing fingers and toes. My brother needs this. Also, what the hell is in those archives that it needs this type of processing?

## ZWELETHU'S POV\_

I looked at the King, he looked back at me. I was numb with fear. What the hell? Medically, he's not supposed to even be awake, let alone standing on his own two feet. And it's something about those black eyes that creeps me out.

Zwe: "My King. Good to see you back on your feet." I walked to the sink trying hard not to trip and fall. I washed my hands. "The queen left some clothes for you to change into. I think we should do an x-ray to double check your injuries?" I turned back to look at him, holding my breath that he didn't come stand behind me again. He was looking through his bag taking out his clothes. This, was beyond my understanding. Sure, anything is possible with the Sikhosana family. Amahle is immortal, Nkosi turns into a tiger. But I couldn't wrap my head around this somehow. After getting dressed. He got back in bed.

King: "Where is she?"

Zwe: "The queens have left my king. Should I call them back?"

King: "Thembisa." Oh.

Zwe: "I'm not sure but I think she's with Nkosi."

King: "Call her."

Zwe: "Yes My King." I took my phone, dialing Nkosi's number. His phone was off. Great. I dialed for Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "Hi Zwe."

Zwe: "My Lord. Uhm, the King has asked to see Nko-"

King: "Thembisa."

Zwe: "Thembisa. He would like to see her please."

Mthunzi: "Ohhh. That can't work."

Zwe: "Please make it happen Mthunzi. As soon as you possibly can." I hung up. I know Nkosi will never leave Thembisa's side but this is the first time the king has spoken since waking up. Perhaps, he has a message for her. God, why was my life this difficult.

Zwe: "Can I get you a meal, my King?" No response. As expected. No worries. "I'm just a call away, on the button next to the bed." I bowed, walking out to the private office I was using while here. I drank a full glass of water trying to calm down. My heart was racing. The thought of looking behind me and finding him there made my bones tremble. I took out my phone, calling my brother walking around the small office.

Sibo: "Brother Zwe."

Zwe: "Hey."

Sibo: "What's up."

Zwe: "So..the king is fully recovered. He just spoke. His whole family has gone home."

Sibo: "Oh? What did he say?"

Zwe: "He wants to see Thembisa. Doesn't say anything else."

Sibo: "That's ... Strange. No? Not even his son?"

Zwe: "Nope. I don't know how this will pan out. What are you busy with there?"

Sibo: "Research. I'm trying to access the archives from the library. Stiff mission let me tell you."

Zwe: "For what?"

Sibo: "Mthunzi asked me to look up black eyes. There's nothing public about them. So, I'm applying for the locked archives."

Zwe: "Okay. Also, please keep security with you at all times. Amahle said this, so please listen."

Sibo: "Okay. No problem. I won't be leaving the palace for any reason this weekend anyway but I'll have my guards ready."

Zwe: "Good. How is everyone at home?"

Sibo: "They're good. Kids are in the garden with the parents. The girls came back from their talk, apparently it was successful. I'll send you the video link to watch when you're free."

Zwe: "And the young princes? What are they doing?"

Sibo: "They're in their lounge playing their video games."

Zwe: "Okay. I don't know when I'll be home. Probably tomorrow."

Sibo: "If he's recovering why are you still there?"

Zwe: "I don't want anyone near him but me. They won't understand him and that might frustrate him."

Sibo: "Okay. Stay safe Zwe. I don't know about this black eye thing."

Zwe: "Don't worry about it. I'll be safe. Send greetings to the family. Remember your guards Sbo."

Sibo: "Alright."

Zwe: "Sharp." I hung up. It's going to be a long night but I doubt I'd get any sleep. His gaze was stuck in my thoughts.

SASA POV\_

I tried to stretch but I was locked in an embrace. Nkosinhle couldn't sleep on his side of the bed. I opened my eyes and found him staring at me, holding me close to his body.

Me: "Sthandwa Sam please."

Nkosi: "Good morning."

Me: "Why are you awake so early?"

Nkosi: "It's not early."

Me: "Good morning baby." I kissed his lips, getting out of bed. After Mthunzi's call yesterday, my mind was reeling a bit. Nkosi didn't even bother to entertain it. He did not want to go to that hospital. I went to the bathroom, taking a pee. I had a new painting on my belly. Clearly I had to get used to this until I buy his supplies. Next thing I know I'll wake up with paint on my face. I went back to bed after flushing, washing my hands and face. He stared at his painting, proudly.

Nkosi: "You're beautiful."

Me: "Thank you baby. I want us to have a chat." I sat in bed. He traced his finger on his painting.

Nkosi: "About what?"

Me: "Your father. I think we should go see him. I know you don't want to and I don't think you're ready but I want to. What if he has something to say? An apology?"

Nkosi: "He doesn't."

Me: "Love. I need you to work with me. I don't like conflict. You don't have to be best friend's with him. I just need the slate clean so we can live our life after."

Nkosi: "Okay. We'll go."

Me: "Do you think you'll be able to control your ability?"

Nkosi: "No. But it's triggered by action or word. If he does something, I'll react to it."

Me: "Okay. Should we get ready?"

Nkosi: "Not yet." I also needed to see Amahle. There has to be a way forward. I haven't dreamt properly in this house except for the nap we took when we arrived. He placed soft kisses on my shoulder. His fingers traced up my thigh. "I have something I want to show you. Just lay here. Close your eyes." I lay back in bed and closed my eyes. I felt his lips touching my skin. My inner thigh, all the way up to my clit. He kissed it, rolling the tip of his tongue on it. I opened wider, moaning his name. He slowly inserted one finger, gently rubbing my g spot inside.

Me: "Nkosi..." I cried. My body melting in pure warm pleasure. I held on the sheet, panting already ready for my climax. He pulled his finger out and kissed it over and over. I tried pulling him to come up. I need him inside. He lay flat on the bed, holding under my things and continued to kiss me, occasionally licking and again on my clit. My vision blurred. "Ohhhh." I moaned. His finger pushed in again, rubbing gently. A warm liquid spurted out. He growled, working faster. My toes curled anticipating the highest climax. "Nkosihle..." I cried. Feeling it hit that spot, my whole body shook violently, cumming over and over again until I froze. He stopped, climbing on top of me. His gaze focus on mine. His beard dripping wet, orange eyes lazy with lust. He pushed himself in slowly, still staring at me. I pulled the back of his neck to kiss his mouth. He stroked slowly. His lips on mine, tasting myself on him. He growled moving faster. I hung my legs up.

Nkosi: "Ahhhh." He groaned, grabbing the sheet tearing it as he moved faster. I held on to him tight feeling my orgasm build up once again. His

waist moving on its own in a motion melting me weak. I throbbed awaiting another orgasm.

Nkosi: "Hold on to me baby. I can feel you... Hold on." I dug my nails into him, giving him all of me.

Me: "Almos...." I pant, unable to make a sound.

Nkosi: "There you go...right here. Oohhh fuck." I climaxed, throbbing to a still. He roared, tearing through the sheet once more, as he came. I still held on to him, catching my breath, shaking. He kissed my neck, licking it. "This is not what I had planned."

Me: "Oh really?" I laughed.

Nkosi: "Yes really. Let's get you awake, fed and dressed." ...

It took two hours to get up and dressed. As usual, Nkosi was distracted. I wore a white maxi dress tying up behind my neck. I combed out my afro holding it back with a white headband. I wore small hoop gold earrings.

Me: "Babe." I walked out the room to the lounge. He was standing with Mthunzi. "Good morning Mthunzi. How are you?"

Mthunzi: "I'm good Sasa, how are you?"

Me: "I'm well. I'm ready to go." I went to the kitchen to get some water and fruit for the road. I had eaten breakfast but felt like a little snack to munch on. There were two boxes on the counter. I opened them. The cakes! Nkosi walked in the kitchen, holding my body, kissing my head.

Me: "Did you see the cakes love?"

Nkosi: "Yes, I'll have some when we're back." I turned to look at him. "I know you're about to ask for something I don't want." I giggled.

Me: "I did bake two cakes, baby. One was for the palace."

Nkosi: "I want to be annoyed but I kind of expected it. They're unlikely to eat it, love"

Me: "Maybe you can share it with your dad? I'm sure he'd like a slice."

Nkosi: "Immediately no. Absolutely not."

Me: "It will break the ice."

Nkosi: "It could break hell itself and I still wouldn't do it."

Me: "Fine then. We can go." I'm done making an effort. I'm not even going to bother anymore. If their ancestors bother me one more time, I'm calling on my own too. Rather they fight it out. I've never met more stubborn people. I walked out the kitchen to fetch my bag in the bedroom. I had my allowance for the past two months and I wanted to go to the shops. "Mthunzi, can you please organise some guards for me? After the hospital I'd like to visit the mall. Is that safe?"

Mthunzi: "Yes absolutely."

Me: "Thank you." I walked out to the car. We got in, driving to the hospital.

Nkosi: "Are you mad at me?"

Me: "No."

Nkosi: "You are." What was upsetting me was his lack of effort. He wasn't even trying. Just carrying on life like all is well and good. I took out my phone. Zimmy had sent me a link to a video of their women's talk. I clicked on the video and watched. She looked so confident and radiant. I listened to Siza intently. When the video was halfway, we drove into the hospital. After parking, we got off. Walking into the hospital, I held his hand. He intertwined our fingers squeezing my hand. Zwe was waiting for us by the receiving desk. He looked really tired but held on bravely. Why hasn't he gotten any sleep?

Zwe: "My Prince, Mrs Sikhosana."

Me: "Hi Zwe. How are you?"

Zwe: "Hanging on. How are you?" He smiled.

Me: "I'm okay. Thank you for your time and service, Zwe. We're really grateful you were able to help and promptly so." He chuckled, looking at Nkosi.

Zwe: "It's only a pleasure. How are you my friend?"

Nkosi: "I'm okay. Thank you for asking."

Zwe: "That's good to know. So before we go in, a little preparation. The King woke up Friday night. Uhm... His eyes are no longer orange. So... Don't be shocked." What on earth does that even mean?

Me: "No longer orange? As in he's...blind?"

Zwe: "No, he can see. Very well. He's just, they're black now. Don't be alarmed." This isn't real surely.

Me: "Okay." We walked into the room after Zwe.

Zwe: "My King. Look who came to visit." I looked at the King in bed. He stared at me. Truly his eyes, a pure black. I don't know about this. I looked behind me but Nkosi hadn't walked in.

Me: "Good morning my King." I kept my distance not sure if a bolt of lightening would come my way.

King: "Thembisa. It is good to see you again."

Me: "Glad to see you're recovering, my King. You look well."

King: "I have a question."

Me: "Yes my king?"

King: "Where did you hear the song?"

Me: "Which son- oh you heard me? Uhm, I don't know. I heard it play on the radio last Monday. From there I searched for it and listened to it."

King: "Do you know what it means?"

Me: "Not really. I just liked the vocals. Uhm." I looked at Zwe who stood beside me. "I had a dream also, about it. On Friday, after..."

King: "After your husband tried to kill me." So he's no longer his son but my husband? Good to know.

Me: "Yes."

King: "Would you mind articulating the dream for me?" My heart ached at the reminder of it.

Me: "I can't."

King: "Can't or won't?"

Me: "Won't. It won't help in any way. It hurts."

King: "I'm used to hurting. Please tell me." I sat on the chair beside the hospital bed. I hate this. That was such a horrible dream. But to recite it back to him? Oh, what fresh hell.

Me: "I don't even know how to place the scene. Everytime I visit the past, I'm there as Mam Nonkosi. This time, I was her spirit. After she'd died. I walked down the palace stairs to the lounge. King Ngidumise was there sitting in his chair, staring at nothing. The bab..." I looked at my fingers. "Was in the crib near him, crying. I stood over the bab.."

King: "Just say me."

Me: "I stood over you and you stopped crying. I spoke to you for a bit then went to the king, kneeling beside him. I begged him to hold you. He obviously couldn't hear me, or maybe he felt something but right then, he started crying. He got up and left for his room ordering a helper to change you. She took you to your nursery Room, changing you, fed you and left a music box to put you to sleep. I switched it off, looking over you once again. You'd started to recognise my face, and smile, giggle. I sang the song then. After singing this song, I told you the story of an artist."

King: "Vincent Van Gogh."

Me: "Yeah." I swallowed the lump in my throat. We sat in silence a few minutes.

King: "I don't remember her. I remember her voice. The song. Thank you." He looked at me once again. I didn't feel a shiver of fear at all. Yes the eyes looked strange but nothing about them scared me.

Me: "You're welcome, my king." He looked down my body and smiled.

King: "Finally." Finally what? Nkosi walked in the room. The King didn't bother to react.

Nkosi: "Father." The King looked at him with a look filled with what I couldn't pinpoint exactly. "Thembisa thought you'd enjoy a slice of cake. She baked it on Friday." He held the box of cake in his hand. My heart warmed, melting to liquid. "If her bread is anything to go by, this must taste fantastic." He placed it on the table. Silence swept through the room. The king looked at the box then back at Nkosinhle.

King: "Dr Biyela. Am I allowed a slice of cake?" I silently let out the breath I'd been holding.

Zwe: "Yes my King. I'll get plates and a cake cutter ." He walked out. My husband and his father stared at each other quietly. Were they thinking of a topic? I have plenty to choose from. Anything but the staring.

However, if I knew one thing about this family, they will stare until kingdom come. So perhaps that is their language. I have nothing else to contribute at this point.

## Chapter 116

### NKOSI'S POV\_

It's been a few days since we visited my father in hospital. I didn't say much to him and he too kept quiet. He listened to Thembisa talk about her school. Her new assignment that was fascinating her and also the woman's talk. Not sure what that was about but he was entertained. I watched him closely, observing his energy. It wasn't malicious. For the first time, I could feel my father genuinely pleased. He was happy. Also, Thembisa could talk your ears off if you give her the chance. That's her nervous trait along with giggling. She's fortunate to have a sweet voice that can put a devil to sleep. I watched over her as she slept soundly. Her week was filled with school work. I let her focus and do her best. My heart couldn't bare be away from her and so I worked mostly from home. My father was discharged from hospital earlier in the week. He was said to be recovering in the palace but he was fully recovered. This confused me. Not that I wanted him to stay injured but how? Something was off. Yes, Amahle's blood was healing but even she didn't heal overnight. It should've taken a few days. Since his discharge, he hasn't asked for Thembisa or even visited the villa. Mthunzi double checked. I'm glad he's staying away but I'm still bothered. So perhaps it's time to talk to him. I hate talking but I didn't have much of a choice now. Thembisa stirred in her sleep, finally stretching awake.

Nkosi: "My love."

Sasa: "Hey baby." I kissed her pretty nose.

Nkosi: "How are you feeling today?"

Sasa: "Excited. I haven't seen my girls in so long. Thank you my love."  
She kissed me again.

Nkosi: "For what?"

Sasa: "For trying to keep my life normal and comfortable."

Nkosi: "There is nothing in this world, I wouldn't do for you."

Sasa: "And how are you feeling?"

Nkosi: "I'm okay. I've decided I need to finally speak to my father."

Sasa: "That's good but will you be able to? We still haven't gotten a handle on your abilities." She got up.

Nkosi: "I don't know. Maybe. I'll have to bring reinforcements to hold me back."

Sasa: "Do you want me to be there for you?"

Nkosi: "No baby. You go and be pretty with your friends. I'll have Mthunzi and Zwe to help. It's their turn now." She giggled.

Sasa: "Hey, you know what you could do?"

Nkosi: "Tell me baby." I lay on my back on the bed, with my arm above my head.

Sasa: "Are you trying to seduce me?"

Nkosi: "Yes." She laughed.

Sasa: "Let's be serious. Today must be smooth. So, you know how you like to paint?" I looked at her stomach where I'd placed a new painting just this morning. "But I bought you supplies sthandwa? Why am I still your canvas?"

Nkosi: "It looks much more lively on you. You carry them so beautifully." She smiled. I loved painting her belly so much, my heart gleamed when doing it. I couldn't stop kissing it.

Sasa: "You're funny. Then you'll have to take your supplies with you today. You like to paint, how about having a set up done at the palace, you paint while your father listens to music and watches you. Maybe this is something you can both bond over, giving each other guidelines and pointers. It will break the ice." The ice she keeps wanting to break is actually a glacier but her cute effort warmed my heart.

Nkosi: "We can try that."

Sasa: "Perfect. I need to pee." She ran to the bathroom leaving me in stitches. All this time she's holding it in? I called Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "My Prince."

Nkosi: "Hey Mthunzi. How are you?"

Mthunzi: "Hey Mthunzi?? Since when? You only say hello." He laughed.

Nkosi: "Mxim. I'm not going to greet you again. When are you coming?"

Mthunzi: "I'll be there in an hour or so. I'm going to fetch Sasa's orders."

Nkosi: "What orders?"

Mthunzi: "She ordered something from a store and told me about it. It's wrapped."

Nkosi: "Oh okay. Also, has the registry been updated?"

Mthunzi: "Yes. She has been added. Your marriage certificate is also ready. Her allowance will be processed soon."

Nkosi: "She's going to hate that."

Mthunzi: "I know but it's not a choice we can make. What's your day looking like?"

Nkosi: "You're my boss, you tell me."

Mthunzi: "I'm still your boss? Because you do as you please. I barely saw you this week."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi stop lying to a king, you were in my house every day of this week." He laughed.

Mthunzi: "Fine then. I'm giving you an off day but we have to discuss the developments before the end of the day. How about we kidnap Zwe and go have drinks in the forest?"

Nkosi: "I would love that, and I need it. I have to talk to my father today. I still don't have a handle on my ability."

Mthunzi: "We'll give it a spin in nature. We'll figure something out my friend." I was honestly blessed to have my friends and I needed to do something for them. I don't know what. Thembisa's influence has swallowed me whole. She's always ready to reciprocate what she receives and I have to admit it's the sweetest human quality I've known.

Nkosi: "Thank you. Let me go love my beautiful person. Goodbye Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "See you soon." He hung up. I got out of bed walking to the bathroom.

Nkosi: "Baby?"

Sasa: "Hey." I hugged her body.

Nkosi: "I need to feed you. Can I make breakfast?"

Sasa: "This is strange, but do you mind making that sandwich you made yesterday?"

Nkosi: "You liked it? I'm getting better at making sandwiches."

Sasa: "You are. So now I must teach you how to bake bread."

Nkosi: "I don't think baking is my specialty." She laughed.

Sasa: "That sounds a little lazy. Let's bath baby."...

## KHAYA'S POV\_

Today was a Friday. I had only one class to attend and then I'm going out for a gourmet lunch in Greenland. I deserved it. It has been a busy week with school. I went downstairs for breakfast. The brothers were here.

Khaya: "Good morning family."

Sibo: "Hi bug."

Zwe: "Young Prince."

Mnqobi: "Brother." I sat down, dishing up food.

Khaya: "Brother Zwe. Do you think it's a good idea to rent out my apartment?"

Zwe: "Yes. I think that's actually a great idea and I know you like your private space sometimes but there's plenty of houses here in Stellars. Pick one and furnish it. When you want time alone, you'll go there."

Khaya: "I'll use Mnqobi's house for private time Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "No. That's Mnqobi's house, and the girls are there. You need your own." Stellars houses are madly expensive. I couldn't justify moving here living in the palace was enough.

Khaya: "Bhut Zwe-"

Sibo: "This is not up for debate Khaya. Choose a house and call Victoria. By end of today."

Khaya: "Okay. I'll do this, on condition that I buy it." They laughed.

Sibo: "Sure bug. If that makes you feel better. What's our schedule for the day Zwe?" My phone buzzed. I took it out looking at the message. <Hi Khaya. Have you forgotten to take me out for ice cream.> This was from Princess Sikhosana. Nkwenkwezi.

Zwe: "The young princes have a class today. I will be in hospital just for the morning. I don't have any surgeries scheduled. The girls will be at Mngqobi's house, Sasa is visiting them for the day and evening so please up the security. The kids have day care, they'll be picked up at 1pm. Siza is writing. Mom is going to her boutiques, she said she's working on her winter launch. Dad will be at Bi-motive. I believe you have your research and a meeting at Bi-connect?"

Sibo: "Okay. I'll be in the office for most of the day."

Zwe: "Oh and Mngqobi is leaving in the evening for his weekend away."

Sibo: "Bring me the ocean water you use to bath Mngqobi." We laughed.

Zwe: "How far have you gotten?"

Sibo: "I got busy this week."

Zwe: "That's a lame excuse."

Sibo: "You forget that you work me to the bone? Please let me be." I responded to the message: <Hi Nkwenkwezi. I was being respectful of your father since he was in hospital.> I wanted to see her. <Well, how about now?> She replied. <I have class in an hour, I'm free after lunch.> I sent it, checking the news. A phone rang.

Zwe: "My Lord.... No I'm not in the hospital, I'm on my way there.... This sounds suspicious, you're never interested in seeing me...." He laughed. "Okay, true... See you then." He hung up.

Sibo: "Oh, before I forget. There's a form and some documents I need you to hand in at the library."

Zwe: "Pretty sure you can email it Sboni. The library is way out of my route." He got up.

Sibo: "No it needs to be manually submitted."

Zwe: "That's a lie."

Sibo: "Why would I lie?"

Zwe: "Sibonelo, you are the blueprint of technology in this country and you aren't even trying to fight sending an email instead of manual submission?"

Sibo: "Zwe, I can't dictate how people do their job."

Zwe: "Why are you lying Sibonelo?" Mngqobi and I laughed.

Sibo: "Bhut Zwe. Please? This is important."

Zwe: "I know it's important but nawe, you'll be going to your office so hand it in on your own way."

Sibo: "I can't. I'll be late for my meeting."

Zwe: "I have a hospital to run."

Sibo: "It won't take long."

Zwe: "Mxim. Give me this thing." Sibonelo gave him the brown envelope.

Sibo: "Please hand it to Nomzamo Mahla. Only her."

Zwe: "What if she's not there?"

Sibo: "It can't be given to anyone else, there's very important information there that she will protect and also escalate quicker."

Zwe: "Can't Khaya take it there? After his class he's free isn't he?"

Khaya: "I'm going to Greenland Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "To do what there?"

Khaya: "I'm having lunch, bhuti." He stared at me.

Sibo: "Please Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "Mxim." He walked out. "You people obviously hate me."

Sibo: "Thank you bhuti."

Khaya: "Also, I may have a date with the princess Bhut Sbo."

Sibo: "Good luck my bug, I'll make a note of that. Send me your location. I have to get going. Mngqobi, do you have any plans after your class?"

Mnqobi: "I'll be with Petu the whole day. I'll send you my location as well."

Sibo: "Good." He walked out with his guards. I was left with Mnqobi. We have an office inside the palace we use to attend our virtual classes.

Khaya: "So... Are you nervous?"

Mnqobi: "A bit, yes. A lot is happening in my brain."

Khaya: "Talk to me."

Mnqobi: "It's just... I know Petu said she's okay with this weekend away thing, it was her idea but I can't help feel like she's hiding if it hurts."

Khaya: "So you feel guilty."

Mnqobi: "Kind of, yeah. I haven't given her a weekend away."

Khaya: "Okay. Mnqobi, you are sure of how you feel about both these girls. I've seen you. Also, you guys have such a long life together and there'll be time for you to take Petu on her weekend away as well. You've gone all out for today and planned a perfect day to spend with her. Ask her how she truly feels."

Mnqobi: "You're right. I just also don't know how to tend to Nothando. You know my girl Khaya. She doesn't like anything. It seems Petu knows her more than I do."

Khaya: "This is a great way to learn more about her then. Surely there's one thing she does like. Also, of course Petu will know her better, they're best friends and live together. Mnqobi, stop being so hard on yourself. Since beginning this relationship, all you have done is cater to both women. Are you catering to yourself as well?"

Mnqobi: "Not really, no."

Khaya: "Do that sometimes. The girls love you. Stop worrying." He sighed.

Mnqobi: "Thank you brother. So, are you excited for your date?"

Khaya: "More nervous than excited actually. We're supposed to have ice cream but I'm afraid she'll be accompanied by an army."

Mnqobi: "She's a Sikhosana princess, that's a given." He chuckled.

Khaya: "Will it be the same as when we're around Nkosi? You've seen the public go crazy over that family Mngqobi and Nkwenkwezi isn't used to that. She's lived in isolation all her life. What if she panics?"

Mngqobi: "I doubt it will be the same as Nkosi but just in case, carry extra security. I'm sure Sboni is already on it. You know him." Yeah, Sboni doesn't compromise on our security. I hope today goes smoothly.

## ZWELETHU'S POV\_

I parked in front of the library. They weren't even open. No, Sibonelo is trying me. I sat in my car checking my emails. In about 10 minutes, some guy unlocked the doors to the library. Finally. He opened them, walking in. I got out my car with the envelope and walked in following him. He was still undoing the chains in the second door. Honestly? I was being tested.

Zwe: "Good morning, sir." He looked up at me, taking off his hat.

Him: "Prince Biyela. How can I help you?" It was a blessing and a curse that every person in this city knew exactly who I was even in my plain black shirt and jeans. The guards always gave me away.

Zwe: "I'm looking for a Nomzamo. I have to submit this to her."

Him: "Oh. Nomzamo isn't here yet my Prince. It's unusual for her to be late. Can I take it for her instead?" Damn Sibonelo.

Zwe: "No, I'll wait."

Him: "You can come inside, my prince." He opened the second door. I walked in with my two guards. The smell of books wafted in the air hypnotizing me. I loved reading. I walked through the first aisle. The shelves were spectacular clean. I walked up the stairs to the second floor and looked through the books of medical history to calm my annoyance. 40 whole minutes later, I was giving up. I'll have to come back later. The only reason I stayed this long was only because I was reading but it's obvious I'm just wasting my time when I should be working. A woman hurried into the library, carrying way too many things at once.

She: "Bhuti Vuyani. Thank you so much for opening. Yoh. I overslept this morning. I felt like a cartoon spinning around to get my things together. It didn't help that it was that precise moment when the power went off. Please don't judge how I look." The man laughed.

Vuyani: "Don't worry, Zamo. Also, you have a guest. He's been waiting a very long time. So please attend to him."

She: "I am so sorry. Dear God. Where is he? Have you offered coffee Bhuti Vuyani?" I watched her from the second floor while she bustled about trying to fix herself and her station all at once but fumbling everything, falling over the floor. "This is so embarrassing. Where is he Bhuti?" He nodded up my direction. She looked up at me. "Oh. My Prince." She bowed. "I am so sorry to take up so much of your time. Please forgive me." I placed the book back in its place and walked down the stairs.

Zwe: "Good morning. Are you Nomzamo Mahla?" I stood in front of her. She nodded quickly, if her caramel skin was any lighter, her cheeks would be flaming red.

She: "Yes sir- My Prince. I am Nomzamo. I believe we spoke on the phone." I gave her the envelope. "You didn't have to come all the way. An email would be great." She couldn't look me in the eye, keeping her head bowed. So Sibonelo lied to me as I initially thought.

Zwe: "You spoke to my brother, not me. He didn't mention an email."

Zamo: "Oh, I'm so sorry to waste your time my Prince."

Zwe: "Hopefully the documents will reach their destination faster?"

Zamo: "I'll make sure of it. I'll get on it right away."

Zwe: "Thank you, Nomzamo." She curtsied, making me chuckle. No one has ever done that for me.

Zamo: "Is there anything else, my prince?"

Zwe: "No." I walked out of the library. Sibonelo thinks he's so smart, doesn't he? I laughed. I'm going to play this game of his.

## SIBONELO'S POV \_

I sat in my office at Bi-connect, I was waiting for Zimasa to arrive so we could start the meeting. My assistant walked in.

Sibo: "Ariel. Is Zimmy here?"

Ariel: "Not yet, Prince Sibonelo. Your meeting is only in 30 minutes, I'm sure she's on her way. Uhm, you do however have an appointment."

Sibo: "Who?"

Ariel: "A lady booked an appointment early this week. She's a journalist for Peak Reads, she said you spoke to her on the phone about being on next month's Business issue."

Sibo: "What? I didn't speak to any journalist, Ariel. In fact, I have never been interested in being on magazine."

Ariel: "She's already here, sir."

Sibo: "Ngenze njani ke mina? Yoh. Send her in, I'm not doing an interview. Make her understand that I'm simply calling her in to explain I'm not interested." (What must I do?)

Ariel: "Yes sir." She walked out. I closed my emails, checking my phone. A pair of heels walked in my office clinking on the floor. I looked up. You've got to be fucking with me.

Sibo: "What the hell?!"

Megan: "Hi baby." She undid her coat, revealing her naked body.

Sibo: "Megan what is your fucking problem!!"

Megan: "I don't have a problem." She walked toward me. I stood up from my seat.

Sibo: "What part of I'm not interested do you not fucking understand?! My business partner is about to walk in any minute! Get out!!"

Megan: "So where should I wait then?"

Sibo: "Nkulunkulu Yini ungizonda kanje? Don't wait for me!! I don't want you Megan." (God, why do you hate me?)

Megan: "I don't believe you, Sibonelo. I'm going to prove to you that you really want me-"

Sibo: "GUARDS!!!" They quickly marched in. "This is the very last time I'm addressing you Megan. Get the fuck out of my life. I won't be gentle the next time."

Megan: "See you soon baby." They escorted her out. What the hell was this nonsense? This situation not only frustrated me but it was beginning to anger me because I don't wish or commit violence on women. So what the hell can I do to get her off my back? A harassment charge? Let's do that. My phone rang.

Sibo: "Hello?"

Zwe: "Brother. So I got your documents in. I met the librarian." I smiled.

Sibo: "She's cute ne?"

Zwe: "Indeed. So I figured I should ask her out. She said no. Turns out, she has a crush on you. Has had one for years in fact, she was hoping to meet you." Oh fuck no.

Sibo: "What?"

Zwe: "Yeah. I decided let me set something up for you. She's such a sweet girl, you definitely need her in your life. I hope you're free for lunch. I made a reservation for you at Amelia's. She'll be expecting you." This can't be happening.

Sibo: "No Zwe!! I can't. I'm not interested in having lunch with her."

Zwe: "I know you're shy, brother. I think this girl is perfect for you though. Maybe this time you'll fall in love and work toward being committed-"

Sibo: "Zwe, I do not want this girl. I cannot."

Zwe: "Why not?"

Sibo: "I just don't think it will be a good match for me."

Zwe: "But you're single?"

Sibo: "She's not my type."

Zwe: "That's nonsense. She's a pretty girl, very smart too. You'll be fine."

Sibo: "Zwele-"

Zwe: "Don't be late. You know it's rude to keep a woman waiting. Speak to you soon." He hung up. What the hell? I tried calling him back and he didn't answer. I can't go out with this girl. It's fine if she didn't want him but I didn't want her. Why would Zwelethu just plan a date for me without my knowledge? Did I say I want to date? Why is he making my very busy life even more complicated?

Sibo: "Answer your phone!!" I shouted in the voicemail. Should I call her and cancel? Oh that is so rude. Especially because she's sweet. Maybe I should go to Amelia's and let her down gently? Zwelethu is very mean. There was no need for this honestly. Zimmy walked in.

Zimmy: "Morning, Prince Sibonelo." She looked amazing in tight jeans with a rip on her thigh, baggy white plain t-shirt and a black blazer on top with the highest red heels.

Sibo: "Hey."

Zimmy: "Am I late? Ariel says you're waiting for me. I thought we were starting at half past."

Sibo: "No. You're not late." She didn't have a wig on today, instead new braids tied up to a bun. Her face clean of any makeup. "New fragrance?" I opened my meeting folder on the computer. I loved her old fragrance. It turned me on like a tap.

Zimmy: "Yes. Thought I'd try something new." Her usual scent was floral and powdery. This new scent was minty and fresh. Not completely opposite but very different from what I'm used to from her.

Sibo: "It's...crisp. Different."

Zimmy: "Exactly what I was going for." She smiled. It's been weeks since I was smiled at. "Before we begin, can I please ask something?"

Sibo: "Sure."

Zimmy: "Is it okay if I took the weekend off?"

Sibo: "You don't work weekends."

Zimmy: "I mean in the sense that I won't be attending to emails or possibly calls immediately."

Sibo: "May I ask why?" If rest is what she needed then sure, why not.

Zimmy: "Uhm I wanted to go to a concert tomorrow. I haven't been to one before so I was hoping... I could go. It would be easier to leave tonight, the bus is at 6."

Sibo: "Where is the concert?"

Zimmy: "In Golden Crown."

Sibo: "That's five hours away. You'll arrive around midnight in a city you don't know."

Zimmy: "A friend will be waiting for me."

Sibo: "Melokuhle." My chest felt tight. He was still in the picture? What's wrong with him? Why can't he disappear?

Zimmy: "Yes."

Sibo: "I see." I clicked on my computer, doing useless things because I don't even know what I was looking for.

Zimmy: "So, may I?"

Sibo: "Sure. Can we begin?"

Zimmy: "Thank you Prince Sibonelo. Yes, we may start." This was starting to fuck with me and I hate it. I hate the spinning in my head.

Sibo: "You'll be staying in his house?"

Zimmy: "Yes, he offered to accommodate me."

Sibo: "He was married before."

Zimmy: "He told me about it. And about his son, Libhongo." How serious was this? If he's already told her about his life and kid? Inviting her to stay in his house? Was i playing a losing game here?

Sibo: "Oh. That's good." My hands were shaking. "Have you updated your banking details or they're still the same?"

Zimmy: "Still the same. Why?"

Sibo: "Your salary will only be paid next week so I have to give you an advance. You need financial security if you're going to another province. You can't just be dependent on the man that called you there."

Zimmy: "I have savings." I logged into my app, sending her what she'll need.

Sibo: "Let's start our meeting."

Zimmy: "Thank you Sibonelo. This is really thoughtful of you." I needed to get this meeting finished as quick as humanly possible. How? I don't know. My brain was short circuiting. Will she be fucking him? Has she already fucked him? Was it serious? Melokuhle was a serious guy, he was always straight forward and if she's out there visiting his house it's clear he's serious. If he was in front of me, I'd probably punch him in the face.

Sibo: "Have you gotten a response from GRAYSON pharmaceutical?"

Zimmy: "I contacted his office yesterday and his assistant mentioned that he will get back to me."

Sibo: "Drop him. Please prepare a proposal offer for Weih brothers and Co. I want to send it out next week. Well, when you have a chance I guess."

Zimmy: "I'll start it while I'm on the bus."

Sibo: "Why is Melokuhle making you take a bus? He's rich, he can afford to have you flown."

Zimmy: "I actually didn't want him to. I want to be responsible for my own transportation." She cleared her throat. Of course you did. You never let yourself down.

Sibo: "I went through the report you sent in the week. You suggested a media page for the business. Have you appointed anyone to manage it?"

Zimmy: "I'm managing it."

Sibo: "No, it has to be someone else. You have the work to do and your schooling. This is for someone else. Appoint a manager and register them so we can process their contract."

Zimmy: "I'll do so." She typed on her laptop. I looked at her for a minute. I've never been so conflicted. If I dare ask her back, I'll look like a loser. Imagine? Only when Melo is making strides here I am trying to sneak back? Fuck Melokuhle.

Sibo: "Are you still on contraceptives?" She looked at me. "I'm sorry. That was invasive." That slipped from my thoughts out of my mouth.

Zimmy: "I have sent the projections for the next week. What do you think about the promo idea for new sign up's?"

Sibo: "Great idea to boost business." Why didn't she even attempt to answer my question?

Zimmy: "Lastly, I have the branding design ready for the scooters. Did you take a look?"

Sibo: "Yes. It's perfect." I don't even think I took a look. I had too much work this week, I trusted her to make a good decision.

Zimmy: "So I can go ahead with the printing?"

Sibo: "Yes."

Zimmy: "Perfect. That sums up our week."

Sibo: "When will you be back?"

Zimmy: "Sunday evening."

Sibo: "Okay. Travel safely." I hope it storms and the bus breaks down before it even moves. "Pack warm. Golden Crown is colder than Mountain Peak."

Zimmy: "Thank you, Prince Sibonelo." She packed her laptop and notebook into her bag.

Sibo: "Do you like him?"

Zimmy: "Melo? He's nice. Please excuse me." She hurried out the office. Okay? It was still morning and Miles was at day care so I couldn't even go hang out with him. Mngqobi is with Petu, Khaya going on his date, maybe I can go bother Zwe. He's the reason I'm going through this. I had tons of work to do though, I just don't feel like doing it today. She walked back in. "Sorry about that." She took her bag.

Sibo: "Are you okay? You look flushed."

Zimmy: "I'm perfect. Thank you for the payment, Prince Sbo. I should get going. Enjoy your weekend." How? How the hell must I enjoy it when Melokuhle is going to be eating my food?

Sibo: "Sure." She walked out the office...

NKOSI'S POV\_

We dropped Thembisa off in Mngqobi's house, where her friends were. She had her security, which was surrounding the property, as well as more security from the Biyela household. Amahle was also here. So she was safe. Then why was my heart refusing to leave. I stood with her on the driveway, holding her in my arms.

Nkosi: "I already miss you."

Sasa: "I know baby but we'll see each other tonight. Please stay calm during your talk with the King. I love you."

Nkosi: "I love you too." I held her closer.

Sasa: "Baby you're squeezing me."

Nkosi: "I'm hoping to absorb you into my body so we can go everywhere together." She giggled.

Sasa: "Is it because you want to hang out with my girls?"

Nkosi: "Yes, you're always having a good time."

Sasa: "Next time I'll invite you." I kissed her lips.

Nkosi: "I love you. Go inside love otherwise I'll never leave." I let her go.

Sasa: "I love you too." She walked in the house. I tore my heart away, getting into the car. We drove to the hospital to fetch Zwe. When we arrived he was in the reception area as he usually is. Does he ever do his rounds or actually work?

Nkosi: "As usual, slacking off. Hello Zwe." He laughed.

Zwe: "My Prince. My Lord. To what do I owe this visit?"

Mthunzi: "Since you look bored, we thought to take you somewhere for the day."

Zwe: "A date? I'm honoured Your Highness." He batted his eyelashes. The crowd was already starting to gather.

Nkosi: "Zwelethu, stop playing."

Zwe: "Eh, I always forget your celebrity problems. Let's go." We followed him to his office, my guards as usual, surrounding us until we left the hospital.

We got to the woods, Mthunzi took the cooler box out of the boot. I took off running further into the woods. I climbed up the tree, to sit up on a branch. Not the strongest I'm afraid. I put my ability to the test. Break. The branch immediately broke off the tree, I flew to the ground landing smoothly on both feet. So I can control it. Good to know. I ran back to Mthunzi and Zwe.

Nkosi: "So the control is there."

Zwe: "Let's see." I looked at the nearest tree. Tear in half, I thought. The tree cracked from it's highest point splitting into two. "That's incredible. Let's see if it's impulsive." Mthunzi tossed a glass at me. Split in five pieces, I thought. The glass broke in large pieces before falling to the floor. I looked at the pieces.

Nkosi: "Yep, five. Like I thought."

Mthunzi: "How long can you hold them in the air."

Nkosi: "Let's find out." Zwe tossed another glass. Split in five pieces, float around my head. The glass broke into five pieces floating in the air. Zwe laughed.

Zwe: "I have the coolest best friend in the world."

Mthunzi: "Can you use the abilities all at once?"

Nkosi: "I haven't tried."

Mthunzi: "I brought your extra clothes don't worry." Fall. The glass shreds dropped to the ground.

Nkosi: "Turns out they stay until I tell them to drop. I can't whisper to you guys. You're my friends."

Zwe: "Just turn, conjure fire and then this."

Nkosi: "Okay." I first scanned through the environment. Everything was clear. Safe. My body grew in size tearing through my clothes as it transformed into my tiger. I roared.

Mthunzi: "I can never get used to that. Let's do fire." I growled, scratching my claw on the ground. The fire caught on, blazing more boldly than I've seen it before.

Zwe: "His abilities are enhanced when used simultaneously..." He realized. "Tear through the tree like you did the first one." I looked at the tree growling. Tear in half. The tree slowly plunge out of the ground in its roots, violently splitting apart. Both parts hitting other trees over.

Mthunzi: "Jesus!!"

Zwe: " Okay. Let's take a bit of a break.." I couldn't take a break. The adrenaline surged through me like electricity. I roared from the pits of my soul. I needed to hunt. "Nkosi... Nkosi!!" I scratched my paws off the ground lighting up in flames.

Mthunzi: "Nkosinhle!!" I took off into the words, running at the highest speed.

SASA'S POV \_

Siza had set up in the backyard. We were having a pool luncheon. She was such a great cook. I was immediately hungry just seeing the food.

Me: "Ladies." I hugged her, Amahle and Notha.

Siza: "Hi sweetheart." Amahle smiled.

Me: "How are you?"

Ama: "I'm fine. How are you coping? He's driving you crazy, isn't he?"

Me: "Who?" I laughed.

Ama: "Your husband."

Me: "Never my husband. That is my angel." I giggled.

Ama: "I'm giving you a month. He can't help it shame." She held my waist. I hugged her again. She's probably started drinking already. "I can't wait. Please borrow him to me for the first year?"

Me: "Amahle, please get your own husband, you had 20 years with mine. I'm not borrowing you anything." We laughed. Jimmy arrived.

Jimmy: "Hey loves." We hugged her. "Where's Petu?"

Notha: "She has a date with Mngqobi. Today you're here for me. I need lessons."

Zimmy: "On what love? The food smells delicious, Sizani please don't judge me. I'm already salivating." She took off her heels.

Siza: "Knock yourself out babe."

Ama: "This is beautiful." She smiled.

Zimmy: "Right?" She took a plate, dishing up. I joined her immediately. "Notha, what do you need lessons with."

Notha: "Mnqobi and I are going away today. It's the day I lose my virginity. What do I do?"

Zimmy: "Omg?" She chewed what's in her mouth. I sat on the pool side couch, nibbling into my food.

Siza: "Are you ready Notha?"

Notha: "Yes, I'm sure.." Amahle sat next to me, giving me juice. My favorite this month. Orange.

Me: "You're a life saver." I gulped a few sips.

Zimmy: "Okay. How far have you gotten sexually?"

Notha: "I only had a kiss."

Amahle: "Tell them with who."

Me: "Mnqobi, duh."

Ama: "Nothando?"

Notha: "It was with Petu." We stared at her shocked. Amahle giggled sipping her drink.

Zimmy: "Can I please have more context?"

Siza: "Our Petu?"

Me: "Is there another Petu?" We laughed.

Zimmy: "What does this mean?"

Notha: "Petu, Mnqobi and I are in a relationship. All three of us. It's not just Mnqobi and I or Mnqobi and Petu. There's also Petu and I."

Me: "That's sweet, Notha."

Siza: "So this is why the giggles and cuddles when we're watching movies? I'm being burnt by a candle and I don't even know it." We laughed.

Zimmy: "Okay, I'm telling you what I told Sasa. Let him lead you, love. I can tell you how to prepare. Take a warm bath, preferably together. This way you're both feeling warm and comfortable seeing each other naked. Take turns, applying lotion on to each other. Hold his gaze, kiss him. Kiss every part of him. Let him know how much you trust him, if you love him, you're ready to let him in." She held back her tears. "I'm sorry guys. It's just been such a tough week." She sobbed. Siza rubbed her back.

Siza: "Is it your period week, baby?"

Me: "Please don't cry, you're going to make me cry." Amahle was giggling silently.

Zimmy: "Period week? I'm on contraceptives. I don't.. I'm not sure. Do they happen? They stop right? When you're on the needle?"

Siza: "Sometimes."

Zimmy: "Yeah. I took an injection. I think I'm due soon. Oh women's hormones." She laughed. My brain froze. Contraceptives? I haven't taken contraceptives. Surely it wouldn't happen so quickly right? When was my period? I did have a period. After we got married. Just a few days after. So I was safe? I think. I can't be pregnant. I'm overthinking nonsense.

Notha: "Thembisa, how was your first time?"

Me: "Uhm... Uncomfortable for the first few minutes. I was really nervous but I let him lead. So, let Mnqobi guide you." I trusted my girls, all of them, but I took my mothers advice seriously. Also, my husband was a future king. It would be inappropriate describing how amazing his sex is. But for myself, I had to admit, he was a demi god in more ways than I can imagine. Now I miss him.

Siza: "Also, have lube. It is perfectly safe and fine. Our bodies don't respond the same way to sex, therefore it helps makes things more comfortable."

Ama: "Also, drink a bit of alcohol to let your body loosen up."

Me: "And what do you know about this topic?" She laughed.

Ama: "I don't have to know anything."

Notha: "Okay. So far, I think I'm settling into being less nervous."

Zimmy: "Are you sure about this Notha?"

Notha: "Yes. I want to try it out."

Me: "Trying is good. I wish you the best."

Notha: "Let me show you guys what outfits I have planned." She went upstairs. Amahle went to help Siza. Zimmy sat next to me.

Me: "Do you know any pregnancy symptoms?"

Zimmy: "Yeah, I think nausea, sensitivity to smell, tender... breasts." She stared at nothing probably trying to think of more.

Me: "Okay, I think I'm safe. I haven't had any of that."

Zimmy: "Oh.." I breathed a sigh of relief.

Me: "What's wrong?"

Zimmy: "Nothing."

Me: "You look worried. Did you forget something?"

Zimmy: "I think so."

Me: "What?" My phone rang. Why would Mthunzi be calling? "Hello Mthunzi." I answered.

Mthunzi: "Hi Sasa. Uhm, we have a problem."

Me: "A problem?" Oh God, I hope Nkosi and his father didn't fight again.

Mthunzi: "Yes. Uhm. We lost Nkosi." My heart stopped.

Me: "LOST HIM? LOST HIM HOW!?" I stood up, my knees wobbly.

Mthunzi: "In the woods. We were testing his abilities and he turned, lit on fire, tore apart a tree with the new ability then... Then he changed, he became, seemingly, stronger and...he took off. There's no trace of him." My heart raced.

Me: "What does...what do you mean stronger? You seem panicked, why?"

Mthunzi: "Using all abilities together, enhanced them by alot. We're unsure how the new one works yet, we were trying to figure that out."

Now I don't know. With the way he took off. I don't know where he's ended up and I'm afraid. Whether he's a danger to himself or other people he may come across depending on how far he's gone."

Me: "So what do we do?"

Mthunzi: "I need you to come. The only person that can get through to Nkosi, will be his mate. You. Please come find him." ...

## Chapter 118

### SASA'S POV\_

Amahle came back out to the backyard as I put my shoes on.

Me: "Ladies, I have to dash out for a bit. Amahle, let's go-"

Ama: "You don't need me. I'll hold the fort here." Yep, Amahle was drinking. She's such a happy person when she's indulging alcohol.

Siza: "Is everything okay Sasa?"

Me: "Yes. Everything is fine. I just need to do something quickly. Zimmy?" She looked up.

Zimmy: "Yes baby?"

Me: "Are you okay? You look concerned." She giggled.

Zimmy: "I'm fine."

Me: "Okay." A car arrived, with three guards. I called Mthunzi again. "Mthunzi, a car has come for me. What are the guards names?"

Mthunzi: "Tell them to show ID. It's Mongezi, Ganda and Dave. They're pinging next to you on my side." I checked the ID's before getting in. One of them drove, the other two in the second car following. I was nervous, not sure how Nkosi just disappeared and why. What if he goes to the city? He can't do that. We drove into the woods, I got out the car walking to Mthunzi and Zwe.

Me: "Hello Zwe."

Zwe: "Hi Sasa."

Me: "I take it he's still not back?"

Zwe: "No. We've searched the area twice. There's no sign of him."

Me: "Do you have a knife?" Mthunzi gave me his pocket knife.

Mthunzi: "He won't hurt you."

Me: "I know." I opened the knife cutting my hand. The blood oozed out of the slash in my hand. "Please get in the car-"

Mthunzi: "No."

Me: "He's going to freak out when smelling this blood. We don't know what state he's in-"

Mthunzi: "I'm not leaving you by yourself Thembisa. If we have to fight him, then we'll do that. Right Zwe?"

Zwe: "Heeee, Mthunzi what about my pretty face?" I chuckled. The ground shivered for a second.

Me: "He's coming." Right then, the tiger appeared jumping out of nowhere. My heart stopped with a cold fear. He roared, huffing in front of me. "Baby." More movement.

Zwe: "Oh no." A streak of tigers crawled out of the woods. I was trembling out of my soul.

Me: "Sthandwa sam." I moved closer to the first that appeared. This was him. He licked my hand, roaring loudly. I held his ear, brushing his fur. "Nkosinhle..." He growled, rubbing his head on my belly. I brushed my fingers behind his ears. Slowly his body morphed back to his human form. He was kneeling in front of me, kissing my stomach.

Me: "Hi sweetheart." He looked up.

Nkosi: "Who hurt you." The danger in his eyes.

Me: "No one. I cut my hand to call you. Do you want to introduce me to your friends?" He stood up, looking behind him. A chuff emanating out of his throat. The other tigers backed away, crawling back to their secrets woods.

Nkosi: "Why did you come? Are you hurt?" Why was he so ready to fight?

Me: "Baby, I'm not hurt. Your friends are worried about you." He looked up, Mthunzi and Zwe looked at him.

Zwe: "Hi."

Nkosi: "You called my wife?"

Mthunzi: "You disappeared. What did you expect?"

Nkosi: "Not to bother my wife, for one."

Mthunzi: "Next thing you run to the city and I have to answer for it?"

Nkosi: "Mxim." He looked down at me. "Hey."

Me: "I was worried Nkosi. If you're out here, you need to listen to your friends. They want to keep you safe."

Nkosi: "Okay baby." He kissed my lips.

Me: "Why didn't you introduce me to your tiger friends?"

Nkosi: "They're not my friends, they're my tribe. They already know you."

Mthunzi: "Do they know me?"

Nkosi: "I'm not talking to you, Mthunzi." He kissed my nose.

Mthunzi: "Must I go ask them?"

Nkosi: "I will tie you to the top of that tree." He warned. They laughed. "Let me show you something." He held my hand walking through the woods.

Me: "Oooh, are we going to climb a tree and kiss?" He laughed.

Nkosi: "Why that?"

Me: "You don't know the song? Nkosi and Sasa sitting in a tree, k i s s i n g. First comes lurrv, then comes marriage, then comes the baby in a golden carriage." He laughed.

Nkosi: "Fine then. Hold on to me." He picked me up, wrapping my legs around his waist, my arms holding on to him tight. He climbed up the tree reaching a thick branch and sat on it. I still clung on to him. I definitely didn't trust this tree but I know he wouldn't let me fall. "Sing the song then. How does it go?" I giggled.

Me: "Nkosi and Sasa, sitting in the tree. K. I. S. S. I-" he kissed my lips, forgetting we were even sitting on a tree, my mind and tummy fuzzy with his soft embrace.

Nkosi: "Now that we kissed on a tree, and we have love, and also marriage. I should probably get the golden carriage ready." I laughed.

Me: "It's too early for that, baby."

Nkosi: "It needs to be ready when my boy arrives."

Me: "And you're fortunate that gold is one of your family colours but please don't make the carriage real actual gold."

Nkosi: "Is there such a thing as fake gold? Please don't shame my child in front of a nation, Mrs Sikhosana." I laughed into his chest. "I love you. Thank you for coming for me."

Me: "Personally I would've let you run around naked all you want but Mthunzi was worried." He laughed.

Nkosi: "He never lets me have fun. Let's take you back to your girls, love. You're supposed to be enjoying yourself and resting today. Have you eaten?"

Me: "I did. Siza cooked the most delicious hearty meal and now I'm hungry again so let's go." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "Hold on." He carefully climbed down the tree, landing on the ground safely. He placed me down. We walked back to the others.

Me: "So your tiger friends stay here in the woods? They're full time tigers?" He laughed.

Nkosi: "Yes, they stay in the woods. So I'm part time?"

Me: "Yes baby, you're very part time. This is the first time I've seen you change."

Nkosi: "You were scared."

Me: "Terrified." I laughed.

Nkosi: "I would never hurt you, my love. The others wouldn't either. Even if I'm not here. They'll probably stand around you and wait for me, attacking anything that tries it's luck." He kissed my ear. Mthunzi handed him clothes to wear.

Mthunzi: "Clearly when we bring you here, we must come with your wife."

Nkosi: "Maybe I should come with her alone because she at least let's me have fun." We laughed, walking to the car.

## NOTHANDO'S POV\_

Zimmy and I planned my outfits for the weekend. Amahle wasn't too into fashion and Siza was different from my style. Zimmy too, but she loved fashion as whole.

Zimmy: "Crisp white shirt with stonewashed jeans are always a classic. You can dress it up or down. Your style of choice is a minimalist so perhaps simple slip on sandals for shoes in a neutral colour that matches your purse. Where are your brown sandals?"

Notha: "Here. And accessories, gold simple accents."

Zimmy: "Perfect, this is your Saturday first look. Let's do a back up outfit."

Notha: "These wide leg beige dress pants? They're high waisted. Pairing it with a white bodysuit and the white sandal. Also this beige hat."

Zimmy: "You obviously don't need me. This is beautiful. Where did you get these pants?"

Notha: "At The Baba's."

Zimmy: "Oooh, Designer. The cut gives it away. It's spectacular."

Notha: "Sunday, this flowy wide leg and button shirt linen two piece. I decided to step out of the comfort neutral colors."

Zimmy: "This green? I'm obsessed."

Notha: "But in case I chicken out, I have this flowy white and pink floral skirt, plus this white top."

Zimmy: "These are perfect. Why aren't you studying fashion Notha?"

Notha: "I have no desire to actually make the clothes. I'd rather just style them." We folded my clothes into my small suitcase.

Zimmy: "Please excuse." She got up, running to the bathroom.

Siza: "Ey..." She chuckled.

Notha: "What's up?"

Siza: "Are you on contraceptives Nothando? In fact, do you have condoms? Durex has a real feel range that feels like skin." Amahle laughed out loud. I took my drink because she was clearly getting her buzz.

Notha: "Yes, Petu and I went to get implants on Monday. Yes, I'm still going to use a condom."

Siza: "Good."

Notha: "A baby isn't in our plan yet."

Siza: "How will you have a baby between the three of you when you do decide to have one?"

Notha: "Well, I don't want to carry a baby. Petu said she wants to carry. Therefore, we'll take eggs from me, fertilize it with Mngqobi's sperm, then put it inside Petu. The baby will have two mommies and a daddy. All of us sharing equal parental responsibility."

Siza: "How do you resolve conflict? For example if Petu and Mngqobi fight, who's side are you on?"

Notha: "We never fight. However, if we do, we have discussed having mediators to help solve the conflict depending on how big it is. If it's something we can't solve at the table then each person calls their representative, and we discuss it as a family."

Siza: "I'm not going to lie, I'm jealous. Amahle, how about you? Are you eyeing someone?"

Ama: "Yes actually." She smiled. I chuckled.

Notha: "You haven't told them?"

Siza: "Them?"

Ama: "It's their pronoun. They doesn't use He or She. They use they. They are non binary."

Siza: "Let me get this straight, so you have a crush on One person. Who wants to be acknowledged as non binary? Therefore doesn't use the

general him or her pronouns. Instead uses They to describe themselves."

Ama: "Correct. Gender doesn't define person. The private part a person was born with is no one's concern but they're own."

Siza: "That is very true. And wena Notha? I thought you were asexual."

Notha: "Yes. I have no sexual desire at all. I do however have emotional bonds. This is what I'm still learning. Am I actually asexual or demisexual. I'll figure it out as I go."

Siza: "Now what is demisexual?"

Notha: "Having sexual desire only for the person or people you have created a strong emotional bond with."

Siza: "You are the two most interesting people I've ever met. I'm learning quite a lot. Life is not black and white. There's blue, green, pink, purple and many more. So many beautiful colours to choose from and people too. Hence the rainbow flag? That's so sweet."

Ama: "Try explaining it to my dad, it frustrates him way too much. Whenever I want something from him, I explain the difference between gender pronouns, sexual orientation and fluidity. His brain starts frying very quickly. All he knows is man and woman. Woman and woman. Man and man. Person and woman is too much for him." We laughed.

Siza: "Your stories about your dad are funny because I can't imagine him as anything but our King."

Ama: "He's a big teddy bear but don't confuse him. He gets bored very quickly." Jimmy came back out, sitting down.

Siza: "Are you okay baby? You've been sick over a week now."

Jimmy: "Yoh Siza. I don't know what to do and I'm panicking. I'm on contraceptives. Maybe these are side effects?"

Siza: "It wouldn't hurt to check. What are your symptom-"

Ama: "She's pregnant. Almost seven weeks now."

Jimmy: "Amahle please stop playing. This isn't a game."

Ama: "I'm not playing. Take a test."

Jimmy: "Amahle. Please stop playing like that."

Siza: "Let's just get the test. We can discuss from there."

Zimmy: "I'm not pregnant, Siza. I cannot be. I used a condom, then got on contraceptives."

Siza: "They're not 100% effective. Maybe while they were still kicking in, you conceived. You were having unprotected sex the day after the contraceptive?"

Zimmy: "You mean to tell me it doesn't do that automatically?" Amahle sipped her drink. Zimmy was ready to scream.

Siza: "Oh sweetheart. Let me drive to the store." If Amahle says she is, then she definitely is but some people do want to see for themselves.

Ama: "Sex is very serious."

Notha: "Amahle." I choked on my drink. Siza left the house. "Zimmy, dont stress-"

Zimmy: "Nothando, please."

Notha: "It's just a baby." She stared at me ready to bite my head off. "Fetus I mean."

Zimmy: "Oh God, please. I'm begging. I would do anything. Anything to not be in this situation." She was shaking trying not to cry.

Notha: "Amahle, do you have any advice?"

Ama: "No."

Notha: "Are you going to keep it?"

Zimmy: "Oh my God, he's going to hate me. He is going to think I trapped him. Kanti why can't life just be on my side for once? I'm trying to get my life together and now this surprise?"

Ama: "So you believe me?"

Notha: "I'm sorry Zim. Amahle, nawe." Siza came back in 15 minutes. There was a shopping center just 5 minutes away from the estate by car. She held a plastic in her hand.

Siza: "Okay, you've done a pregnancy test right?"

Zimmy: "Never. Surely there's instructions? I'll figure it out. Please cross fingers."

Am: "That's useless, love."

Notha: "Amahle." Zimmy took the three tests to the bathroom.

Siza: "Shame. Yoh, I know that stress. I was her age when I had to take my first pregnancy test."

Notha: "This is a great reminder to double check condoms." I checked my phone, receiving two messages from Petu. Selfie pictures. My favourite. <You look gorgeous.> I sent back.

Siza: "Poor Zimmy. Yoh. I can feel her panic in my soul." She crossed her fingers.

Ama: "How is that going to help. It's already happened Siza." She laughed.

Siza: "Amahle stop playing. This is serious." She giggled. Sasa walked in.

Sasa: "I'm back ladies. Siza had me day dreaming about this butter chicken." She went to the food table.

Ama: "Sit down Sasa, let me make you a plate."

Sasa: "To what do I owe this pleasure?" She laughed.

Ama: "I'm only taking care of my human, please." Sasa sat down, giggling. Amahle dished up some food.

Sasa: "I am very flattered, thank you. Where's Zimmy?" I sipped my drink quietly.

Siza: "She went to the bathroom."

Sasa: "Oh okay. What did I miss? Notha, your outfits. Tell me what you chose, I see your bag is already packed." I explained the outfits to her in detail. "Please take pictures! Where are you guys going?"

Notha: "We chose Langoluhle private beach resort."

Sasa: "Ooh that's a beautiful town!"

Siza: "Let me check up on Zimmy." She got up hurrying to the bathroom. Siza was very thoughtful and attached to Zimmy. They had a lot in common and spent a lot of time just chatting. I think Zimmy reminded her of herself when she was her age. No matter what happens, Zim would have this support structure. We wouldn't let her down.

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

It was a hectic and long day but what infuriated me was sitting at Amelia's waiting for someone who didn't arrive. Zwelethu is very mean. I called the library to get hold of Nomzamo and she had no knowledge of meeting me. The poor girl. I was trying to get him a date yena he plays around with his one chance. Surely he doesn't want happiness. I walked into the palace. My mother was in the garden with her assistant, going over the launch details. I sat in the lounge.

Sibo: "Lilian!" She quickly came to the lounge.

Lili: "Yes, my prince."

Sibo: "Please prepare me a sandwich. I don't think I can wait till dinner."

Lili: "Your usual sandwich, my prince?"

Sibo: "Exactly that one."

Lili: "Yes my prince." She left for the kitchen. I took out my laptop, starting the booking. I made the two nights reservations sending her an email. I checked the time, still about 4pm so she hasn't left. I dialed her number. No answer. I hope she changed her mind. I sent a message: <Hey. Made a reservation for you at Four Seasons Hotel, there'll be a car waiting at the station for you so you have reliable and safe transport.> See, now there's no use for Melokuhle. We'll see. She read the message and that was it. Okay? Maybe she's busy packing? Why is she still go- Mxim. I dialed his number, listening to it ring.

Melo: "Prince Sbo. Kunjani?" (How are you)

Sibo: "Ngiyaphila. Wena unjani?" (I'm fine, how are you?)

Melo: "Great. Good to hear from you, man."

Sibo: "Yeah. I hear there's some concert in your city. What's that about?"

Melo: "Oh yes. Rave is in the country for a private concert."

Sibo: "And you didn't invite me?" He chuckled.

Melo: "Haha. I thought you were mad at me. Also, I didn't want any conflict."

Sibo: "Conflict?"

Melo: "Ey, Sboni. You know I like Zimmy. So she's coming here for the weekend, I'm trying to get to know her. I don't want problems with you but I'm not letting her go until she asks me to. Rather you and I establish where we stand right now."

Sibo: "There's no reason to pull out boxing gloves Melokuhle. I was only asking."

Melo: "And I'm only telling."

Sibo: "Alright then. Enjoy your concert."

Melo: "I plan to, my friend. Thoroughly. Have a good weekend." He hung up. The plan was to dissuade him and it didn't work. There's obviously nothing I could say to make Melokuhle a sensible human being and listen to me. Lilian brought my sandwich on a tray with my juice. I stared at the bread. The tomato was sticking out.

Sibo: "How old is that?"

Lili: "The tomato? It's fresh from today's grocery trip, my prince."

Sibo: "Then why does it smell like that?"

Lili: "Like what, my prince? It's toasted cheese tomato and ham just like you like it."

Sibo: "You changed something." My father walked in.

Biyela: "What's the problem?"

Sibo: "Nothing." I took the plate, eating my sandwich.

Biyela: "Where's your brother?"

Sibo: "Don't tell me about Zwelethu. He wasted half my day today as a prank. I don't want to talk to him."

Biyela: "What did he do?"

Sibo: "I sent him to the library to hand in the documents for the archives retrieval, I wanted him to meet the librarian lady and what does he do? Call me back and tells me she told him she has a crush on me and so he reserved a table for us for lunch. I went there so I can tell her gently that I'm not interested. She didn't show up. Over an hour went by. When I

called her, she tells me my brother didn't mention anything about a lunch." He laughed.

Biyela: "So you tricked him into a date without his knowledge and he turned it back to you? You can't be mad."

Sibo: "He'll never find a wife at this rate."

Biyela: "If he reaches 35 without a wife, I'm paying lobola on his behalf to the throne. The country will pick a wife for him."

Sibo: "Do you see why I'm working overtime? My poor brother will be pecked apart." I got up. "I need to fetch my second laptop at my house. I'll be back in a minute."

Biyela: "Okay." I walked out the house, driving to my house just nearby. I walked in the front door, making my way to the bedroom. Something was off here. I placed my phone and keys on the bed, looking through the house. It was empty. Maybe Lilian had come to clean earlier. I looked at the vault door. Still the same it always is. Oh well. I sighed walking back to my room, I picked up my phone dialing for Zimmy once again.

Sibo: "Please pick up.." I mumbled. What could she possibly be busy with? I took out my second laptop from the bottom drawer, ending the call. I don't even remember why I was calling to be honest. Oh yes, reservations. And also hoping she changes her mind. Wait... Was i intruding in her personal space?

Sibo: "Zwelethu. He'll know." Yes I was no longer mad at him, I need his wise words. I typed his number off by heart about to press dial.

"Hi baby." A voice said behind me. I turned around, shock engulfing me for a split second before a blow hit my head. Everything went dark.

Chapter 119

SIBONELO'S POV\_

I opened my eyes to a bright room, trying to move but I was tied to a chair. What the fuck was happening? My vision zeroed in until it focused. I looked around and saw her.

Sibo: "What...the hell."

Megan: "Hey sexy." She walked to me. "I was worried for a second you wouldn't get up." She giggled. I tried breaking the chains but they held tight on my wrists. My head was blasting with pain.

Sibo: "What do you want from me?"

Megan: "So much Sibonelo. You and I? We belong together baby."

Sibo: "Megan, uyahlanya yin- Untie me right now."

Megan: "Not yet. Not until you admit how you feel about me." I had to stay calm to get her trust.

Sibo: "Okay. Okay. We can get to know each other and build from there. I want to be with you." My vision blurring for a second before returning again. My head is splitting in half.

Megan: "Yes, but not so fast." She knelt in front of me, her hands brushing up my thigh. My heart rate quickened.

Sibo: "Megan..."

Megan: "Shhh... We have so much time. I have a surprise." She got up and went over to the table bring back an injection. "Look?"

Sibo: "What is that?" My heart hammered in my chest. Was she trying to kill me?

Megan: "This is going to help us keep this one awake for as long as we wish." She looked at my pants.

Sibo: "Megan please untie me." I pulled on the restraints violently.

Megan: "This injection? Intensifies every feeling you have. You will feel it all, baby. My mouth on you, my warmth on you, and when you cum? Your world will explode." I pulled on the restraints harder trying to get free. "You can't wait, can you?" I was not about to let this psychopath have her way with me. No fucking way. My wrists started bleeding the harder I pulled. "oh Sibonelo... Just when I thought you couldn't get any sexier." She sat in front of me, touching herself. I looked around me for something to use. "Maybe we should take this off, yes?" She crawled

over to me, tearing open my shirt. I lunged forward to headbut her but she ducked, the restraints pulling me back. "Maybe the injection will help. Don't worry. Whether you want it or not, your body will not resist. It won't be able to fight. It will only intensify what it's feeling." My heart slowed to a complete still. I couldn't get out of this. Who knows how long Zwe will notice I'm missing?

Sibo: "Megan please. Tell me what it is that you want. I will give it to you. I swear."

Megan: "I want you, baby."

Sibo: "Okay, you can have me. Just untie me."

Megan: "Not yet. You won't let me touch you." I swallowed.

Sibo: "You'll untie me if I let you touch me?"

Megan: "Yes." She smiled.

Sibo: "Go ahead then. No injection. Just you." She picked up the chain that was on the floor, tying it around my chest and neck. "MEGAN. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?"

Megan: "Making sure you don't try anything stupid." She tied the other end on the bars behind me. If I pulled on these restraints once, I will be strangled to death. A sudden horrifying realization dawned on me. She sat on top of me, naked, her legs on either side of me. I swallowed the lump in my throat. "When will you realize we're meant to be together? It wasn't a coincidence that we met. We have a connection Sibonelo. The way you held me, loved me, spoke to me. Baby, that wasn't acting. I don't want to hurt you but you give me no choice. I want that Sibonelo. The one who made love to me. Can you give me him?" Her fingers traced down my chest. "I'm not crazy. I'm not. I just know you're mine. You just need to realize it." I closed my eyes, unable to move. Karma had chains around my neck. Forcing me to do something that I didn't want to do. Just to save my life. How did she get into my house? How did she access my things? How did she drag my body down here? I swallowed the lump in my throat. My whole spirit was fighting. These questions didn't matter. Even my watch was off my wrist, which would've been easy to send an emergency alert. She got up, fetching the injection again.

Megan: "What's it going to be Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "Please put the needle down Megan." I don't know what was worse. Not being in control of your body, having it intensify the very feeling you're trying to fight. Or not being in control and going through this shit fully aware. "Do as you please, just put the needle away."

Megan: "I'm not convinced."

Sibo: "I want you. Nothing else. Just you." I tried swallowing the lump in my throat but the chain had gotten a little tighter. "Let it just be me and you baby.. come sit on me." She looked at me, smiling. "Please." Zwelethu, if you can, as impossible it is, just fucking hear me. Please brother.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

After watching Sasa go in the house for the second time, I went back to the car. Zwelethu was driving, Mthunzi in the passenger. I hopped in the back. The guards followed in different cars around us.

Nkosi: "I've delayed it long enough. I need to go to the palace. Zwelethu why are you bleeding?"

Zwe: "I'm not bleeding." He clicked on his phone.

Nkosi: "I'm smelling your blood."

Mthunzi: "Perhaps still Sasa."

Nkosi: "I know my wife's blood. This isn't it." They both looked at me.

Mthunzi: "Do you think the witch is back here?" He jumped out the car, pulling out his gun. We got off the car. I sniffed around the yard, the guards.

Nkosi: "No. Zwelethu, please check. One of you is bleeding. Just check."

Zwe: "I think I'd know if I was bleeding Nkosi. I don't even have a bruise. Mthunzi?"

Mthunzi: "Not me. Let's check the house."

Zwe: "Now, hold on. There's no need to scare the girls." A car drove onto the driveway. Mngqobi got out with his girlfriend.

Mnqobi: "Your Highness. Bhut Mthunzi, Bhut Zwe. Hello." I sniffed around him. "What's going on?"

Nkosi: "I still smell it."

Mnqobi: "Smell what?"

Mthunzi: "I'm checking the house. Guards, follow. All perimeters. First priority, the future queen and last princess of the throne. Move in!!"  
Mnqobi grabbed Petu back behind him. I followed Mthunzi and the guards in. I walked out the back yard, my eyes landing on Sasa. She was relaxed on the couch. I went straight to her, holding her belly, sniffing around her.

Sasa: "Love? What's wrong?"

Nkosi: "Blood." Amahle sat up quickly.

Ama: "Blood."

Nkosi: "You can smell it? Where is it?"

Ama: "ZWE!!!" he came running out.

Zwe: "What's wrong?"

Sasa: "What's going on?"

Ama: "Where's Sibonelo?"

Zwe: "I don't know. He's not answering his-" I ran out the house, straight to the Biyela palace first. Did something happen at the palace? I took less than 2 minutes to reach the doors, I barged in. He wasn't here. I couldn't smell anything here. King Biyela hurried out the lounge.

Biyela: "My Prince? Is everything okay?" Zwelethu entered, followed by Mthunzi and Amahle.

Zwe: "Father, where's Sibonelo?"

Biyela: "He said he's going to his house but that was an hour ago. I figured he's probably working there." I sprinted out once again. They'd follow by car, I ran faster than it anyway. Sibonelo's house wasn't too far from Zwe's but further away from the palace than Mnqobi's. It didn't help that this estate was huge. I reached the front door. Slamming my full weight on it. It broke off it's hinges, falling to the floor. I searched through the house only smelling the scent of a woman. Nothing else. He had to be here.

Zwe: "SBONELO!!!" We looked through the whole house ending in his bedroom.

Mthunzi: "Doesn't seem to be here. Where else could he be?" I looked at the floor. A drop of blood.

Nkosi: "He's here."

Zwe: "Basement. That's the only other place." He marched down to a vault door. It was locked. "That's strange. No one has access to this room except for him."

Ama: "He's in there, Open!"

Zwe: "I need his tablet and Mngqobi." He took out his phone, dialing. I grabbed on the handle, stepping on the wall, and pulling. The door didn't budge.

Mthunzi: "Break it." I stepped down. I looked at the door. Break, off the hinges. The screws came undone. I pulled him and Amahle out of the way. The heavy metal door slowly descended on to the ground, knocking into a wall and cracking it. I jumped in the basement, climbing down the stairs. I held the gate, shaking it twice before it broke off its hinges.

Sibo: "ST..OP! La...ser. Don't. Move." He choked. I saw the laser lights on. Amahle walked past me, into the basement. She touched the laser, letting it burn her skin.

Megan: "You're not going to take him from me. You're not. Sibonelo is mine!!!"

Ama: "Nkosi." Switch off laser. It shut down immediately. Zwe walked in, followed by Mthunzi and myself. I went to Sibonelo, trying to untie the chains strangling him.

Mthunzi: "Zwelethu!!!" I looked up. Zwe had the girl choking in his hands, Mthunzi trying to stop him. Amahle helped me with the chains.

Mthunzi: "Zwelethu, stop it!!!" He managed to get him off her. She sprinted the door, Zwe grabbed her hair pulling her viciously to the ground.

Zwe: "I'm going to fucking kill her!!!" He fought Mthunzi off, with the grip of her hair in a tight hold.

Mthunzi: "Zwelethu stop it!!!"

Zwe: "Leave me the fuck alone!!!" He finally got loose, and smashed her head on the stairs.

Ama: "Zwelethu." She gasped.

Zwe: "You do NOT touch my blood and spill it then think I'll let you live. That is one game you don't win. Not while I live-"

Mthunzi: "Nkosinhle, stop him!" I finally let the chain loose. He could barely breath, and had a bump on his head. Possible concussion. He needed a hospital before he has an aneurysm. Zwe took over, checking his eyes and pulse. He picked up his brother walking up the stairs.

Zwe: "Leave her there."

Mthunzi: "Are you insane? This is a woman, Zwelethu. Now I get that you're angry but I'm not going to sit by and let this happen. Nkosinhle, mkhuze!" (Stop him.)

Nkosi: "Zwelethu you can't k.ill a woman."

Zwe: "I don't care what she is. She broke into our home and threatened my brothers life. Leave her there, I'll sort it out." He walked out.

Mthunzi: "We need to get this woman out of here-"

Nkosi: "Mthunzi, do you want to fight with Zwelethu?"

Mthunzi: "He's angry. I get it but I know him, he would never k.ill a woman. He's our softest, most loving friend. We can take care of this."

Ama: "And what will we do? Let her go? What happens when she does it again? This time k.illing him."

Mthunzi: "I need you two, for once, to think like actual human beings. This, this is wrong."

Ama: "And what do you know about wrong Mthunzi? If someone was threatening your wife's life, literally putting a noose around her neck would you be so understanding? Would you let them go?" He stepped back.

Mthunzi: "You're royals. A woman dying at your hand, no matter what the circumstances, will be detrimental to the reputation of the throne. This will be bad for your reign, my Prince."

Ama: "Who would know?"

Mthunzi: "Amahle!"

Ama: "Killers are intentional Mthunzi. They do not stop until their victim is dead." I was heavily conflicted. Mthunzi was right. We do not kill women, we do not hurt women. This, would be bad for my name. On the other hand, we let her live then what? She does it again? Amahle looked at me. "You're the king. What do you think should happen to the woman who attempted to rape and kill a royal?"

Nkosi: "Zwe's decision is final. He gets to decide. Put her in custody." I walked out.

After Mthunzi had taken the girl into custody, making sure she's dressed and guarded, we left for the palace. He was quiet throughout the trip, staring out of the window.

Nkosi: "If that woman had gotten a hold of me, you would've reacted the same as Zwe. Let's not make him the villain. Circumstances don't count when the person most important to you is hurt." He kept quiet, still staring at the world passing by. "I almost did the same to my father just last week. You didn't judge me. Uncontrollable abilities aren't an excuse." Still silence. I wasn't justifying the killing of a woman but who had the right to decide what happens? The victim. Let them decide. And if the victim isn't able to, their direct kin. I couldn't stop Zwe from getting angry, I had to help Sibonelo not die. "I'm sorry."

Mthunzi: "I'm not mad at you Nkosihle."

Nkosi: "Oh. Then why are you ignoring me?"

Mthunzi: "My own thoughts are fucking with me. This has nothing to do with Zwe."

Nkosi: "Do you want to talk about it?"

Mthunzi: "I don't know if I can. Not only did I break the law but I almost hurt someone I love."

Nkosi: "Did you stop? Do you understand what you almost did is wrong?"

Mthunzi: "Yeah. I'm dropping it. I shouldn't have done it to begin with. Hopefully it's not too late." Mthunzi was the most sensible of probably everyone I knew. Humans make mistakes and he was a great one

because he knew when to reprimand himself and right his wrongs. That's why I trusted him with my life. No matter what, he looked out for those he loved first.

Nkosi: "Okay. Whatever it is, I know you have it handled. Do the right thing like you always do." We drove into the palace, parking.

Mthunzi: "Yeah." We got off the car, going inside the palace. I know my mothers did not want me here and my father was not expecting me. Or maybe he was. I wouldn't know what's going through his mind. I walked in the lounge.

Nolwazi: "Have you no shame!!! Why are you here?? To finish him off!?"

Nkosi: "Mother, please."

Nolwazi: "Please what! Why are you here!?"

Nkosi: "I'm here to speak to him."

Nolwazi: "Get out."

Nkosi: "Mother, do you really think I want to purposefully hurt my own father?"

Nolwazi: "YES because you did Mehluli!! It's not a thought, it HAPPENED!!" Before I lost my temper, I went upstairs to my father's lounge, walking in slowly. He sat in his chair, staring at a painting.

Nkosi: "Father." He didn't respond or acknowledge my presence. Not once flinching or breathing different. He was expecting me. "I don't want to fight. We've never been best friends but we also have never been this hostile. Please meet me halfway." He looked at me with those ink black eyes. Why did that happen? What did it mean? Orange eyes were unusual, yes but black eyes? That's worse.

King: "You do realize I can hear your thoughts as loud as trumpets right?"

Nkosi: "You can't hear my thoughts."

King: "You think my black eyes are weird. Worse than your orange ones."

Nkosi: "You gained my ability?"

King: "No." He looked back at his painting. "I gained all the abilities known to the Sikhosana lineage. From the first ancestors. Black eyes

are our origin. The orange began when we came across the first treasure blood. They purified our blood."

Nkosi: "Oh." I sat back on the chair. "What does this mean for you?"

King: "I already said. It means I have all abilities."

Nkosi: "Even mine?" He looked at me.

King: "What's the definition of all?"

Nkosi: "I don't understand why that would happen. Why would the ancestors...."

King: "Give me that much power? Not sure."

Nkosi: "How do you feel about it?"

King: "I feel nothing." So the feelings for Thembisa were gone, thank goodness. I had one less thing to worry about but also this was a bit of a problem. He stared at me.

Nkosi: "Have you told Amahle?"

King: "No. And also, no."

Nkosi: "What does that mean?"

King: "She's the only glimmer I can feel. I don't want to take your wife Mehluli. I never did."

Nkosi: "Is lying one of the new abilities?"

King: "I've stayed away, haven't I?" I sighed, unsure of how I feel about this. We stayed in silence for a bit.

Nkosi: "I brought some supplies, do you mind if I set up here to paint?"

King: "In my lounge Mehluli? You have the entire palace, your own wing and you want to paint inside my lounge while I'm trying to have a perfect Friday afternoon?"

Nkosi: "You're staring at a painting."

King: "You don't know what's happening in the painting."

Nkosi: "Wouldn't it be better to create a story in a painting?"

King: "Is that an excuse to splash paint on my furniture?"

Nkosi: "I'll fetch the supplies." I left the lounge, going back down the stairs. Mthunzi met me halfway carrying everything in. "Thank you my friend."

Mthunzi: "I'll be in your office when you need me." I took my things, going back to the lounge.

King: "You even came prepared." I took the painting off the stand, replacing it with my canvas.

Nkosi: "Do you want to participate or watch with commentary?"

King: "Neither." I poured the colours on the palette. I had no idea of what to paint. Usually with Thembisa's paintings, they come naturally. I don't have to think. Her belly guides me. I wish she had suggested a painting when she suggested this idea. Music. I took out my phone, playing the playlist she compiled some days ago. I sat down, rolling up my sleeves.

King: "Vintage kitchen with brown cupboards, the counters a dilapidated black painted wood. The curtain is a lace with satin frills. The small table in the center of the small kitchen is round with a black and white checkered table cloth. Two chairs, one looking chipped, the other not matching. There's a man, a woman. Holding each other, lovingly, smiling, happy. Her belly bulging out, while he held it protectively staring into her eyes. They're dancing. Happy. Can you paint that?" I dipped my brush in water then mixed a few colours for the background.

Nkosi: "Yes." Painting on a canvas was different than painting on Thembisa. I started with pencil outlines.

King: "The curtain is a tad bit longer than the window, almost reaching the sink."

Nkosi: "What's the significance of the length." I kept sketching.

King: "It's a pet peeve of hers. Bothers her everytime water drenches it but she only complains in frustration, refusing to remove the curtain for a new one. It makes him chuckle." I smiled. That's a beautiful detail.

Nkosi: "Is it evening?"

King: "Yes, after dinner. Dishes are washed up and on the sink rack. He has a cloth on his shoulder, he was helping." My pencil outlines were done. Now to add colour. I dipped my brush in paint making light strokes on the canvas, gradually building the colour.

Nkosi: "What are the more unusual abilities you've experienced now?"

King: "Trust me, you don't want to know that."

Nkosi: "What can you tell me."

King: "I can turn someone into something else."

Nkosi: "How did you realize that ?"

King: "I already knew. The knowledge is living in me."

Nkosi: "Did you test it?"

King: "No."

Nkosi: "Have you tested any?"

King: "No. And I don't think I want to."

Nkosi: "Why is that?"

King: "It doesn't feel good. It doesn't feel right. With the way I'd started to come to terms with warmth, this cold is unwelcoming and lonely."

Nkosi: "Do you think you can make it go away?"

King: "No, I can't. The healer has already slaughtered a goat, begged, nothing will make it go away."

Nkosi: "What do you think caused it? You got Amahle's blood. She's your blood."

King: "Except, Amahle is a seer that can see different realities."

Nkosi: "Do you want to go back to normal?"

King: "Your black is too dark, it needs to look more chipped and a slight gray. Almost dull." I mixed some white to make it less vibrant.

Nkosi: "Can you go back to normal?"

King: "Probably yes."

Nkosi: "Will this cause problems for you and I regarding Thembisa? Father, I am not willing to share my wife. That, I blatantly refuse."

King: "Now why would you think that of me Nkosinhle? At which stage did I ask for her hand in marriage?"

Nkosi: "I hate how you look at her. It's weird."

King: "I look at everyone like that. Would you rather I stare at my shoes? Sure, they're stylish but I'm not a down to earth man. I look at the people I speak to in the eye."

Nkosi: "Then why come to the villa, have her read to you? What's that about?"

King: "I was interested in the story she was reading. Aren't you? I am still itching to know if the lady conquered her mission."

Nkosi: "She didn't, as I predicted. Decided to stay in the new world and have babies with her new mate. Building a family." I rolled my eyes.

King: "That's sweet. Why are you bored? Because you predicted it?"

Nkosi: "I'm bored because the author didn't bother to fight for that character. She just let her dissolve from a strong world leader that took no bull into a girly girl that now lives to serve the father of her children." He laughed.

King: "Your wife is a girly girl."

Nkosi: "I found her like that. That's what made me fall in love with her. As much as she's adventurous and can stand her ground, she is rather kind in doing so. She's very sweet, loves pink, romance, flowers, running around in nature, dressing up in pretty dresses, she's also terrified of tigers since toda-"

King: "What?"

Nkosi: "She came to the woods, I'd turned-"

King: "ARE YOU INSANE!!!"

Nkosi: "Will you please calm down? Everything was fine. I didn't know she came to me."

King: "You can't be that irresponsible Nkosihle!! You're uncontrollable when you're angry!"

Nkosi: "Not with her. I'm never angry when she holds me." I cleaned my brush in the water. "I would never hurt Thembisa. It's good that the tribe has officially seen her. They would never hurt her either."

King: "She's carrying the future heir. Stop endangering her life like that. Do you understand the wrath of your ancestors if you dare hurt this child? They won't even get to you before I do." I looked at him.

Nkosi: "What do you mean?"

King: "Can't you feel it when you're near her?" My mind ran through my previous few weeks then days.

Nkosi: "I feel attached. I didn't think..." He sighed, shaking his head. The belly. I kept feeling blood curling in her belly. The smell of overwhelming love. Feeling of peace. Nkosiyokuthula. My son.

King: "Can we at least finish my painting before you drift off into your fairytales?"

Nkosi: "Your painting? I'm taking this home."

King: "Mehluli."

Nkosi: "Okay...okay.." I dipped in the plant again. "He has a name."

King: "Again, trumpets." I smiled.

## Chapter 120

### KHAYA'S POV\_

The lunch I had at Greenland was not as amazing because I was nervous as hell. Nkwenkwezi was looking forward to this date more than I was. We'd settled on a time and before I knew it, she had arrived. I found her at the palace waiting.

Khaya: "Princess Sikhosana."

Nkwe: "Why do you refuse to call me by name?"

Khaya: "Sorry. Nkwenkwezi, how are you?"

Nkwe: "I'm well. How are you?" She looked stunning in a light blue summer dress.

Khaya: "I'm fine. Do you mind if I freshen up for a minute?"

Nkwe: "Sure. I'll wait here." I went up the stairs to my room. I'd already showered in the morning but I jumped right back in, for a 3 minute refresh. After drying, I put on some jeans and white shirt, brown leather

shoes for a more serious yet casual look. I put some of my best cologne and made my way back out.

Khaya: "Do you want anything to drink?"

Nkwe: "No. When are we leaving?" Where were the parents? This was so awkward.

Khaya: "We can go now." I lead her out the palace and noticed what I had feared. She really brought the army. Wow. There was a total of 7 guards and 3 soldiers.

Nkwe: "We can take my car."

Khaya: "No, they'll follow. We're riding in Bi-motive today. Have you been inside one?" Sboni was using his Benz so I took his Bi-motive SUV. She stared at it funny. Probably never seen it before because this car was a work of art.

Nkwe: "No." I opened the door, letting her climb in the back. I got on the other side. The guard driving us out.

Guard: "The soldier is asking for a location, my prince."

Khaya: "eMoyeni. The ice cream parlour." He drove again.

Nkwe: "So the guards call you Prince?"

Khaya: "Ya, Zwe's orders."

Nkwe: "They really like you huh?"

Khaya: "I'm hard not to like." She giggled. "Is this your first time out besides the vineyard?"

Nkwe: "Not really. I sometimes come to the mall but it's so...dull and sad."

Khaya: "Maybe because you clear out the whole building before you enter?"

Nkwe: "It's not that serious. The palace makes an appointment."

Khaya: "Is it? I always thought you just arrived."

Nkwe: "Father would never let that happen." She looked out the window.

Khaya: "It'll be your first time in a township. What are you expecting?"

Nkwe: "I don't know. What is it like?"

Khaya: "The opposite of what you know."

Nkwe: "I've never seen the opposite."

Khaya: "It's less glamorous. More real. It has life, colour, interest. So many beautiful things from people who have less."

Nkwe: "Yet, you never come here or have even lived here."

Khaya: "Yeah but that's not about the people in general. Some of them are really good."

Nkwe: "So besides work with my brother, what else do you do?"

Khaya: "Studying law. Currently in my third year."

Nkwe: "Why? You already have a secure job."

Khaya: "It's more about gaining knowledge to do the job even better. I don't want to be replaceable. What do you do?" She looked at me.

Nkwe: "Stalk you." She smiled. I chuckled.

Khaya: "Why?"

Nkwe: "I think you're cute." She looked back out the window.

Khaya: "What are you hoping to see today?"

Nkwe: "I'm not sure. I don't even know what to expect."

Khaya: "The people might get a bit excited to see you. You're the first princess to ever come to eMoyeni."

Nkwe: "But Thembisa also came here."

Khaya: "Before she was dating Nkosi. She was still an ordinary girl."

Nkwe: "Did you like her?"

Khaya: "Yes."

Nkwe: "Interesting."

Khaya: "Not really."

Nkwe: "So I'll be the first princess, here?"

Khaya: "Yes. I checked. No princess has ever stepped foot here." I really did. I wanted to prepare for anything. "Is your sister your only friend?"

Nkwe: "Nhlanhla isn't my friend. She's me."

Khaya: "Oh, because you're twins? She's the only person you talk to?"

Nkwe: "Socially, yes."

Khaya: "Why is that? I mean before the royal revocation, there were plenty of princesses."

Nkwe: "I didn't like them."

Khaya: "And now? Is there anyone you're interested in knowing?"

Nkwe: "Yes, you."

Khaya: "I'm not that interesting."

Nkwe: "I think that's a lie." She stared out the window in horror. "Are you sure this is Mountain Peak?" I held in my laugh.

Khaya: "Yes. This is a township."

Nkwe: "A town?"

Khaya: "Ship. A location that is underdeveloped and often racially segregated. A lot of black people live here-"

Nkwe: "Live?? Is that a rat? There's sewerage running down the road! You don't LIVE like that!! That is disgusting!"

Khaya: "Exactly. So when we as royal council sit down on Mondays, we usually talk about ways to develop these areas all around the country. These people are human beings. They don't deserve to live like this while we live in hourly cleaned palaces." The car drove into the more developed area of the township, where the ice cream place was.

Nkwe: "This doesn't belong here."

Khaya: "Because it's beautiful? It's what is called a diamond in the rough. Just because it's a township doesn't mean they don't deserve beautiful things." The cars stopped. Children stopped playing in the street. People slowly gathered, watching the cars.

Nkwe: "I don't know Khaya, I thought you were taking me to an established place in a secure environment."

Khaya: "I won't let anything happen to you. We have guards and the people are really nice. They like Nkosi, you're gorgeous so I'm sure they'll love you." We got out of the car. She held my hand tight. The guards surrounded us, the first two entering the shop. It was a Friday

afternoon, it was busy. This I didn't calculate. The counter was immediately cleaned of everyone. Mthunzi's wife appeared from her office.

Busi: "Good day, My Princess. Hello sir. What can I get you?"  
Nkwenkwezi looked around the shop.

Nkwe: "What's the name of the one we had at the vineyard?" She looked at me.

Khaya: "I don't know. I didn't ask." I looked at the owner. "Uhm, I believe you sent an order to the vineyard not too long ago, made by Thembis-The Prince's wife."

Nkwe: "Yeah, she said she's your friend."

Busi: "Sasa? She ordered The King's Love. Uhm, unfortunately it's not yet launched. We would launch on the wedding day."

Nkwe: "Why did you send it if you haven't launched it?"

Busi: "I created the flavour specifically for the future queen, my princess. I apologize for the inconvenience." Nkwenkwezi looked at me and I knew what that facial expression meant. She wanted me to demand it for her. She's a princess and used to getting whatever she wants but I'm not her father and Busi is a very nice lady.

Khaya: "Perhaps, we can ask the kind owner to order some for when you're back in the palace. Right now, she's unable to serve it so we'll try other flavors."

Nkwe: "But I don't want other flavors!"

Khaya: "Well, that's what you're getting. Besides, you want a full experience therefore you need something interesting to tell Nhlanhla. You're the first to taste other flavours here, wouldn't you want to recommend some?" I brushed her cheek.

Nkwe: "Okay. How about vanilla?"

Khaya: "Something wilder than vanilla, look at the strawberry swirl. Doesn't that look tasty?"

Busi: "Would you like to sample it?"

Nkwe: "Yes. And this one too." I silently sighed. Nkwenkwezi was not difficult as a person but incredibly spoilt. The only good thing is that

she's used to being dictated to by her dad. If I can set her straight and make her listen to me now, she won't speak over me in the future. "This is so good!!"

Khaya: "Hmm. It is good." I smiled...

## ZWELETHU'S POV\_

I stood next to the bed, Sibonelo was sleeping. I'd done his tests, all coming back okay. His x-rays weren't too bad. I'd do an MRI in the morning but I was happy so far with his progress. There was a lot of bruising on his arms and neck. He just needed some rest now. Amahle walked in.

Ama: "How is he?"

Zwe: "Better. He has a concussion. Getting an MRI tomorrow, his scans are clear but I want to be fully sure."

Ama: "He's going to be okay."

Zwe: "I hope you're not here to convince me to let her go."

Ama: "No, I'm not. I'm here to tell you, she's placed in royal custody awaiting your verdict." I looked at her.

Zwe: "I'm not going to spare her life. My brother almost died if I'd been even 5 minutes late"

Ama: "I know." I looked back at Sibonelo.

Zwe: "He doesn't listen. I don't understand what his deal is. I told him to keep guards at all times."

Ama: "Yeah well, this was a little different Zwe. That is his house, minutes away from home. No one could have anticipated an attack, in Stellars."

Zwe: "How did she gain entry?"

Ama: "I checked her info. She works for Reynard Smith. Entered the estate as his employee because he also lives there, remember?"

Zwe: "No, she has to go."

Ama: "Alright. Let me get going."

Zwe: "Thanks Amahle. For everything and also being here. I know Nkosi is pissed-"

Ama: "Don't worry about Nkosinhle. He's on your side. He's given you final verdict." She walked out. Khaya and Mngqobi came in the room.

Mngqobi: "Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "Mngqobi, you're supposed to be on your way to your holiday."

Mngqobi: "I postponed, I can't leave. My brother is in ICU."

Zwe: "Sibonelo is fine. I'm moving him out of here now. He's out of danger. He'll be discharged in the morning. I'd take him home now but I want to do an MRI tomorrow just to double check there's no hidden injuries to his head. Once he gets home, I want him to focus on being inside the house and recovering. So you can go, young prince."

Mngqobi: "I don't know if I can, Bhut Zwe."

Sibo: "Mngqobi get the fuck out of here." Khaya laughed.

Zwe: "Told you he's fine. Sibonelo why don't you listen when I speak? Did I not say to you have guards?"

Sibo: "Ngiyaxolisa. Please help me up. We'll come back in the morning. Mama is probably worried."

Zwe: "You're lying, you want to cuddle her." I helped him up.

Sibo: "At least I have an excuse this time. Fuck, my arms hurt."

Khaya: "What happened Bobo?"

Sibo: "Yoh, Khaya. Stay away from women. Let's leave it there."

Khaya: "So I must date men?"

Sibo: "Preferably."

Zwe: "You think you're a dream boat, Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "Why else would I get kidnapped?" We laughed. Only Sibonelo would make stupid jokes about his trauma. Mngqobi held him under his arm, walking him out. I signed his discharge forms and followed them out.

Zwe: "Mngqobi, how are the girls? I hope they're not alarmed."

Mnqobi: "They kind of are. With how the house got searched and how His Highness bolted out of there. I'll go to them, and let them know everything is okay."

Zwe: "Good." ...

Our mother was relieved to see Sibonelo.

Zwe: "He needs a bit of rest mama, no noise, no hitting his head. He has a concussion."

Mama: "Okay my love. Thank you. What can he eat?"

Zwe: "Anything, as long as it's now in the evening. He can have supper as usual, it's breakfast that he won't have until we're done."

Sibo: "I'm not even that hungry honestly, I just need to lie down."

Zwe: "That's the meds. A few spoons Sboni. Just to build your energy."

Sibo: "I'm going to throw up, please get the food away from me."

Zwe: "Okay." I removed the plate. "How about fruit?"

Sibo: "I can manage fruit. It's okay Zwelethu, I can hold it myself."

Zwe: "Your arms are blue with bruising."

Queen: "Let me help."

Sibo: "Is there dessert? Something sweet. A cake even."

Queen: "Lili made a chocolate mousse."

Sibo: "That would be perfect then I can sleep." Lilian brought the tray with the cup of chocolate mousse. "Yum."

Zwe: "I'm going to check the house then the hospital. I'll be back to check on you before I go to bed. Okay?"

Sibo: "hm." He munch on his dessert. I got up. "Zwe."

Zwe: "Yes?"

Sibo: "Thank you." I didn't deserve his gratitude. I should've done my job that I always did, but forgot today. I should've checked the guards were following him always. I should've called, checked his whereabouts. Like I always do.

Zwe: "Let's thank the Prince. He's the one who noticed." I walked out the house, driving to his house. The guards were still here. "Bring me that girl. Let them know she's being released, but bring her here."

Guard: "Yes my prince." They left. I walked into the house down to the basement. How did she discover this place? She'd probably been in here to plan the attack. Or got into his security system. The security system was one of the best so how did Sibonelo not notice it? He's always on top of things. We'll have to look into that. A woman can't just break into our house and wreck havoc. What the hell is this? I picked up the injection, packing everything away. I searched through the house finding no trace of any of her belongings. The security team will be here in the morning to search more thoroughly. I sat in the lounge, searching for any information about her past life. Did she just show up and target my brother? Why? The guards came back, holding her by the arm. Her wrists still bound. I stood in the lounge.

Zwe: "Thank you guards." They dropped her on the couch walking out. "Who are you?"

Megan: "What is it to you?"

Zwe: "I'm trying to be polite. Who are you?"

Megan: "Sibonelo knows who I am! He's in love with me. All you do, is want to keep him from me!"

Zwe: "Okay. How did you gain entry into his house?"

Megan: "He let me in. Can I go now? I feel like we're done here."

Zwe: "We're not done, Megan. It says here, your ex boyfriend was found dead in his house, a couple of years ago. You were the main suspect but because there was no evidence, you were let go." She stared at me, getting up. "I'm not trying to be violent. Please sit down."

Megan: "I don't have to sit here and listen to this."

Zwe: "Guards." They drew out the guns aiming at her head. "Have a seat." She sat down. "Another of your boyfriend's have disappeared as of last year. Never heard from again."

Megan: "Hector left on his own accord!"

Zwe: "You're a serial killer. What you didn't anticipate was how secure Sibonelo really is because he fits your exact target. Powerful man, who's

death can rock the news but no one will figure it out. Did you really think you would kill my brother and get away with it? Sibonelo is a royal prince. He's not an ordinary person."

Megan: "I didn't want to kill Sibonelo, I love him."

Zwe: "Okay Megan. Let's visit Sibonelo, so you can tell him how much you love him. I'm sure he'll forgive you."

Megan: "Really?"

Zwe: "Oh yes. He's a cool guy. He understands. Let's go." I walked out the house. She followed behind me held by guards. I got in the car, she in the back with my guard. I drove out the yard to the more secluded undeveloped area. It was fenced off with hard wiring to not let anyone in or out. I drove down to the river deck parking the car. It was dark by now, night had settled in. I got out the car, letting her climb out. I walked over to the edge of the deck.

Megan: "Where are we?"

Zwe: "Let me take off your handcuffs."

Megan: "What are you trying to do?!"

Zwe: "Megan, please listen to me. I am not trying to hurt you. I want to take off your handcuffs."

Megan: "Why are you standing by water?"

Zwe: "Come to me, Megan."

Megan: "No!!!" She took off running not getting very far before a guard knocked her down, bringing her back.

Zwe: "To ensure that this incident never happens again, I want to say just one thing." I untied her handcuffs as she whimpered, crying.

Megan: "I love him!!!"

Zwe: "I know angel, I know. I want you to understand one thing, I am the type of man that protects their family. There will never be a time, you can come after a mine. Memorize it and remember it for your next life." I pushed her in the crocodile infested river, and watched her swim frantically to the other side before one grabbed her, the others following suit. I walked back to my car.

Visual representation of the scene: The deck Zwe is standing on is high above the water, attached to a wall. The crocodiles can't climb up the wall and get to the deck or the car. The wall is high up. On the other side of the river is the river bank, where one could swim to and run into the woods. Unfortunately, she didn't get to run. The crocodiles grabbed and tore her limb from limb.

## SASA'S POV\_

After Nkosi had sprinted out of here followed by Zwe, I jumped up.

Ama: "Everything is okay. I'll be back soon. We're just looking for Sibonelo." Zimmy stood up.

Zimmy: "Why?"

Ama: "He's fine. Please believe me. Sit." She ran out after them. I was shocked and a bit of confused.

Siza: "Let's believe Amahle. Come ladies. Let's get in the house."

Petu: "Oh my God, do you think it's the witch again?" We walked in the house.

Sasa: "Let's not think about that yet. For now, let's close the doors and remain inside." We brought in all of the plates and anything quick to carry then closed ourselves in. Mngqobi walked in the front door.

Mngqobi: "Ladies, please don't be alarmed. The guards are alert and all around. I'll update you as soon as I have more information but it seems Sibonelo is missing."

Zimmy: "missing!?"

Mngqobi: "Again, don't be alarmed. Love, can we talk?" He held her hand to the bedroom.

Me: "They'll find him. I'm sure he's okay. This is Sibonelo. He's probably forgotten to charge his phone." I giggled. To be honest, I was scared. Amahle had sobered up in a second. And blood was mentioned.

Siza: "Yes, he's a prince. I'm sure there's an explanation." I sat down with Zimmy while Petu and Siza took stuff to the kitchen and started tidying up.

Me: "Is everything okay? You've been flushed since you came from the bathroom." She looked close to tears.

Zimmy: "I'm pregnant. I took the test, three of them. All of them are positive. I'm pregnant." I hugged her.

Me: "Zimmy... I don't know what to say. Have you told Sibonelo?"

Zimmy: "No. I just found out myself. Besides, he'll think I'm trapping him with a baby."

Me: "That's not true Zimmy. Both of you agreed to have sex. This isn't your fault. All we can pray and hope is that he is willing to take care of his baby."

Zimmy: "Take care?"

Me: "Are you thinking of terminating?"

Zimmy: "I don't think I can Thembisa." She sobbed. "I'm so scared. What will my mother say? I've only just started to get my life together. Business is working good, I'm catching up on school work. I've ruined my life."

Me: "No, Zimmy. You haven't ruined your life. We're here to help. We'll find a way. Besides, as shady as Sibonelo is, I don't think he's the type to not take care of his child. You're carrying a Prince, love."

Zimmy: "Yoh Thembisa. I'm so fucking scared." She sobbed. I held her in my arms, my own tears unable to keep at bay. "I thought I was safe, I made sure. And it had to be the guy who was using me for sex?"

Me: "Zimmy don't talk like that. Your life isn't over. It's fine if you have the baby, we'll take turns babysitting. We'll put some money together, right girls? This child will never feel unloved."

Petu: "And their grandma is very attached to babies. Mama Biyela is so nice Zimmy. You're not alone."

Zimmy: "I know I have you guys and honestly I'm really grateful. I just wish he would... Be different, you know? I guess it wasn't meant to be. I know I sound so stupid but I really wanted to build a good life and settle with someone before I thought of babies. I had just some small hope that maybe, he'll try and woo me. I feel so dumb for always hoping like that."

Petu: "I'm so sorry, friend"

Me: "Don't feel dumb, friend. It's nature. You're a loving person and you're in love with him."

Siza: "I think you should tell him."

Zimmy: "I can't Siza. What if he rejects me?"

Siza: "Don't give him a chance to. Sibonelo is not as detached to you as you think. Try again. Tell him how you feel. And keep fighting."

Zimmy: "I'm sorry Siza but I'm going to look so desperate. The shame of it all." We giggled.

Siza: "It won't get to shame, trust me. Tell him sweetheart." Zimmy wiped her tears.

Zimmy: "So... I'm having a baby? At this age? Yoh. The things we go through because of sex." We laughed.

Amahle walked back into the house. Did they find him. She didn't look worried. Where was Zwe? Nkosi walked in as well. I walked up to him.

Nkosi: "He's okay. Everyone is okay."

Me: "You found him?"

Nkosi: "Yes. He's currently with Zwe. I'm also going to the palace now."

Me: "Okay, my love. Best of luck." He smiled.

Nkosi: "Thank you." He kissed my lips. "Mnqobi, we need to go to the palace. Call Khaya home."

Mnqobi: "He's almost here, Your Highness." They walked out. Nothando sat with us.

Ama: "I'll be back." He walked out after them. I was relieved that they'd found him and everything was fine. I went to sit back down.

Me: "That's good news. He's safe and sound."

Petu: "Thank goodness. For a second I thought it was the witch again."

Me: "Girl, same. I'm glad we're rid of that girl." We laughed. The front door unlocked, opening again, Khaya walked in.

Khaya: "Hi angels." We greeted him back, looking at the person he had walked in with. "I have to rush to the palace, would you be so kind and sit with Nkwenkwezi? I won't be too long."

Me: "Sure."

Khaya: "Thank you my queen." He turned to her. "I'll be back soon, I just want to check on my brother, alright? You can take a seat." He walked out the house. Nkwenkwezi looked at us, her eyes landing on me.

Me: "Come sit. Do you want a drink?"

Nkwe: "Sure." She looked at the house, walking into the lounge and sitting down. How did Khaya end up with this one? Not that there's a difference. The twins are probably the same human in different bodies.

Siza: "We have some champagne, or gin. What do you want to drink?"

Nkwe: "What is the champagne?"

Siza: "Oh I'm not sure of the name, princess."

Nkwe: "I guess I'll have that." Siza got up to fetch the unopened bottle and glass. Nkwenkwezi looked out of place, looking around the lounge and judging the couches.

Me: "Did you have a good time today?" She looked at me. Her eyes may not be orange but they were a beautiful medium brown and they had the exact shocking element when Nkosi, or Amahle stared. That's probably the King's contribution to the genes. A scary stare. The twins looked alot like their mother but the eyes were definitely Sikhosana.

Nkwe: "Great. We went to a township."

Zimmy: "Did you enjoy it?"

Nkwe: "No. It got a little invasive. We had to leave because a crowd was forming outside the store."

Me: "That's what they do when they see Nkosi. The people are always happy to see you." Siza opened the champagne, pouring it for her.

Nkwe: "You look too stylish to be a maid." Oh my God.

Siza: "I'm not the maid. We don't have maids here. There's a helper who helps us clean the house." She gave her the glass.

Nkwe: "A helper? They're not helping. They're doing their job."

Siza: "It may be their job but it is to assist us to focus on everything else. Cleaning up after ourselves should come naturally."

Nkwe: "No. You hire people for that."

Siza: "Yes, because you have the privilege to. Not everyone does. That's why it's natural to do it yourself."

Nkwe: "That's not natural. Everyone has a helper."

Me: "I didn't grow up with a helper."

Zimmy: "Me too. My mum did all the chores until I started to help her."

Nkwe: "What's a chore?"

Me: "Work, that helps in improving your environment. Washing dishes, sweeping, changing the bed linen."

Nkwe: "You're not allowed to do that. Do you do that?" I almost laughed. She sounded so offended at the prospect of chores. Her bubble was very soft, I must say.

Me: "In my house, yes. Most of the chores, I leave to our helper but throughout the week I do the cleaning. I enjoy it, it's therapeutic especially with some music."

Zimmy: "Ooh some RnB."

Petu: "With a gospel here and there."

Me: "Perfect spring cleaning day." We giggled.

Nkwe: "Why do you do that to yourself. Doesn't it hurt your nails? Why do you aspire for labour and glamourize it with music?"

Me: "Perhaps it's how we grew up but it's something really calming about cleaning up a space. Have it go from chaotic to clean and neat. It soothes a part of you."

Nkwe: "Riighht." She took a sip of her champagne.

Petu: "I think I'll join you on this. Love, do you want a refill?"

Notha: "Yes please."

Petu: "Not too much though. There's still a possibility of you going away tonight. Did you put in the headache tablets in your suitcase?"

Notha: "I'm fine with postponing."

Petu: "Still, let's be prepared." She went to fetch an extra glass for herself and made a cocktail for Notha. Everyone else was already drinking and I didn't want Zimmy to feel left out so I'd stay sober with her. I didn't mind. Besides, we were having a good time munching on snacks.

Zimmy: "There's this range at the Fresh Foods supermarket, they import snacks from different countries. How about we try some out?"

Me: "Let's do it!" She giggled, taking out her phone starting the order.

Nkwe: "How do you do that?"

Zimmy: "Let me show you, come." Nkwenkwezi hesitated but got up to sit next to me since Zimmy was on my other side. "So I partly own a delivery company. Through our app, you can order anything from the supermarket and have it delivered to your door. Just like this."

Nkwe: "It goes anywhere? Like I order anything and it goes to the palace?"

Zimmy: "Absolutely. We're still working on a deal to get a pharmaceutical company on board but so far, I've managed to sign two supermarkets. So any food you need from these two stores, snacks, alcohol. You just order it and it arrives in 30 minutes."

Nkwe: "And I don't have to make an appointment for the mall?"

Zimmy: "At all."

Nkwe: "Does it work for other stuff? Like clothes?"

Zimmy: "Not on this app. This is only grocery foods for now. I know of two boutiques that have an app like this. Both in Golden Crown but they deliver in like 24 hours."

Nkwe: "Show me." I gave them some space, going to sit with Petu, Siza and Nothando who were playing cards.

## MTHUNZI'S POV\_

I had the guards bring Thembisa, Nkwenkwezi and Amahle home to the palace and once they'd arrived, I went to my house. Thembisa and Nkosi would sleep at the palace so I could go home. A lot was going through my head. I'd written a letter. I'd practiced what I'd say. I was so nervous.

I didn't want to lose my wife but I couldn't keep this from her. I couldn't lie any longer. I'd fucked up badly and I could only pray to God to save my marriage. I parked my car, and went in. Busi sat in the lounge, curled on the couch with her bible open on the table. The sage was burning on a small bowl. What was happening now?

Mthunzi: "My love. Good evening. What's all this?"

Busi: "Hey baby. I just had a strange dream when I was napping." I put my keys on the table and sat down.

Mthunzi: "What happened?"

Busi: "I came home from work. Oooh, I got a visit from the princess!! One of the twins came to the store. She was with Khaya. Are they dating? They seemed cosy." She giggled.

Mthunzi: "Not that I know of. They had only planned a date, that's all. She asked the King when we were at the vineyard. So I guess this was their day. What happened?"

Busi: "Nothing much. They sampled some ice creams and had a sit down but the crowd was starting to form outside so Khaya suggested they leave. He's so sweet to her, firm, but very sweet."

Mthunzi: "That's good. The princesses can be very...mean to say the least. So what happened in your dream?"

Busi: "Oh yes. It felt like I was in this village. I think I was lost but I saw Sasa. She was hiding, trying to get away from something. I didn't want to give away her hiding spot so I checked around for what it was that she seemed to be so afraid of. I couldn't see it but I could feel the negative energy and then I woke up. So I decided to pray, that's why the bible and incense."

Mthunzi: "Oh. That's sweet. However Sasa is heavily guarded. She has 12 guards for her alone apart from Nkosi but I'll remind them daily to be alert at all times."

Busi: "Really? You believe me?"

Mthunzi: "I know I've said before you have a creative imagination that spills into your dreams sometimes but I've never not believed you baby. I always wait until you finish your prayer before I walk out." She smiled.

Busi: "You're the best husband." My heart ached. I should've been the best husband but I wasn't. Maybe this didn't work? And there's no reason to hurt her? Maybe the fertility pills, the love making, all of it, didn't get her pregnant. But it doesn't make it right. I violated her consent. Her body. Without her permission. Hiding it from her and continuing to not give her choice, is horrible.

Mthunzi: "Love, there's something you and I need to talk about."

Busi: "Sounds serious."

Mthunzi: "It is. And... I'm hoping that, coming clean, is in a way going to help us."

Busi: "What is it Mthunzi? You're scaring me."

Mthunzi: "I did something horrible behind your back. I planned, and did it. Only now, realizing how bad it was. Violating even."

Busi: "What did you do?"

Mthunzi: "I'm so sorry, Busi. I am truly and utterly sorry that this idea even came about. I fucked up."

Busi: "What is it Mthunzi? Are you sleeping with someone else?"  
Suddenly, that seemed less evil.

Mthunzi: "No baby, I didn't. So you remember, we decided that we'd get a surrogate to carry my child?"

Busi: "Oh." Her face said it all. She was already heartbroken.

Mthunzi: "I haven't slept with anyone else. It's not that. Busi, I don't want a child with some random woman I don't know. I want my child to have one mother, which is you. My wife. I don't want other women in my life. I never have. It's always just been you."

Busi: "Then what happened?" I stared at my hands.

Mthunzi: "The time you got sick. I increased your vitamins dosage so that your body can break down in reaction to it and you'd be flushed off all of the vitamins and also have the implant removed. You didn't get sick because your doctor made a mistake. It was me. I wanted you to remove the implant so that I can get you pregnant. The contraceptive pills I'm giving you everyday, are actually fertility pills. I'm also taking the male version of them. This week, I lied to you when I said you aren't ovulating. We've been taking fertility treatment for the past almost three weeks

and, when we made love, I was...intending to get you pregnant. I am sorry."

Busi: "what." She whispered.

Mthunzi: "I was desperate and I know what I did was wrong. I am so sorry Bus-"

Busi: "You violated my body. You lied. You almost killed me. All because you wanted your wish fulfilled because your choice is more important than mine?" Her voice shook.

Mthunzi: "That's not tru-"

Busi: "It is Mthunzi. I trusted you with my life. I gave you my life. You chose to do this with it because you think you are my God? You decided whether I like it or not you will forc...." She broke down crying. "You would rather I died than not have your wish??"

Mthunzi: "I love you Busi. I don't want to lose you. I didn't want another addition without you."

Busi: "I gave you a choice Mthunzi!!! I gave you so many choices, on our first date, you asked about children and I TOLD YOU I DONT WANT ANY!!!!!!!" She screamed. "I TOLD YOU I DONT WANT TO HAVE ANY AND YOU CONTINUED TO COURT ME!!!! I ASKED YOU PLENTY OF TIMES AND EVEN SAT YOU DOWN BEFORE YOU PROPOSED! Do you remember? Do you remember I said, I want to marry you but we have to talk before I say yes? I asked you once again. I gave you this choice." She stood up, shivering. "You must hate me. There's no other explanation. You hate me. I defended you to that doctor and you knew she was right but because you are my husband and I trusted you I stood by your side. How could you do this to me? How could you listen to my trauma for years and watch me break down at every milestone, every birthday I couldn't celebrate, every gesture of kindness, attending therapy once a week for years and then turn around and do this?" She hiccuped trying to regulate her breathing. "Get out."

Mthunzi: "Baby plea-"

Busi: "GET. THE. FUCK. OUT. OF. MY. HOUSE." I stood up, taking my keys.

Mthunzi: "Busi I know I fucked up. I am so sorry. I am willing to do anything to rectify this. Anythin-"

Busi: "You violated me!!! I could have your seed growing inside of me RIGHT NOW. You took away my choice!!! The choice I have had to learn to have over and over and over again, you just showed me that I will never ever have it. I am nothing to you. I am not even a human being that can fucking have a choice!!!! Get the hell out!!!!!" She screamed.

## Chapter 121

### SASA'S POV\_

My body woke me up before my brain was ready. I hated it. I was so tired and needed more sleep, it was barely sunrise. I got out of bed wearing my black dress and a matching long cardigan. I left the room after putting on some sneakers. Nkosi was fast asleep, interesting how he didn't even wake. He too must be exhausted. He had a long session with his father and they still aren't done with their painting. I walked down the stairs, into the open hallway, crossing out to the back entrance onto the courtyard. I opened the door and breathed the crisp fresh air. The guards were roaming around holding the biggest guns. I had to ignore. Holding my dress, I went through the garden Nkosi said I was welcome to use. I'd noticed a leaf there that was the same as the one I had in my dream. In the dream, I was making myself a cup of tea to gain some energy and it had worked. I hope I can remember the steps lest I poison myself. I giggled, walking into the garden. There it was. I carefully picked the plant, the leaf on one of them was starting to dry. Thank goodness because I needed it that way. I sniffed it for flavour, it didn't have a smell. That's a little disappointing but okay.

Me: "I hope I'm not missing something, do I grind this or let it soak? I don't know." I mumbled to myself.

"What are you doing?" I almost jumped out of my skin with fear. I looked back, quickly standing straight.

Me: "Oh thank goodness. It's you, Your Majesty."

King: "Yes. Why are you in the garden talking to yourself in the dark?"

Me: "Oh, it helps me process things. I was picking up some Onum leaves for a tea I need to make."

King: "A tea for what?"

Me: "Womanly things. You look dressed and ready to go, Your Majesty. I love your shoes. Do you have an early day?" He smiled.

King: "I always have early days."

Me: "Me too. I just need to get out of this funk. I've been tired, this tea will help."

King: "How do you know that?"

Me: "I dreamt about it, Your Majesty."

King: "Well then..." We walked out the garden quietly back into the palace. I don't know. It was pretty early, did he even go to sleep?

Me: "Would you like some tea?"

King: "That would be lovely."

Me: "I'll make some." I walked to the kitchen. The staff was already awake, bustling about. Not sure doing what. I just needed a kettle and tea bags. I laid out the tray with the tea cups and sugar bowl. He stood next to me peeling the leaf I picked out.

King: "You have to remove the stems if you want it to be effective, never touch the petal from the flower."

Me: "So I was right, it is poisonous." He chuckled. I ground the leaf in a bowl then boiled it on the stove. "Do you know the tea I'm supposed to make? I was experimenting because it seemed to work in my dream."

King: "You believe in your dreams alot?"

Me: "Mostly. For the longest time they were quite stupid."

King: "In what way?"

Me: "Like I'd dream that a friend or someone I know will trip and fall in the street. Then a few days later it happens. I found it funny. Nothing too serious."

King: "And how about now?"

Me: "Now... I'm dreaming of old villages. Places I'd never been but they exist. I'm living in my dreams in a different time."

King: "Which village were you dreaming of?"

Me: "Bakhoyo."

King: "The forgotten lands."

Me: "Amahle and I visited. We got chased away." I laughed.

King: "Chased away? In your nation? That will never happen again." I looked at him and smiled.

Me: "It's okay. I think it was for my protection." The water boiled, I placed his teabag in the tea cup, pouring the water.

King: "Do you always see dead people?"

Me: "No. I actually haven't seen any, apart from the Sikhosana ancestors. I need to start on my new task soon."

King: "What is this task?"

Me: "I need more information from the sleeping beauties. However I think it has to do with Mcebo and also His Majesty, King Ngidumise. Would you like some biscuits with your tea?"

King: "Mcebo, the treasure village? Yes."

Me: "Yes, my King. I don't mean to be forward, that's not my intention, I'm sorry if I'm overstepping. I think, the family needs to apologize and appease the treasure blood ancestors and help rebuild that village. Maybe, that can help me help King Ngidumise finally reunite with his wife. But before that happens, he Himself needs to be in the proper realm."

King: "That's way too much work for you. You're a baby." I giggled.

Me: "I don't mind. It's fun. Can I carry this for you to the lounge?"

King: "Finish making yours first."

Me: "Oh right." I strained my tea and added a teaspoon of sugar. I followed him to the main lounge. Sitting down on the plush furniture.

King: "So how will you get my father into the right realm?"

Me: "Well, I don't know. We have to plead his case, a lot. The ancestors are very aggressive and hard to please. Remember these are....more or less you."

King: "I'm not difficult to please. I only lose interest."

Me: "Understandable. I have to do a lot of meditation."

King: "Who taught you that?"

Me: "No one. I just sort of pray. What helps connect me to the other side is the leaf I burn. Amahle gave it to me. Do you want to connect?"

King: "Yes. I want to speak to my grandfather, King Bhekizizwe."

Me: "Oh that's sweet. Do you miss him?"

King: "No. I want to know why he killed my mother and if he's sorry." My breath got stuck in my throat. I was not expecting that.

Me: "I am so sorry."

King: "Not a worry. A lot of my family will shock you. We are not nice."

Me: "But you're nice, and so is Nkosi and Amahle. I think Nkwenkwezi is getting there. Last night she interacted with the girls but there's still a lot of work to be done."

King: "I thought Nkwenkwezi went to an outing with the Biyela boy."

Me: "Khaya? Oh she did. A lot happened. So, Sibonelo went missing sometime during the day, causing a panic. Everyone went to look for him. Everyone being Nkosi, Zwe and Mthunzi. Also Amahle. They found him, not sure where but he's said to be safe and sound. Anyway, Khaya brought Nkwenkwezi over to sit with us while he went to check if everything is okay back at the palace."

King: "And you trust this Khaya?"

Me: "Absolutely. Khaya is fantastic. Very patient too." I sipped my tea. It was actually very tasty, the flavour popped out when it boiled? Interesting. He stared at my teacup.

King: "Once a month is sufficient of that tea. You want your body to ease itself into adjusting the extra load."

Me: "I hope it works as good as it tastes. I have exams coming up and I will need my whole brain."

King: "Nkwenkwezi adjusted to the girls you say? She was fine with them?"

Me: "Kind of. She wasn't outright rude. I think she did okay."

King: "My children can be very mean. Especially to each other. So I don't trust them to interact with other people."

Me: "Maybe it'll help them understand other people."

King: "Amahle has never spoken a word to the twins. They live in the same house." I gasped.

Me: "No, that can't work."

King: "It works for them."

Me: "My King, that's not okay. I would die if I didn't speak to Zanele. I call her five times a week. Sure, my dad is my best friend but Zanele is my sibling that I share my secret interests with."

King: "Your father is your best friend?"

Me: "Yes, my king. My father is a very good friend. And he knows a lot of things. Can never be bored near him." He chuckled. I finished my tea.

Me: "It was nice chatting, my King. I should be getting upstairs."

King: "Thank you for sitting with me."

Me: "You're very welcome." I got up and bowed, walking out.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

I opened my eyes, feeling the bed cold beside me. Thembisa undressed and crawled into bed.

Sasa: "Hey sweetie. Did I wake you?" I sniffed a different scent around her.

Nkosi: "Where do you come from?"

Sasa: "I couldn't sleep but I was still so tired so I went to the garden." She cuddled me. "I picked out a leaf to boil for some tea and your dad was there. He helped with the tea, and we drank some in the lounge."

Nkosi: "Why didn't you wake me?" Most importantly, why didn't I wake up?

Sasa: "You're tired too baby. That would be mean. It wasn't like an emergency. I just needed tea."

Nkosi: "It doesn't matter if it's an emergency or not, wake me up Thembisa." She looked at me.

Sasa: "To make tea at 5 in the morning Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "Yes."

Sasa: "No. That's not okay-"

Nkosi: "Wake me. That's all I'm saying."

Sasa: "For tea?"

Nkosi: "I don't trust a single person living inside this palace."

Sasa: "Babe, your father won't hurt me-"

Nkosi: "Why are you so soft with him?"

Sasa: "I'm soft with everyone. I can't just be cold like you!" She held her mouth, sitting up. "I'm sorry." I wasn't offended, this is not something I was embarrassed about. I know I'm cold and I'm comfortable with it. "Baby, I'm sorry. I didn't mean that."

Nkosi: "Why are you apologizing?"

Sasa: "That was mean of me. I shouldn't have said something like that to you." I stared at her. What part of the truth is mean? This woman was the most interesting person I've ever met.

Nkosi: "Please lay back down." She laid her head on my chest instead of the pillow. My dick twitched at her soft touch. "What are your plans for the day?"

Sasa: "I don't have any. Why don't we go on a hike? You like doing that on Saturdays."

Nkosi: "Only at the villa. I run here."

Sasa: "Then let's run."

Nkosi: "It's a two hour run, my love. This wouldn't be good for you."

Sasa: "Why not? I can run pretty well."

Nkosi: "I've never seen you run a day in your life."

Sasa: "Excuse me? I'm a very good runner."

Nkosi: "With this big ass? I doubt it baby." She laughed.

Sasa: "Mxim. You can go on your little run alone. I'll have a picnic with Amahle."

Nkosi: "Without me?"

Sasa: "Andithi my ass is too big?"

Nkosi: "But it is." I chuckled, kissing her. "Let's take a nap, then we can go out for breakfast."

Sasa: "Hmm. What time do you have breakfast here on Saturdays?"

Nkosi: "We're not having breakfast here. We're going out. Maybe Amelia's?"

Sasa: "Are you serious baby? In public?"

Nkosi: "Yes, you're my wife now."

Sasa: "We can try it baby. You always have millions of bodyguards surrounding you when you're there. The beauty is in the view."

Nkosi: "Then let's close the restaurant for the day. If it's just us, there won't be a need for guards inside. Well, not as many at least."

Sasa: "Okay. Let's do that." I listened to her ramble about everything under the sun before she finally passed out, fast asleep. Carefully, I removed her from my chest and go out of bed. I quickly got dressed and left the room. My father was in his private lounge, staring at our unfinished painting when I walked in.

Nkosi: "Morning." He looked at me.

King: "What got you riled up today?"

Nkosi: "I'm not riled up, I'm still finding it difficult to trust you around my wife."

King: "I'd never hurt Thembisa. You know that. You want to carry on painting?" I took my tools, prepping them. I needed to speak to Zwe today, not that I cared what he did to the girl but is she still in custody? She can't stay there long. Also, Mthunzi is going through something and I had to speak to him too.

King: "Why don't you just whisper?"

Nkosi: "Why are you in my thoughts? That's intrusive. Then also telling me to do the same to my friend?"

King: "I can't help it." I looked at him.

Nkosi: "You can't switch it off?" He shook his head. "So you can hear every single thought of every person around you, all day long?"

King: "Yes. I've since discovered, seven of the maids have naughty thoughts about me every time they are near me. Your mother thinks about Thembisa alot. Your other mother is still upset with you but wonders if you're not bewitched. Nkwenkwezi has disgusting thoughts. Amahle stays away from me and Nhlanhla? Nkosinhle, Nhlanhla is a dumb child."

Nkosi: "I kept telling you this. You thought I was being mean. We need to fix this. Do you mind changing?"

King: "What for?"

Nkosi: "We're going to the woods, so I can show you how to turn down the ability." He sighed, getting up and walking out.

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

I'd hardly slept. Even with the sleeping pills Zwe gave me reluctantly, I managed only a few hours. I've been sitting in the lounge eating the best chicken I've ever tasted. I don't know what it's for but I found it in the kitchen and warmed it up. Finishing a full chicken was not the plan for 7 in the morning but it happened and we're moving on. I hadn't eaten all day yesterday so I'm glad my appetite is coming back. I stared at the TV, watching a series. Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "You're up. I was looking for you in your room. Sibonelo, I told you not to eat."

Sibo: "I got hungry. What was I supposed to do?"

Zwe: "Is that ice cream?"

Sibo: "No. Okay maybe. I just wanted a little taste."

Zwe: "You barely eat in the morning."

Sibo: "Yes I do. I always have breakfast. Are we leaving now? I need a shower."

Zwe: "Are you okay?"

Sibo: "Yeah." I stood up from the couch.

Zwe: "Sboni, talk to me." I chuckled.

Sibo: "About what, Zwe? Food?"

Zwe: "This isn't about food. You don't sit in the lounge this early. You're usually at the table, waiting on us."

Sibo: "I thought I'd catch up on this series."

Zwe: "What season are you on?"

Sibo: "Season two."

Zwe: "So you didn't sleep." Fucks sake. Why does he always have to trick me?

Sibo: "I did. I'm going to take a shower." He held my arm.

Zwe: "If you need to talk about what happened, please come to me. I know it must have been traumatic. We can get through it together."

Sibo: "Thanks brother Zwe but I'm fine." I went upstairs to my room, locking the door. I got in the bathroom, locking it and taking a shower. Once I was done, finding something to wear in the bedroom. It was a Saturday, I had nothing planned other than the hospital with Zwe then coming back home. After getting dressed, I made my way back downstairs.

Queen: "Hi love. Come have breakfast." If I went any closer to those eggs, I'm not sure what will happen. I shouldn't have eaten a full chicken by myself. Gluttony is one of the seven deadly sins for a reason.

Sibo: "No thanks mama. I already ate. Zwe and I have to go."

Zwe: "Okay sit down while I finish my food."

Sibo: "I'll just tidy up the lounge, wait for you there." I walked to the lounge. As expected the space was already cleaned so I sat down. I couldn't have access to my phone yet, Zwe had handed over all my devices to the security team to wipe through and check how Megan had gained entry into my house and basement. I don't know why he had to do that. I was negligent. That's all. It was no one's fault but my own. This was bound to happen at some point. So many women have been to my

house and I thought it was harmless and I could defend myself. I let my guard down. No one should be punished for that.

Zwe: "Let's go." I followed him out the house, getting into his car. I was glad he was driving. That way he'd be distracted and stop staring at me. "Jackson will be released on Monday. I see you negotiated with the judge. Do you want me to take over?"

Sibo: "Huh?"

Zwe: "Getting rid of him. Should I do it?"

Sibo: "No. I'll manage." I looked out of the window. I didn't want a bloody scene. Zwe spares no change when he talks of getting rid of someone.

Zwe: "I would've staged an accident. That way no one will investigate."

Sibo: "That's a good idea."

Zwe: "You'll be getting your phone back in the afternoon. I'm sure you must be going out of your mind."

Sibo: "Not really."

Zwe: "You're always glued to your phone."

Sibo: "A break is nice. Can you please stop at the petrol station, I want some juice."

Zwe: "Sure." He drove into the station and parked. I got out of the car, into the shop and bought two juices.

Cashier: "Will that be all, my prince?"

Sibo: "Yes."

Cashier: "We haven't seen you here in a short while, is there another station keeping you busy?" She giggled. I took the juice, walking out the shop swiftly.

Zwe: "You okay?"

Sibo: "How will you know I have a brain injury? Will it take some days? Can you fix it?"

Zwe: "Why?"

Sibo: "Just asking. Sometimes I just freeze and my head hurts again."

Zwe: "We'll know in a few days." I nodded. He drove out the station towards the hospital. "I've taken care of Megan."

Sibo: "Taken care of her how?"

Zwe: "She's dead. She won't be bothering you ever again." But, What if there's another woman like Megan? How would I know? How many of them are there just waiting on an opportunity I willingly give them?

## Chapter 122

### SASA'S POV\_

I woke up, feeling a tongue on my neck. I knew it was him.

Me: "Nkosinhle." I opened my eyes. But this was not Nkosinhle. This was a cat. A large white furred cat. I sat up, staring at it. What was a cat doing here? Who else could turn into a cat in this palace, people of God? The door opened, Nkosi walking in.

Nkosi: "What's wrong? You called for me."

Me: "Uhm, who's this?" He stared at the cat.

Nkosi: "Glacivory."

Me: "Who's tha- I've never met a Glacivory. Why is she in my bed?"

Nkosi: "Baby, she's not human. It's Amahle's cat." I breathed in relief.

Me: "I thought someone snuck into my bed Nkosi." He laughed, climbing on the bed.

Nkosi: "I wonder how she got in here, she never leaves Amahle's room."

Me: "And she's huge." I brushed the fur, the cat purred.

Nkosi: "She definitely likes you."

Me: "Does she like you?"

Nkosi: "Not much, no."

Me: "Why? What did you do to her?"

Nkosi: "Nothing. We're in the same feline but different species." I cuddled the cat, brushing her head. "Must be nice." I giggled.

Me: "Come baby, let me brush you too."

Nkosi: "So that she hates me even more? No thanks." I laughed.

Me: "What have you been up to this morning?"

Nkosi: "I'm painting with father. We came back from the woods two hours ago."

Me: "Oh that's lovely. I need to get up and bath."

Nkosi: "There's some dresses here for you. Remember the tailor took your measurements the last time we were here."

Me: "They made me dresses?"

Nkosi: "Yes. That's their job my love."

Me: "Their dresses are always so elegant baby."

Nkosi: "There's a few for house wearing surely."

Me: "Okay. I'm excited though. Let me get up. Please take Glacivory to her mommy."

Nkosi: "She'll make her way the same way she decided to come in here. Let me run your bath." He got up, going to the bathroom. I got out of bed, putting on my dress.

Me: "Come little angel." I picked her up, walking out to Amahle's room. I knocked on her door.

Ama: "Come in." I walked in. "There you are. I've been wondering why you're not around, it's your feeding time. Hi mommy."

Me: "I woke up to her in my bed. How did she get in?"

Ama: "I taught her how to pull a door handle." I laughed. "She's hungry." She got out of bed, fetching the cat food from her cupboard. "How Are you feeling?"

Me: "So much better. I had tea earlier. I feel amazing."

Ama: "That's good. Have you spoken to Zimmy?"

Me: "I'm going to call her just now. She must be so stressed shame."

Ama: "Well, she's not alone in her situation."

Me: "What situation?" She smiled, pouring the food in her cat's bowl.  
"Amahle?"

Ama: "Ask Nkosi." I didn't even wait or ask. I went back to my room,  
Nkosi in our bathroom.

Me: "Nkosi. Amahle is talking about a situation. Do I have a situation?"

Nkosi: "What situation is this, my love?" He sprinkled the petals in the  
water.

Me: "We found out yesterday that Zimmy is pregnant. Amahle says she's  
not alone in her situation and I need to ask you."

Nkosi: "Oh."

Me: "What's going on?"

Nkosi: "Love, you're pregnant."

Me: "I'm not pregnant."

Nkosi: "You are."

Me: "Nkosi, I know my body. I've lived in it all my life. I'm not pregnant."

Nkosi: "We can take a test, my love." Why did he look so sure?

Me: "A test?" I swallowed.

Nkosi: "Yes. I can ask the helper to bring a pregnancy test from the  
medical room. That's if they have those. I'll check-"

Me: "No!! Baby, I can't be pregnant so soon. We've only just started  
having sex." I whispered.

Nkosi: "I don't know what to tell you sthandwa sam. I wanted it to be a  
surprise."

Me: "How can a surprise grow inside of me Nkosi?" He chuckled. "So  
Amahle knows? And you? When did you find out?"

Nkosi: "Father told me yesterday-"

Me: "Your father knows??" I hissed. "Who else knows? The nation?" He  
laughed.

Nkosi: "You freaking out is absolutely cute. Don't worry about anything,  
baby." He enveloped me in his arms. "I am happy. I love you." I held on  
to him, feeling safe and definitely loved. And also out of breath. I was

pregnant? I know Nkosi and Amahle were pretty accurate but I don't know if I believe them. How can I? I haven't felt any different. Am I two days pregnant or something?

Me: "I don't know how I feel yet. A bit surprised, maybe." He looked at me, and kissed my lips.

Nkosi: "I'll take care of you. You will achieve all of your dreams, I will make sure of it." Nkosi has shown me time and again how much he loves me and makes sure my life doesn't change too much. I believe he'll continue doing so even with the baby. If there is a baby. Maybe I should take a test.

After getting dressed, in my new design. It was elegant but casual. I love that two of them were actually maxi's. The tailor and designer were amazing. Elevating my simple modest style into royalty? That's talent. I needed to thank them. Nkosi had soaked in the bath with me, also now fully dressed. He held my hand walking out. We walked down the stairs.

Nkosi: "Do you want to say hi to the family before we leave?"

Me: "I don't know. Your mothers have very strong opinions of me and I don't want you to react. We're still learning your ability." He looked at me, smiling.

Nkosi: "Okay. Let me tell father we're leaving."

King: "Where are you going?" He turned around the corner, shocking me out my bones. How does he do that?

Nkosi: "We're going out."

King: "Why don't you have lunch here then you can go do your fairy dancing or whatever it is you two do when you're together."

Nkosi: "You mean a date?"

King: "Yes, a date. Come, the table is ready." He walked ahead. We followed him to the dining table. The family was sitting down.

Nolwazi: "You've got to be kidding me." Nkosi pulled a chair out for me.

King: "I've asked Nkosi and Thembisa to join us for lunch. They're family and should be treated as such." I could feel the stare from both mothers. Our starter was served. In the palace, lunch was always three course

and dinner a five course. If I wasn't careful, I'd blossom in weight and quickly so.

Nkosi: "Father, is the ability working better?"

King: "Yes, thank you."

Nkosi: "Good." We sat in silence, eating.

King: "Thembisa, are you feeling any better from this morning?"

Me: "Yes my King, thank you so much. The tea really helped."

King: "I was only the company. You already knew what to do."

Nobantu: "The company?"

King: "Yes, we had tea in the morning."

Nolwazi: "Hehe. I don't know anymore." The table was silent once again. I was grateful for one thing amongst many, the King never spoke rudely to his wives. He never shouted, he never dismissed. That is a level of respect.

King: "Thembisa, have you thought about what we spoke about? Do you know what we need to do to appease on his behalf?"

Me: "No, my King. I gave it some thought and.... maybe you'll have to go to the villa."

King: "To meditate?"

Me: "No, my king. Up the mountain-"

King: "Not happening."

Nkosi: "What's not happening?"

King: "I told you when we were in the woods."

Nkosi: "Oh, for Papa? She's right, father. You have to go up the mountain."

King: "I think you're over estimating how invested I am in this. Me helping is as minimal as possible."

Me: "My King."

King: "Hm?"

Me: "Are you scared of the snakes?" Amahle and Nkosi choked, laughing.

King: "Don't be silly." He chuckled. "I'm not scared of anything."

Me: "It's okay. I'm also scared of snakes but they're harmless if you close your eyes."

King: "I promise you the last thing I am, is scared of snakes."

Me: "Okay my King. I wouldn't judge you though. Just saying. My first time there was very upsetting."

King: "I don't have a problem with the snakes."

Nkosi: "Then why won't you go?"

King: "I'm not that invested. This isn't my business. I didn't tell him to alienate himself. I was not involved."

Nkosi: "I would plead your case if it was you. I would do anything I needed to do-"

King: "That's not going to work." Our main meals were served. Nkosi looked at me. He already said no, I can't force him. And also, I can't go up the mountain again, that would be disrespectful. That's not a social club, it's a sacred place. They're not my friends.

Me: "Maybe you could go the alter you built here in the palace garden. Take it for a test drive."

King: "That sounds much better."

Nkosi: "So it is about the snakes?" I held back a giggle.

King: "Why would I be scared of snakes Nkosinhle, have you any idea the things I've seen?"

Nkosi: "Clearly snakes isn't one of them." Amahle bent over laughing. I ate my food, trying not to choke.

King: "You're silly. I'll go to the alter today with the healer."

Nobantu: "What is this for, my king?"

King: "I am supposed to speak to the ancestors on behalf of King Ngidumise, to be let into the Sikhosana royals spiritual realm."

Nolwazi: "I'm confused, what does this have to do with her?" She pointed at me.

King: "Thembisa highlighted this issue for me in the morning. King Ngidumise has visited her a few times."

Nolwazi: "Visited her?"

King: "Yes, she can connect to and speak to the dead."

Nolwazi: "I'm still unfortunately confused. She can speak to the dead?"

Nhla: "Obviously mother, she's friends with Amahle. Amahle is technologically not here." Does she mean technically?

Nolwazi: "Nhlanhla, be quiet. My King, what is happening?"

King: "Perhaps, it's time we talk about it as a family. Thembisa is spiritually gifted. She has treasure blood that helps connect to the ancestors. That's why she can connect to them. She's received messages from the Sikhosana ancestors to rebuild what has been previously wrecked threatening our demise."

Nolwazi: "So, this girl connects to your ancestors? You once called her a witch."

King: "I was wrong."

Nolwazi: "How do you know you aren't now?"

King: "I trust her. None of what she has shared has come to threaten me or this family, instead she builds it, brings life into it."

Nolwazi: "I see. And this makes her tell you what to do in your own house? She dictates the throne?"

King: "She's never dictated anything."

Nolwazi: "She gave a ruling in royal council. A court not even your wives or your father's, and those that came before him have entered. Yet, you let her do that. You let her come into our home, and tell you what needs to be done."

King: "What is this about, Nolwazi?"

Nolwazi: "I think you don't value us, my King. Actually, I believe you don't. Ever since this girl came into our lives, we have been nothing to you. Especially my daughters and I, because if we're being honest,

we've never been anything to you. All these years, I have had no say. My children unloved and disregarded. I identify good business opportunities to favour our nation and you give them to Nobantu to handle. I gave you two beautiful daughters, but the minute your wife gave birth again, you tossed them aside and was extremely overjoyed. Till this day she has been your favourite. I've kept quiet and obeyed all this time, respecting you and this throne. Defending you and loving you through the worst. Now, there's a new addition to the family and you've embraced her with a love we've never received. It's not just you being cold towards me and the twins but your ancestors pushed them aside as well. All of your children have abilities except the ones from my womb. It wouldn't hurt this much if you showed them just a quarter of the love you have for Nkosinhle and Amahle but it's okay. I understand now. When you took me from my family, it wasn't because you loved me. You took me because you could and I was stupid enough to believe I would one day, mean something to you. It's okay, My King. I think it's probably time to let us free. I cannot for the life of me fight for a spot anymore. After her, it's going to be her children. When will it ever be my children's turn? When will you sit with them and have tea? When will you paint with them? It's not for a lack of trying, my king because they come to you at all times to sit with you but you're busy. I as their mother, console them with the knowledge their father is a king but you're only a king to them. You're a father to anyone else. Please release us my king, revoke our royal status as well. We will not bother you, this I promise on my life." She got up, walking away with tears in her eyes. I had a lump in my throat.

Nkwe: "I'm on mother's side. You can revoke our status father. Living as commoners won't be as bad as living like we don't exist. Nhlanhla let's go."

Nhla: "Haaa, Nkwenkwezi I still want to be a princess."

Nkwe: "Let's go!!" She pulled her sister away.

MTHUNZI'S POV\_

I'd slept at the villa, I couldn't really sleep. Busi had cried herself to sleep. She looked better this morning but stayed in bed. I know this because of the camera surveillance in the house. She probably

eventually remembered that there's cameras because she switched all of it off. Admitting my wrong wasn't only to her. I'd been procrastinating all day but I had to man up now. I dialed his number.

Zwe: "My Lord."

Mthunzi: "Hi Zwelethu. Can I see you sometime today?"

Zwe: "Yoh, you never call me by my full name. I'm in trouble, ne?"

Mthunzi: "No. We just need to talk."

Zwe: "Okay. Where can we meet? I'm at the palace."

Mthunzi: "I'm at Nkosi's villa, should we meet at your house?"

Zwe: "Yes. Come over."

Mthunzi: "Alright, I'll be there in 30." I hung up, going to my car. I drove out the villa straight to his house. I dialed another number. One of the guards in my yard.

Guard: "Yes my General."

Mthunzi: "Hi. Uhm, I'm just checking if everything is still fine there. Is my wife home?"

Guard: "Yes she is, my lord."

Mthunzi: "Okay. Please keep her safe."

Guard: "I will do so, my lord." I hung up, driving into The Stellars in 30 minutes. I parked outside Zwe's house, walking in.

Zwe: "Hey."

Mthunzi: "My friend." He poured me a drink. "How's Sibonelo?"

Zwe: "I'm worried about him. He refuses to speak. Of course, answers questions when you ask but he's not as... Sibonelo is. You know? I don't know how to get through to him. I don't have the courage to watch the recovered surveillance from yesterday and what he went through."

Mthunzi: "What are you afraid of?"

Zwe: "I'm afraid I'll be angry. I'll be angry that I didn't keep her long enough to feel my anger. Enough about me, I know you're against my actions. What do you need to talk about?"

Mthunzi: "I'm not against your actions Zwelethu. If anything, you called me out on my bullshit."

Zwe: "What happened?"

Mthunzi: "First of all, feel the need to judge me as harsh as you wish."

Zwe: "That would never happen."

Mthunzi: "Wait until I finish. So, Busi and I have been married for about five years now. Before we got married, while getting to know each other she told me about her childhood. It wasn't all at once. At first she only mentioned having lived in an abusive home and escaping from it. Gradually started letting me in about how she grew up. She was subjected to physical and emotional abuse for over a decade of her life. Having to take care of her cousins children, fend for them herself and be expected to parent them also neglecting herself. She barely coped with school, barely made it out but by a miracle she did. She got into university and that's when she met Sboni. As you know, Sboni is big on family so he encouraged her to go back. Which she did, and nothing had changed. They stripped her away of everything she had once again, having to flee. Even the children she had raised, taken care of, stealing from her. She closed the chapter for good but couldn't heal. She had mental breakdowns, she suffered depression and severe anxiety. Even with therapy, medication, swapping medication, increasing dosage, lowering it. She just, she's battled with it for years."

Zwe: "That's horrible. I'm so sorry man."

Mthunzi: "One of the conditions she had, has, was that she didn't want any children. She was clear that she'd never want to parent a child. If we're to marry, then I had to accept that. I didn't mind it then because I thought this is something that goes away in time. Recently I spoke to her about having a child and she refused, suggested I get a woman to carry and parent the child with. At first, I thought about it but... I just couldn't see another woman in my life that isn't Busi. I can't. I don't want anyone else. This is where, my love turned somewhat evil. The vitamins I asked you to find and provide for me, were not from her doctor. I increased her dosage, so that she can get sick and...make it to hospital, removing the implant from her body."

Zwe: "My God."

Mthunzi: "After it was removed, I gave her fertility pills daily, taking some myself and...messed with her calendar so that her ovulation days are only known by me that way I can impregnate her-"

Zwe: "Stop talking." He walked to the kitchen, coming back in a few minutes. "You're saying, not only did you drug your wife, risking her life. You knowingly violated her body without informed consent and on top of all of that, as if that's not bad enough, you risked my license for this shit?"

Mthunzi: "I am sorry."

Zwe: "What are you sorry for?? You did this without a gun to your head. Nobody forced you. How could you do something like this? Sure, I may not be important to you but good God, Your wife!! Why would you do this to her? Has she not been through enough? I almost suspended an intern because I thought she was lying. Your wife defended you with so much confidence and trust in you, how could you do something like that?" Letting myself down wasn't as horrible as hearing how disappointed he was.

Mthunzi: "I wish there was a way I could reverse or turn back time. I am so sorry Zwelethu. I shouldn't have even had this thought let alone involve you as my friend."

Zwe: "So what are you going to do now because you've ruined your marriage? Yoh Mthunzi. Couldn't you have at least come to me so I can speak some sense to you? What the hell is this bra? I have to be watching abooSibonelo and the young princes, but you too? Seriously? Does Nkosinhle know about this? Of course he doesn't because he would never let it happen. Do you realize how lucky you are? Yoh. Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Yeah, I'm planning to speak to him tod-"

Zwe: "Are you insane!?"

Mthunzi: "I can't keep this a secret Zwelethu."

Zwe: "Just stop, stop. Nx." He poured another shot in my glass. "What you did was reckless and fucking stupid. You're supposed to be the sensible one, Mthunzi. How is she taking it?"

Mthunzi: "Bad. She switched off the cameras today so I can't see how she's doing."

Zwe: "Can't you put on the backup?"

Mthunzi: "I can but I don't want to invade her privacy."

Zwe: "Oh really? You want to start now? Yoh, Waze wangicasula Mthunzi. I am so annoyed."

Mthunzi: "I didn't mean to put your career in jeopardy."

Zwe: "I'm a Biyela, my career will never be in jeopardy but this is my passion Mthunzi. It's more than just a reputation and money, I love it. Yazi if you weren't my friend I would've punched you to the floor. Ubucabangani?" (What were you thinking?)

Mthunzi: "It's fucked up thought. I thought I had some right..."

Zwe: "To another human beings body and soul? No, my friend. No. Never that. We need to fix this."

Mthunzi: "She probably hates me right this moment."

Zwe: "As she fucking should. She should hate you, I'm not even sure how much I like you right this moment. Yerr. Asambe, I need to drag Sibonelo out of bed."

Mthunzi: "Bed? It's a Saturday afternoon."

Zwe: "Like I said before, he's acting very strange. It may be the concussion but I think he's traumatized."

Mthunzi: "Do you want me to check the footage on your behalf? That way you won't be too angry to make a decision on how to help him get through it. Amahle spoke of attempted rape, I don't know how horrifying that must be perhaps he's finding it difficult to explain it too. I know you're also blaming yourself, because you think you're responsible for his safety. Maybe it isn't just him that needs to talk through this."

Zwe: "Yeah. Please check the footage." He drank his shot. "Angazi ukuthi ngizokwenzani ngodaba lwakho. Honestly. Let's go before I get upset. We'll think of something." (I don't know what I'm going to do with your issue). It felt better knowing, I had a supportive friend even though I didn't deserve it, I had someone to at least share this load with. Busi needed someone too. She could be angry at me, sure but I needed someone to check on her and make sure she's okay. I could text Bethany. I took out my phone.

Zwe: "Put down that phone before I smack it out of your hands."

Mthunzi: "I just wanted to contact someone to check on her, she needs someone on her side-"

Zwe: "Stop treating her like she's a child. Busisiwe is capable of calling a friend or her therapist whenever she wants to. Let her decide her own decisions from now on. It's the very least you can do after this whole situation."

Mthunzi: "You're right. Okay." We got in the car, driving to their palace.

## Chapter 123

### ZWELETHU'S POV\_

I walked into the palace, up to Sibonelo's room. I opened the door, finding it locked. Okay? That's new. Why would he lock?

Zwe: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Zwelethu." He unlocked the door. I walked in the room. The windows and curtains were closed. His humidifier in the corner turned on purifying the air.

Zwe: "Why is the door locked?"

Sibo: "I was masturbating." Why does he think he can lie to me so confidently? I sighed sitting down.

Zwe: "Do you want to go to your club for a drink-"

Sibo: "No." That was quick. "I think I want to nap for a bit. It's been a very long week."

Zwe: "You've been sleeping all day."

Sibo: "I did a bit of work. Figured it's good to rest a bit."

Zwe: "Maybe we can go to my house? Have a chill? Mthunzi's around. Since Mngqobi has gone to his vacation we could grab Khaya and bully him into dancing for us." He smiled.

Sibo: "You know Khaya would never. Besides, he's gone out with his other friends. He was here not too long ago."

Zwe: "Okay but at least come with us ke. Hawu Sibonelo, if you want to nap, you'll nap in my house. Let's go."

Sibo: "Fine." He got out of bed, walking to his closet. Sibonelo never ate in his bedroom, the empty plates and snack wrappers were strange. Not only are they strange, he obviously had to order them because I doubt we have this much junk food in the house. This person was very health conscious, a snack to him meant fruit. I've never known him to have a sweet tooth. I need to go through those results once more. I'm pretty sure, a concussion doesn't include diet change in its symptoms. I watched him walk to the bathroom, closing the door and throwing up. That's what happens when you eat junk excessively. Especially when your body isn't used to it, and unfortunately for him this is another symptom of concussion. It could last a week or two so it's probably best he stays off alcohol in the meanwhile.

Zwe: "You okay there, brother?"

Sibo: "Are you sure there's nothing wrong with me Zwe? My body doesn't feel right." He walked out the bathroom.

Zwe: "How will it feel right when you're eating this? There's chocolate, plenty of it, ice cream, chips and so many other things. This isn't healthy."

Sibo: "But my body wants it. I think I have low sugar."

Zwe: "Low sugar? Really?"

Sibo: "It wouldn't hurt to check."

Zwe: "Fine. Get dressed."

Sibo: "You're not taking this seriously enough, Zwe. What if I'm bleeding internally?"

Zwe: "Ngenzeni ke mina? Because I've checked you twice now. You're not bleeding."

Sibo: "Why are you annoyed? If you don't want to help me, just say so Zwelethu. In fact, please get out. I no longer want to chill with you. Please go."

Zwe: "Hebana."

Sibo: "Please leave." What was going on?

Zwe: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Ngicel ung'phumele." (Please leave.) He got back into his bed. I walked out his room. I don't know anymore. His mother is the only one that can get through to him at this point. I walked into the lounge. Mthunzi was sitting with my father having a chat.

Mthunzi: "He's still asleep?"

Zwe: "No, he told me to leave him alone. Just switched up on me."

Mthunzi: "How Zwe?"

Zwe: "He was getting dressed complaining about his body and when I respond he says I'm annoyed with him and not taking him seriously so I must leave."

Mthunzi: "Hawu? That's unlike Sibonelo."

Zwe: "Angisazi mina Mthunzi." I sat down. (I don't know anymore.)

Mthunzi: "Should I speak to him?"

Zwe: "You can try. Honestly Sibonelo is acting like a pregnant woman, I'm not going to take it personally. His room is the fourth on the right." He got up, walking up the stairs.

King: "What happened with him?"

Zwe: "When he's ready Baba, he'll talk. For now, I also don't know." If I mentioned a woman holding him hostage, without knowing full details my father might blame it back on him and his behaviour of having multiple women. Right now, I don't think that would help. Also, if he then finds out in the future, he'd feel horrible for berating his son like that. Involving him was not necessary.

King: "He's acting very different Zwelethu. Almost like he's scared or depressed. I can't tell."

Zwe: "I'll try and get through to him Baba."

King: "Okay. Your mother is worried. She says he insists on sleeping in his own bed alone. Which is good for me because then he stops cuddling my wife but that's unlike him. Sibonelo is usually attached to his mother when he's sad. Zwelethu ungang'bulaleli ingane yami." (Please don't let my child die.)

Zwe: "Baba, I'll do my best. I promise." My father was right about one thing. Sibonelo was very attached to mom when he's sad. He tells her everything. If he can't even speak to her then it's worse than I thought. Let's try one of the big guns. I dialed his number walking out the house.

Nkosi: "Hello Zwe."

Zwe: "Hi Nkosi. Unjani?" (How are you?)

Nkosi: "Conflicted. How are you?"

Zwe: "Is everything okay?"

Nkosi: "Not sure yet, why were you calling?"

Zwe: "There's this situation with Sboni. I don't know how to help him open up. Knowing him, he'll find some project at work and fully focus on it, ignoring his feelings. I was thinking maybe you could wipe Friday's memory from him. Would you be able to do that?"

Nkosi: "I could but I wouldn't want to, Zwe. The thing with wiping a memory is that the feeling of it has rested in your spirit. There'll be things that trigger the feeling and he'll have no reason why he's feeling like that and...it will hurt if not drive him completely crazy. Things like standing in his bedroom where he was attacked, that might bring up a feeling of shock, anxiety that someone is there, watching him. Being in the basement perhaps reminding him of the feeling of fear, hopelessness. Sibonelo's personality is that of a perfectionist, if he can't figure out why he's feeling whatever he's feeling because he has no memory of it... I don't know Zwe. That wouldn't be good. I refused the same with Thembisa's father." I sighed.

Zwe: "I don't know what to do, Nkosi. He locks himself in his room. At home. Where he's supposed to feel most safe. He closes the door when he goes into the bathroom even when I'm there." I blinked back my tears. "I don't want him to feel alone. I don't want him to feel unsafe. I know he blames me for not watching over him and I want to make it right, Nkosi. That's my little brother. He can't... I can't fail him again."

Nkosi: "I'm on my way." He hung up.

NKOSI'S POV\_

I needed my father to deal with this issue with my mother. I had to rush to Zwe. I walked into the dining room once again. It was quiet. Thembisa played around with her food unable to eat. Everyone else was eating.

Nkosi: "Father."

King: "Hm?"

Nkosi: "Aren't you going to speak to mother?"

King: "Speak to her about what?"

Nkosi: "You cannot be serious. You heard her telling you how she feels, the very least you could do is speak to her and apologize. She's not wrong, what she said is very much true."

King: "Nolwazi is not going anywhere Nkosi. Sit and eat your food." How is he not even-

Nkosi: "Father."

King: "I'm trying to eat. Nolwazi has lived more than half her life as a Queen, she's not going anywhere."

Nkosi: "That's not- Mxim." I walked up the stairs to mother's private lounge. Before walking in, I knocked on the door a little and stepped inside. She dabbed her eyes with her silk napkin.

Nolwazi: "Mehluli, or perhaps I should call you Nkosinhle now." I don't even know why I was here, this wasn't my business to fix.

Nkosi: "I'm sorry."

Nolwazi: "What are you sorry for?"

Nkosi: "I don't really know but I feel bad."

Nolwazi: "You're nothing like him." She looked out the window, sitting in the chair. "I can see you coming out of your shell. You've always been such a quiet, withdrawn child. Even with that, you had some softness, that you slowly hid away as you grew up. Now it's tearing open again."

Nkosi: "He's not going to make it easy for you to leave."

Nolwazi: "Oh, I know. And it's not because he feels anything for me, he just wants to be in control." I took the fleece off the ottoman, handing it to her. "Thank you." She wrapped it on her shoulders.

Nkosi: "But mother, the hurt you feel shouldn't be expelled in anger towards Thembisa. She didn't do anything to you."

Nolwazi: "I'm not angry at Thembisa. I am angry at myself. Why am I here Mehluli? What is my purpose? You're ready to rule the nation, The twins are grown, starting to see the world, Amahle is halfway through her degree. What is my purpose?" Even I didn't have the answer to that. "Do you know how I met your father?"

Nkosi: "No."

Nolwazi: "He was visiting my nation, my father and him were talking about business together. I had never seen him before but I'd heard alot about him. King Sikhosana, the stylish king. People were always so excited to see him because of how he was always so put together. He walked like a model they said, but the moment I finally saw him I disagreed. He didn't walk like a model, he walked like a king. There was something about those orange eyes that enchanted me. I knew then and there I had to stay away. Far away. So I hid." She chuckled. "He came a second time to finalize his deal and asked my father a strange question. Where is your daughter. My father had us called and I still hid, I was so scared of him. There was something so peculiar, so dangerous about him. However, he didn't even look at my sisters, he simply asked again, where is your daughter. At this stage I was promised to another prince. My father was stuck. Even when he explained the only other daughter he has is promised, your father said, bring her to me. I want to see for myself if she's promised. I was called. 19 years old at the time, I knelt in front of them bowing my head, hoping this would be enough for him to leave me alone. Instead, he asked me to look at him and I did. It was from that moment I think all of my senses stopped simultaneously because from that moment Mehluli, I could see nothing, hear no one but him. I knew I'd spend the rest of my life serving him and I didn't want it any other way. I didn't care that he had a nation instead of a little kingdom, that he was King instead of just a prince. He was the only thing that mattered. It was only when he took me home as his wife did I notice he doesn't have feeling. No emotion at all. He was never sad, or angry. He would laugh but only for a few seconds. He would smile only for a short while. As time went by, I grew accustomed to him and his coldness. See, I thought the King couldn't feel and it only just dawned to me that he can. He just chooses not to. I chose to stay blind to it. I still do not understand why he personally requested for me. I don't know why

he married me then abandoned me for the rest of my days. I understand one thing though, I cannot be here any longer. There's never been anything for me here and there is nothing now. I am only grateful to have seen you grow into this man you are today. From a little 6 year old boy that was obsessed with nature." ...

What a heavy afternoon. I walked out of my mother's room, down the passage bumping into Nkwenkwezi. She was going to mother's room.

Nkwe: "Bhuti." She passed. How is this our life?

Nkosi: "Nkwenkwezi." I watched her knock on her mother's door and walk in, closing it behind her. I silenced my thoughts, seeping into the walls of that lounge with my mind.

Nkwe: "How are you mother?"

Nolwazi: "I'm fine. Where's your sister?"

Nkwe: "She's watching TV. Were you serious? Are you really leaving father?"

Nolwazi: "What choice do we have Nkwenkwezi? Honestly, if you want to stay then do so. I can't promise you'll receive love. I have reached my capacity Nkwenkwezi. I've tried."

Nkwe: "Where will you go? You're not allowed back in your nation if you leave a king."

Nolwazi: "I will have to start a life elsewhere. I have my qualification, I don't have any plan for now but I'll obviously have to move to a nation that has no influence with this one if I want to live."

Nkwe: "Mama, it's dangerous."

Nolwazi: "Nkwenkwezi, I'll be fine. If you stay, I have to take your sister. She won't be happy but she won't cope here especially if you go on to marry this boy you're going out with."

Nkwe: "You can't take Nhlanhla away from me mama."

Nolwazi: "Nkwenkwezi, I can't expect you to look after your sister."

Nkwe: "Then how must I cope? Without you and her? Mama can't you just try again with him? Please. We don't have to go anywhere." I stopped listening and walked down the stairs. Thembisa was probably

uncomfortable, knowing her she blames herself for this. I reached the dining room.

Nkosi: "My love." Yep, she was near tears.

Sasa: "Hey."

Nkosi: "We have to go. Zwe needs my help with something."

King: "Then where are you taking her?"

Nkosi: "She has an appointment with MaBiyela." I held her hand walking straight out of the house before he could object. The cars drove off.

"Hey. Come here." I placed her on my lap. She was trying to hold back. A new thing that I really disliked. "You're not the reason why she's upset. My parents have had problems for years. This has nothing to do with you."

Sasa: "Okay." I brushed her back letting her calm down. She fell asleep in no time. I don't know how to handle my father's problem. As much as he's started to open up just a little, he barely spoke of how he feels. I was certain for one thing though, he's not letting go of mother. Maybe I too, had unknowingly played a part in this. I never even tried to bond with the twins. I was always closed off and into my own things, ignoring them completely. They were fortunate to be born together because they then could be best friends. As much as I'd like to believe the ancestors have their reason, I strongly believe they can be cruel. There's no reason for the twins to be born without abilities because a good heart isn't what qualifies you. Sizwengaye, my own father doesn't have a pure heart, Ngidumise, Bhekizizwe the others before them even worse. Yet, they all had abilities. I know the twins are definitely Sikhosana, they're my blood, so that's not the problem either. I'd really like to make sense of it because what is the reason? The strange thing is that the twins are the first girls to be born in quite a few generations. Ngidumise never had girl children, he also never had sisters or siblings at all. King Bhekizizwe never had any sisters. I wonder how far back do Sikhosana girls go. However one thing is for certain, father did treat them unfairly.

We arrived at the palace, I woke Thembisa up. She still curled on my chest, sleeping peacefully. As much as I enjoyed watching her sleep, I needed to help Zwe.

Nkosi: "My love. Wake up." I kissed her nose.

Sasa: "We're here already?"

Nkosi: "Yes. Do you want to visit Petunia?"

Sasa: "After I greet Queen Biyela." We got out of the car, walking to the door. They were opened and we stepped in. Zwe came up to us from the lounge.

Zwe: "Mrs Sikhosana." I hugged him.

Sasa: "Hello Zwe."

Nkosi: "Why don't I get a hug?"

Zwe: "I've been hugging you since we were babies Nkosinhle. Hello, my friend." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "Hello. Where is your mother, Thembisa wants to say hi before she goes to Petunia."

Zwe: "She's this way. Come Sasa. Nkosi, dad is in the lounge." She followed him out to the garden. I went to the lounge, Mthunzi was here with King Biyela.

Nkosi: "So this is where you spend your leisure time? Hello King Biyela."

Biyela: "My Prince."

Mthunzi: "Yeah well, you've abandoned me. So what must I do?" I sat down with them.

Nkosi: "Where are the young princes?"

Biyela: "Khaya went to see his friends, Mngqobi is away on vacation."

Mthunzi: "Sibonelo is upstairs mad at everyone."

Nkosi: "He's not mad at me, I didn't do anything wrong."

Biyela: "You may as well be his favourite person, my prince. Everyone has tried to speak to him. He's not having it." Zwe walked back in.

Zwe: "Who's not having it?"

Biyela: "Your brother."

Zwe: "Ey, Sibonelo stresses me. Let me call him for you, Nkosi. Maybe he'll talk to you." He went upstairs. I looked at the TV playing a sport channel. In the lounge. Well, I obviously have one but I don't watch this. How is it fun watching people run around?"

Nkosi: "King Biyela, why are there men playing with a ball in your TV?"

Biyela: "It's soccer, my prince. It's entertaining."

Nkosi: "How?"

Biyela: "Well, you choose a team you support and you cheer on for them."

Nkosi: "They can't hear you, King Biyela."

Biyela: "Yes, they can't. But your friends and family can. For example, I support the same team with Khaya. Zwe and Mngqobi have their own team. We enjoy watching it together and cheering for our respective teams, also making fun of each other."

Nkosi: "So it's about spending time together."

Biyela: "Yes my prince. What do you do with the guys?"

Nkosi: "They take me to the woods, sometimes the beach. I haven't tried watching a sport. Mthunzi which sport would I like?"

Mthunzi: "Athletics, Horse racing, possibly golf. Mostly non contact sports. You also don't like noise."

Nkosi: "I could try to watch a contact sport and see how it goes."

Mthunzi: "That wouldn't be fun for you. You'd predict the score halfway."

Nkosi: "It's worth a try. King Biyela which team do you recommend?"

Biyela: "There's so many my prince but I support our national team, and internationally I support Barcelona."

Nkosi: "Interesting." Sibonelo walked in carrying a baby.

Sibo: "My Prince."

Nkosi: "Hello. I came to see you." Where did he get a baby?

Sibo: "You didn't have to, Your Highness. I'm doing well."

Nkosi: "Well, I'm here now, so..."

Sibo: "Can I get you something to drink?"

Nkosi: "No I'm fine."

Zwe: "Come this side." He led us into another lounge, just Sibonelo and I and the baby. I sat on the couch, looking around. Was this his private lounge? It didn't seem personalized.

Sibo: "Uhm, this is Miles. He is Siza's son. Do you remember her?"

Nkosi: "No clue."

Sibo: "Oh, she's Petu's sister. They're living in Mngqobi's house currently."

Nkosi: "Okay." The baby stared at me. I wasn't really good with babies. Or perhaps because I didn't know any.

Sibo: "Miles, say hello to Prince Sikhosana. He's going to be our King."

Miles: "Like Grandpa?"

Sibo: "Something like that, yes. He will rule the whole nation though."

Miles: "Hello."

Nkosi: "Hello Miles." He instantly turned to the phone in his hand and entertained himself. "You smell like vomit and milk."

Sibo: "I've been a bit sick, my prince. The concussion really knocked me."

Nkosi: "No, you got someone pregnant." He chuckled.

Sibo: "No my Prince, I've been very careful. I didn't get anyone pregnant."

Nkosi: "Oh." But I thought Zimmy was pregnant? That's what Sasa said? If Sibonelo was careful and says he didn't do it, who did? Did Zimmy have another boyfriend we didn't know about? Not that I'd know. I'll have to ask Sasa. "How are you feeling?"

Sibo: "Apart from the symptoms, I'm okay." Symptoms. It had to be him. But he isn't lying? Did he not know?

Nkosi: "Do you want to talk about what happened?"

Sibo: "There's nothing to talk about, my prince. It's just a little small incident."

Nkosi: "It's a security breach. You're one of the most secured people I know. Your security system is in my new house because I trust you. So it's not a small incident. What happened?"

Sibo: "Miles, please go ask Uncle Zwe to get you a snack and sit with him for a bit while I talk to the prince."

Miles: "Okay." He got up, and walked out. Kids just listen to anyone and do as they're asked? This person looked insanely comfortable to just get up and leave.

Sibo: "I was careless with my house, my prince. Sure, I locked the house but I don't remember actually securing it. I'm always in and out, I never stay long enough. I live in The Stellars, no one comes in here unless authorized and with that, I didn't have a reason to be fully secure. Megan on the other hand, did get authorization to come in simply and only because she works for the only other family that lives here. Smith. They granted her access but she didn't go there. I don't leave guards in my house because like I said, I'm in and out. They'd just stand there aimlessly without any work. There's nothing to guard. When I went there, I thought it'd be in and out, as usual. So I didn't bring them. This was no one's fault but my own negligence honestly." He stared at his hands.

Nkosi: "I understand. So she broke into your house with the system off by default and waited in there for you. Weren't your motion sensors on?"

Sibo: "They were. They went off on my phone but again, I didn't check because I was preoccupied and assumed the cleaners were there." I was finding it difficult to grasp this situation. As much as both of us were royal princes, Sibonelo was very different from me. All of them were. All of my houses needed guards whether I'm there or not. I wasn't allowed anywhere without a minimum of five, it is excessive but that's my life. Sibonelo was much different because he lived a free life. He could be in public without people running to him to bow down. He could enter a public space and not have people break into a song and dance, crowding all around him, screaming at the top of their lungs. He had the luxury of freedom that I wished for. I'm sure if I had a pet, even they would need a guard.

Nkosi: "This isn't your fault Sibonelo. A woman breaking into your house isn't your fault. You can't blame yourself for feeling safe in your own house. They took advantage of that. How did you discover she was inside?"

Sibo: "I didn't. I remember walking in and noticing there's something different, again I assumed it was the cleaners and I ignored it. I took out my phone, I can't remember who I was calling but I heard her speak

behind me. Then it went black. From there, I woke up in the basement. At first thinking it's a joke and she was just looking for attention. She then took out this injection explaining it as something that will enhance everything I'm feeling, whether I like it or not. She tied the chains around me because I was fighting to get loose. I begged her not to use the injection, I didn't know what was in it but I figured..." He swallowed, blinking back his tears. "I just didn't want it to feel any worse than it would feel. I figured I could at least forget about this, if I let her sleep with me while I was conscious. At least, I could get over it. I didn't know what nightmares would haunt me if my body had withdrawals from the substance she injects into me. It doesn't matter though because they have caught up with me regardless. Probably because of the hit to my head."

Nkosi: "You're having trouble sleeping?"

Sibo: "Yes."

Nkosi: "Did she touch you?" He stared at his hands.

Sibo: "Yes."

Nkosi: "I am sorry." He chuckled.

Sibo: "I'm a man, my prince. These things don't affect me. I'll be fine soon enough. I know Zwe is worried and it's enough, I don't want him to blame himself. I'll be fine. After the concussion, I'll be good."

Nkosi: "Just because you're a man doesn't mean you're not allowed to hurt."

Sibo: "What would I be hurting for? I let this woman into my house, I've slept with her before. It's nothi-"

Nkosi: "It's not nothing, Sibonelo. It isn't. This time you didn't let her in, she forced herself in. That's not okay and you need to stop hiding behind the concussion because that milk smell is coming off strong. How about we speak to a doctor?"

Sibo: "I can't speak to Zwe, Nkosi. He's already dedicated his whole life to us as his family. Often neglecting his own life apart from us. This will cement it, please my brother will never want to marry. I can't do that to him."

Nkosi: "Okay. Not Zwe, another doctor. If he can see you're taking strides to help yourself, he won't feel the need to take care of you."

Sibo: "I don't know.."

Nkosi: "Unfortunately for you, you have to obey me. I'm your future king."  
He smiled.

Sibo: "Okay. I'll book a session this week."

Nkosi: "Good, do you want to take a shower? I'll wait in the lounge." I  
walked out.

## Chapter 124

### KHAYA'S POV\_

I'd had a good day catching up with some varsity friends. I was now at Amelia's waiting for Zimmy to join me for dinner. I hadn't heard from Nkwenkwezi since earlier today and I know I shouldn't really be worried but it was kind of worrying because she usually texted me alot. I finally swallowed my pride and dialed her number.

Nkwe: "Hello."

Khaya: "Hi. How are you?"

Nkwe: "Not good."

Khaya: "Oh? What's wrong?"

Nkwe: "I can't talk about it."

Khaya: "Why is that? Maybe I can help."

Nkwe: "You can't. It's family related." Oh, Sikhosana business. A very secretive family with weird occurrences. Wait a damn minute, if Nkosi has that power he used to go into people's minds, does that mean Nkwenkwezi also has some power? Zwe and Sbo always kept this a secret and hid whatever it is but that sky flood was not natural. It was man made. Did they all have these powers?

Nkwe: "Still there?"

Khaya: "Uhm. Yeah. Yeah I'm still here. If you ever need someone you can trust and just be around, call me."

Nkwe: "Really? You'd take care of me?"

Khaya: "Of course I'd take care of you. I want to make sure you're good. I don't know what this means for us right now but understand that I respect you alot and I like you."

Nkwe: "I like you too, Khaya. Thank you for reassuring me."

Khaya: "You're welcome. What are you up to?"

Nkwe: "I'm going to my sister's room. We're going to watch something."

Khaya: "You already had dinner?"

Nkwe: "Not yet. Probably later."

Khaya: "Hm... So when can I see you."

Nkwe: "Maybe tomorrow."

Khaya: "I'm looking forward to that. This time I want to show you a beautiful restaurant overlooking the sea. Have you been to the beach?"

Nkwe: "No."

Khaya: "Well, please wear a casual summer dress and let your hair down. We'll take a walk across the shoreline. Have the water run up to your pretty toes." She giggled.

Nkwe: "This seems like an excuse to see my toes Khaya." I smiled.

Khaya: "Maybe. But I won't be judgemental if they're not pretty. You can't have it all baby." She laughed.

Nkwe: "Well, I do."

Khaya: "I'll have to see for myself. Please respond to my texts now. You've been ignoring me all day."

Nkwe: "I wasn't ignoring you, I had things to deal with. I'll respond, be patient."

Khaya: "Okay baby. Let me have my dinner, we'll talk on the phone."

Nkwe: "Okay then, bye." I hung up. Zimmy walked in, coming to the table.

Zimmy: "Friend. Hi." I hugged her and she sat down.

Khaya: "How are you?" I signaled for the waiter.

Zimmy: "I'm good. How are you?"

Khaya: "Great. You look fresh. Skin popping and all. How come you're not in Golden Crown for the concert? You were so excited."

Zimmy: "Ah. Got sick last minute." The waiter stood by our table.

Khaya: "Can you get me a mango juice and a bottle of the Region's finest champagne-"

Zimmy: "No. I won't be having alcohol. Can I just have a water with a slice of lemon and ice." The waiter nodded walking away.

Khaya: "You never turn down alcohol. Is that why you didn't go? You got piss drunk didn't you?" I chuckled.

Zimmy: "I wish. Let's catch up on other stuff."

Khaya: "No, what do you mean? You have a hangover?"

Zimmy: "When have I ever? Leave this alone."

Khaya: "We're friends Zimmy. Talk to me."

Zimmy: "I can't Khaya, you can't keep secrets from your brothers and I'm not ready for the spectacle."

Khaya: "Oh my God. You're with Melo? Zimmy!"

Zimmy: "How did you jump to Melo? I'm not with him."

Khaya: "Come on, tell me. I can keep a secret."

Zimmy: "What secret do you have that your brothers don't know?" I gave it some thought. "Exactly."

Khaya: "Wait, give me a minute to think." I laughed. "okay, this will be the first."

Zimmy: "Please don't say anything."

Khaya: "Pinky promise."

Zimmy: "I'm pregnant." I gasped.

Khaya: "Who? How? Why? WHAT?!"

Zimmy: "Sibonelo, first week we hooked up, That's my situation right now." Our drinks came to the table.

Khaya: "You're joking Zimmy." I held my mouth, unable to believe this.

Zimmy: "I wish I was Khaya. I don't even understand how this happened. We used condoms the first night, next day a doctor came to give me contraceptive injection, she did a pregnancy test then and it was negative because she had to be sure since I wasn't on my period. I got the injection and I thought I was safe. Turns out there's a waiting period. I've never felt so stupid." I choked on my juice laughing.

Khaya: "This is fucking hilarious."

Zimmy: "Is it Khaya? I'm in hell!"

Khaya: "Have you told him?"

Zimmy: "Not yet, I don't know how. What if he rejects me?"

Khaya: "He'd never do that. You're carrying a prince Zimmy or a princess. Are you keeping it?"

Zimmy: "Khaya, I don't know. I do want to keep the baby, what I know is that this will be possibly the most difficult thing I have to do. Being a parent while you're studying and building a business, as a 21 year old? Yoh."

Khaya: "You'll have help and support. We won't let you suffer. Just tell him, soon."

Zimmy: "Yeah. I need to get it over with. Anyway, what was yesterday's deal about? How was he missing?"

Khaya: "Oh, he was in his house. Nothing major. You still care about him ne?"

Zimmy: "Doesn't matter anymore." She finished her water eyeing my juice longingly. I chuckled calling the waiter and ordering another one.

Khaya: "Tell Sibonelo he's a father to be. Yoh, mama Biyela will be so happy. I have to say, her prayers are strong. Imagine defeating contraceptives? Haha."

Zimmy: "Mxim Khaya."

Khaya: "How do you feel about it though? Being pregnant and all?"

Zimmy: "It's so confusing. One moment I'm a little happy and the next I'm so scared and worried. I'm asking myself what will I do, worst case scenario I have to take care of the baby alone, I'd rather drop out of

school after birth and go back when the baby gets to day care. I'll still be part of the business, hopefully -"

Khaya: "First of all, stop worrying. I keep telling you this. There's no worst case scenario here. Just tell- give me your phone." I grabbed her phone off the table.

Zimmy: "Khaya!! You can't tell him on text!"

Khaya: "Tell him you need to speak to him then." I gave her the phone.

Zimmy: "You're boring. I was going to wait until tomorrow at least." She sent a message. "There, I'm asking to meet up."

Khaya: "Good. Stop worrying. The hardest part is finding out you're pregnant, telling him is easy. If he doesn't believe you he'll just do a DNA test. That's all."

Zimmy: "Alright." She received her juice, drinking it happily.

Khaya: "And also tell him how you feel about him."

Zimmy: "We'll see how he takes this news first." I chuckled. Sibonelo won't be mad at this. If anything, he'll be over the moon. He loves children, I wouldn't be surprised if he offered to raise the baby himself.

## NOTHANDO'S POV\_

We'd arrived at the private beach resort early Saturday morning. Since Mngqobi was worried about Sibonelo we'd stayed the night in Mountain Peak and just left this morning. It was only an hour drive more or less. We've spent the day by the private beach, I did a bit of reading and we participated in some water activities. My favourite was the jet ski. Dinner was set up for us on the beach. The sand decorated with candles and flowers while a duet band performed the guitar with a bit of singing. Mngqobi sat across the table, looking a tad bit nervous or stressed. His beige linen shirt unbuttoned on the first two, paired with white linen pants. This was obviously copying my outfit.

Notha: "You've been refusing we drink all day but we're on vacation."

Mngqobi: "I want us to fully relax, and have good memories."

Notha: "Hmm."

Mnqobi: "Are you nervous?"

Notha: "Yes. So I'm ordering a glass of wine."

Mnqobi: "Let's order it in the room." I looked at his eyes, oh he was ready. My nerves started to settle in. We made our way to our room, it was set up romantically with red rose petals on the bed. None of this really mattered to me. I wasn't here for the aesthetics. I watched him talk on the landline ordering a wine, also texting on his phone. He hung up the landline. "I'm sorry, love. I'm just texting Sboni." He finally put his phone down.

Notha: "How about, I run a bath and you finish your commitments."

Mnqobi: "Okay." I went to the bathroom, running the water in the large round tub. Petu had bought me some bath salts that smell so delicious. It was way different from hers, she went to find my favourite scents just to make me more comfortable. I poured them in the bath, lighting up the candles. Mnqobi walked in minutes later carrying two glasses and a bottle.

Mnqobi: "I want to make you feel more comfortable. May I take off your clothes, and pour you a glass of wine?"

Notha: "I can take off my clothes, it's okay."

Mnqobi: "I know you can, but I still want to do it." I wanted to protest but I let it go and nodded. He pulled down my pant zipper, sliding them off my body. He undid my bodysuit, peeling it off slowly from my body over my head. "You look beautiful." I felt the flutters in my tummy.

Notha: "Thank you."

Mnqobi: "May I kiss you?"

Notha: "Yes." I at least knew what to do there. His soft cold lips touched mine, gently sucking on my lower. He pulled me close to his body, his hands caressing my skin. I unbuttoned the rest of his shirt, taking it off. He pulled off his pants and underwear as well. He stood in front of me fully naked and erected. I still had my thong on, shy to pull it off but this is my husband. I hooked my thumb's on the fabric and pulled it off, letting it drop on the ground. My eyes never left his.

Mnqobi: "Would you like a glass of wine?"

Notha: "Yes please." He poured each of us a glass then led me into the tub carefully holding my hand. I sat down, watching him bring the towels closer before getting in behind me. He handed me my glass and took a sip of his. The water was warm and soothing. The salts smelling so fresh. I took a sip of the wine and of course it had to be my favourite dry white.

Mnqobi: "What are your expectations?"

Notha: "Sounds like a job interview." He chuckled.

Mnqobi: "I don't want to fuck up, or make you uncomfortable. So at any stage you feel discomfort, just say stop."

Notha: "Okay but you know more than me about sex. What can I expect?"

Mnqobi: "From me? An orgasm, that's for sure." I laughed.

Notha: "Can you be serious?" He pulled me to lay on his chest with my back. I sipped my wine.

Mnqobi: "I will kiss your body, from head to toe, making my way back up again and slipping my tongue in between your folds. You'll feel the most pleasure when I lick your clit. I hope." I sipped more of my wine. His one hand was on my breast massaging it.

Notha: "What can I do to you?"

Mnqobi: "You want to do something to me?"

Notha: "Obviously. I want all of it."

Mnqobi: "And you will get it. Every inch of it." He gulped down his wine, putting away the glass. "Let's start with a massage." Both his hands gently massaged my breasts. I was enjoying my wine and his touch.

Notha: "This feels nice." I sipped my wine. One of his hands slid down under water in between my legs. I closed my eyes, letting his finger rub on me slowly.

Mnqobi: "That's good.." he whispered in my ear. His pace remained the same, rubbing up and down on my clit. I felt dizzy, his kisses on my neck and other hand massaging my breast.

Notha: "Mnqobi."

Mnqobi: "You can't cum just yet baby, we have a long night together."  
He stopped.

Notha: "Mnqobi, please.." I begged. Both his hands massaging my boobs. This man was turned on himself but he kept his composure. I turned to look at him, kneeling on the bath floor.

Mnqobi: "You're ready for me."

Notha: "Yes." I sat on him without putting it in.

Mnqobi: "You look so damn sexy." He kissed my boob, licking on the nipple. I felt some pleasure from his touch and kisses.

Mnqobi: "Let's go." We got out of the bath, walking to the bedroom. I climbed on the bed, laying flat on my back. He got on top, kissing my body, all the way down to my pussy. I felt his tongue roaming all over it until it touched a spot that sensitised my whole body. I let out a moan. He circulated that spot with the tips of his tongue, making me weak. I closed my eyes, feeling only his touch, rapidly licking back and forth.

Notha: "Mnq....obi..." My toes curled, feeling intense wave. I held on the sheet, panting. My body trembled and throbbed to a still. He kissed it, coming up to my face. He placed small kisses on my neck. He was at my entrance, slowly pushing it in.

Mnqobi: "Ohhh fuck.." I numbed with shock and slight pain. He pulled it out and worked it in again. "Fucccck." He breathed, kissing my lips. He paused. "Are you comfortable, love?"

Notha: "Yes.. keep going." He kept moving his waist, going in and out while kissing my face. He pulled out of me, grabbing a condom to put it on. I was grateful he remembered because I didn't. As much as I was on the IUD and also, wasn't ovulating, I didn't want to risk it at least until the waiting period is done. He pushed it back in, riding into me looking into my eyes. The numbness melted away, I felt his motions once more. He went faster, groaning and finally releasing, holding me tight. I enjoyed his tongue, alot. The penetration wasn't something I really liked. I didn't know what to do while it was happening and it hurts like hell.

Mnqobi: "Are you hurt?"

Notha: "I'm fine." I smiled. "Thank you for trying your best to be gentle."  
He smiled, kissing my face.

Mnqobi: "Thank you for giving me your body Nothando."

Notha: "Hmm. You can stop kissing my face now." He laughed.

Mnqobi: "You don't like me wena. Uyang'pretender." He pulled out, lying next to me.

Notha: "I agreed to marry you again, I don't think that's true."

Mnqobi: "Baby, I don't ever want you to feel like you're trapped with me. If you want to leave, we can make a plan. I'll take care of your tuition up to Masters if needs be."

Notha: "Really? After you've broken my virginity?" He laughed.

Mnqobi: "Mxim. Let me get some drinks to celebrate. Wine or champagne?"

Notha: "Celebrate what now?"

Mnqobi: "Yoh Nothando, I've been waiting for this day since I was 17. Allow me to be happy." I chuckled.

Notha: "Wine then. It helps my body be a little comfortable."

Mnqobi: "You still want to ...?"

Notha: "Of course, why do you think we're here Mnqobi? I didn't feel an orgasm during the actual deed and you made promises." He laughed, fetch the wine and glasses.

Mnqobi: "I'll work harder, my love." He poured the wine in the glasses, handing one to me. "I don't want to start off heavy but I've been wondering for a bit. We said we would circle back in a few weeks. How are you adjusting not being a princess and most importantly, being away from your birth family." Birth family because his was my now only family and they treated me better than my family ever did.

Notha: "A lot of things are still confusing but it's not as bad because of my marriage to you. When I was a princess, no one really cared or looked when I'm in the mall for example. Now, people are staring and pointing and I know what they're saying. That I sold my family out to be close to you and the Sikhosana family. People from my father's former kingdom have insulted and others threatening that I would never last here because I'm a traitor. My life went from quiet to instantly hated by people I don't even know."

Mnqobi: "But you refused to let me mute your name and put in a ban and charge for someone who bullies you, why?"

Notha: "To what end Mngqobi? I want to build a life outside of being a royal or affiliated with. If you have to mute my name then that would be muting my growth because no one will be able to see my progress or even know who I am when I'm successful. I'll always be the former princess, the traitor. I want them to get it out of the system and eventually come to terms with Nothando. Just Nothando."

Mngqobi: "Okay, I hear what you're saying but at least the insults. You're my wife Nothando, I'm not going to let people speak anyhow to you. Or how about an interview? Would you be keen to tell your side of the story?"

Notha: "It may be the wine talking but yes, probably. I just don't get why my father did this Mngqobi. He was in good relations with the king. Do you think the witch maybe got to him?"

Mngqobi: "No I don't think that. The witch was mentioned after they'd decided they would do this. He could've warned the king but he didn't. He chose to stick by the other royals."

Notha: "But there has to be a reason for that, it doesn't make sense."

Mngqobi: "He obviously had something to gain. What if Nakhamula wasn't interested in being the actual king but appointing one that he chooses? Your father. He's the only one who had a chance to be a king."

Notha: "Wow." I sighed.

Mngqobi: "Love, I have to tell my brothers and the Prince. If this was a plan, perhaps their silence is another plan."

Notha: "Yeah." I was disappointed at how my father would do this to himself and our family. "He has a deal with the oil nation up north, they were still discussing details and had planned a briefing for a few months in time. I don't know much about it but I know father was very excited. I think this is the deal that will round a few other nations under his belt and also secure funding enough for a war." He sat up. "You have to tell His Highness, Mngqobi. What if they were biding time letting us believe they're defeated but they're coming back with bigger guns?"

Mngqobi: "Love, why didn't you say anything?"

Notha: "I didn't think my father would be the one specifically gunning for kingship. I thought it was just a business deal like the hundreds of others he has." He took his phone, dialing for Zwe.

Mnqobi: "Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "You're supposed to be on vacation Mnqobi, Yini inkinga yakho? Awufuni ukuphumula yini?" (What's your problem? Don't you want to rest?)

Mnqobi: "We wanted to tell you this before I forget. Nothando will speak." I took the phone and told Zwe what I just told Mnqobi.

Zwe: "Are you sure about this Nothando?"

Notha: "Yes Bhuti."

Zwe: "Okay. Don't worry about this. Enjoy your night. I'll handle everything else."

Mnqobi: "Okay. Is Sboni ok-" Zwe hung up. I chuckled. Mnqobi was very attached to his brothers but mostly Sboni. He spoke to him every hour. I wonder how my brother will be affected in all this. I cared about him alot and it sucks that he's under 18 so he can't make his own decisions even though I highly suspect he'd side with his father. They were more close than I. And of course he was set to inherit the entire family fortune. My father technically owned Golden Crown. Were the people on the internet right about me? Did I really sell out my own family?

## Chapter 125

### SASA POV \_

Sunday morning, I woke up next to Nkosi. I'd suggested we come back to the palace because it would seem very sketchy that now they're having problems and we're running away. I didn't even know what to do so we'd fetched some of our things from our house and moved into the palace once more. It was so tense. Queen Nolwazi and Nkwenkwezi didn't come to dinner last night. Nhlanhla came alone and sat quietly throughout. That's a first. She always has something to say. The conversation wasn't entirely dead though, the king was chatting to Nkosi and Amahle mostly. Queen Nobantu, as usual, very quiet and reserved. So maybe that's where Nkosi gets that quality. She too didn't like talking.

I sat up in bed and stretched. Glacivory climbed up the bed coming in for a cuddle.

Me: "Morning sweetie." I mimed. I had another task to do before Nkosi woke up. I got out of bed, she followed me to the bathroom. I'd managed to get pregnancy tests. I opened one and read the instructions. So I pee on the strip part. Okay, easy. I sat on the toilet and did it. Then waited. I busied myself, brushing my teeth and washing my face. Surely it was done processing now? My hands were shaking, I was suddenly nervous. Maybe I should wake him up? He must check it and tell me, I feel like I'm going to faint if I touch that stick. I walked to the bedroom again.

Me: "Babe." I whispered. "Nkosi." He opened his eyes, waking up. "Hello." Is he not going to at least stretch and yawn?

Nkosi: "Hi love. Why are you up so early?" A sudden desire for hot buttery scones tickled my taste buds. Oh my god, with jam. Is that's what's been happening to me? Cravings? Isn't it too early for that? "Baby? What's wrong?" He sat up from bed.

Me: "Nothing. I need you to go to the bathroom and check the stick."

Nkosi: "Stick?" He walked to the bathroom. "There's no stick here baby."

Me: "It's small, next to the toilet."

Nkosi: "A stick?"

Me: "Yes Nkosi, it's right there."

Nkosi: "Babe. There's no stick here."

Me: "I left it there-" I got up and walked to the bathroom. "There it is. The white one."

Nkosi: "This isn't a stick my love."

Me: "What does it say?" He stared at it, turning it around and back.

Nkosi: "Hmm." Is he still sleeping? What's going on?

Me: "Baby? Are you awake?"

Nkosi: "I am, love. Hold on." He looked at the paper then the stick and smiled. "You're having my baby." I stared at him in surprise. He gave me the stick. I stared at the positive sign, shocked out of my brains.

Me: "I'm pregnant?"

Nkosi: "I told you." He kissed my lips.

Me: "Glacivory did you know about this too?" We laughed.

Nkosi: "Probably why she's here." I held my very flat tummy.

Me: "Someone is growing in my belly?"

Nkosi: "And he's the future king." He kissed me again, hugging me. "Do you think I should call Tata?" Nkosi called my father uTata. No clue why. He's stopped saying sir altogether.

Me: "What if he gets upset that we didn't prevent?"

Nkosi: "We can't keep it a secret for long, my love. You'll start showing in a month. Yes you'll be less frequent in the public eye but the nation will be told at 20 weeks. By then your father needs to have been told and hopefully welcoming to the idea."

Me: "Okay. Let's wait. For now, I want it to be just us. Maybe in a few days we can call him." To be honest, I was scared. I may be a married lady but I was still my father's child and of course I'm very embarrassed to tell him we've been having sex. Imagine that? How shameful.

Nkosi: "Hm..."

Me: "You're itching to call him, aren't you?"

Nkosi: "I can't lie."

Me: "It's not even lying, you're just keeping it to yourself."

Nkosi: "That would be lying."

Me: "How would it even come up Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "If we're on the phone and he asks, oh how are you guys doing? And I say, we're good, Sasa is pregnant. Like that."

Me: "No. Not like that. You can end it at we're good."

Nkosi: "That would be lying. We're not just good, we're great. That's the pregnant part. It's a build up."

Me: "Then just say we're great."

Nkosi: "But he'll ask why are we so great then?"

Me: "Love. You're not telling my father today. Okay?"

Nkosi: "What about Zwe?"

Me: "Same time as my father."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi? He'll know something is up. He can read me like a book."

Me: "Mthunzi bought the pregnancy test Nkosi. I think he knows but yes, maybe Mthunzi. But only him."

Nkosi: "Okay. For now, let's take a warm bath. I want to take you out but our plans got disrupted yesterday."

Me: "Before that, I desperately need scones. Have you spoken to your mother?"

Nkosi: "I did, yesterday. I'll check on her sometime today. Father is refusing to let them leave."

Me: "Are you serious? Why?"

Nkosi: "You can't divorce a King." He mumbled.

Me: "What was that?"

Nkosi: "You can't divorce a King."

Me: "WHAT."

Nkosi: "But we don't have to worry about that, we're in love."

Me: "What are you talking about? Nkosi, what do you mean you can't?"

Nkosi: "Yeah." He scratched his head.

Me: "Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "But you love me baby, it's not like you'll want to leave me at some point."

Me: "Oh we don't know that, sir. So what is she going to do?"

Nkosi: "I don't know yet but she is planning on leaving regardless. She's really done with him and rightfully so."

Me: "But why now? It's because of me isn't it?"

Nkosi: "Partly but not necessarily you."

Me: "How is it partly me?"

Nkosi: "Mother was more or less trying to get to this point if I'm putting it correctly. When she came home with father, she tried. She would cook

for him, get him drinks, try to talk to him. But father is father. I think the only person remotely close to understanding him fully is first mother. After Amahle was born, second mother stopped trying. She mostly just focused on the twins, because I was not interested in being cuddled and attended to. Amahle had father's full attention."

Me: "Oh my God." Now he's decided to start doing for another person what she'd tried to work for and not been appreciated for. Is that why the twins are mean? It was a way of clapping back to the cold treatment they've always received? I needed to speak to Amahle and ask her side of the story as well.

After our bath, I went to get dressed. Nothing stressed me more than this. I was usually in simple maxi dresses but here, the game had a new level. I needed to look like I belonged. I checked in my new dresses and found a non-dress item as well. Was I allowed in pants? It was a wide leg black flowy pant and matching top. It covered my shoulders and cleavage, and no skin was showing by my belly since the pants were highwaisted. It had a floor length cardigan as well, I loved it so much. I left for the kitchen, ready to make my scones. I needed to call Queen Biyela as well. I checked the lounge and no one was there. It would be impossible to check where everyone is. This palace is double the size of the biggest mall I've been to. And I've been to a very big one. I went to the kitchen instead. The kitchen staff were sitting on a bench, getting up as soon as I entered. Do they sit here and wait for someone to need something? That's crazy.

Me: "Good morning."

Palma: "Good morning, Your Highness. Can I make something for you?"

Me: "No thank you. Do you mind borrowing me the kitchen for just 40 minutes? I want to bake."

Palma: "I can bake anything, Your Highness. Just let me know what you need."

Me: "I'd prefer doing it myself, please don't take offense." They obviously took offense.

Palma: "Is there a problem, Your Highness?"

Me: "Oh no. No problem. I just like baking and it would be upsetting if my one hobby was not allowed." I chuckled. They started to relax.

Palma: "Oh. If that's the case then, we can help." I am going to go insane. How do I make this stop without sounding rude?

Me: "That won't be necessary, ma. I just need you to show me where the baking essentials are. I've got it handled from there." Before more protesting I dialed for Queen Biyela. Is her household also this hands on? I giggled.

Queen: "Hello sweet love."

Me: "Hi mama. How are you?"

Queen: "I am great, how are you?"

Me: "I'm doing well. I wanted to ask for some pointers. I'm about to bake, the scones we had yesterday were to die for and if you don't mind, can you help me with the recipe?"

Queen: "Oh, I'd love to sweetheart. Let's do it together. What you'll need is, plain flour, baking powder, salt, butter, sugar, milk and eggs."

Me: "Alright." I turned around, finding Palma there holding a shopping basket. What is this now? She led me into the pantry door that obviously wasn't a pantry. This was a supermarket. INSIDE THE KITCHEN??

Me: "Wow."

Queen: "The kitchen is incredible isn't it?"

Me: "You've been inside?"

Queen: "Oh yes. Many moons ago, Amahle was still a baby." I giggled, picking out my products and going back to the kitchen.

Me: "I got everything mama." She guided me through step by step, also telling me about her boutique, with their upcoming launch. I put the scones in the preheated oven, still chatting to her on loudspeaker.

Queen: "I'm going to send you some pieces. The boutique caters alot for us as royals but I do keep specific pieces strictly for royals. For example, any item gifted to the queens can never be replicated or sold."

Me: "That's understandable. So, mama, do you have a home wear range? Most of the time, I'm studying especially now we're going into exam season."

Queen: "That would be an exciting challenge for me. Comfortable home wear that still looks stylish. You're such a darling." I giggled.

Me: "I'm looking forward to seeing those designs."

Queen: "Let me start mapping it out, my angel. We'll talk soon. Thank you for the call."

Me: "Thank you for your help Queen Biyela. Have a lovely day." We hung up. Where was everyone? All the staff were bowing down. What's happening now? "Guys? I thought we had talked."

"Good morning Nobomi." I got a fright, almost dropping my phone. I bowed.

Me: "My queen. Good morning."

Nobantu: "Why are you in the kitchen?"

Me: "Uhm, I was baking my queen."

Nobantu: "You were on the phone."

Me: "Yes my queen. Queen Biyela was guiding me through the process. I'm making scones." I pointed at the oven. She continued to stare at me.

Nobantu: "I see." I didn't know much about Queen Nobantu. She rarely said a word. Asks a few questions but that's it. I wonder if she'd always been like that or she too adjusted to it after marrying King Sikhosana like Queen Nolwazi did. My heart ached for her. I would've never married Nkosi if I wasn't sure that he loved me but everyone is different and this was not my business. But before it's not my business, did the King show affection to Nobantu then? That would be spicy. Things are tense as is.

Nobantu: "Would you care to join us in the courtyard for a beverage?"

Me: "I'd love to." She walked out the kitchen, I followed her out all the way to the courtyard. I expected it to be her and Amahle but nope it was both queens.

Me: "Good morning my queen." We sat down. She didn't respond.

Nobantu: "I've called this meeting because as we're all aware, Thembisa and Nkosinhle's national wedding is in three weeks. We need to start with the preparation." Three weeks? I'd be finishing my exams just then. And isn't that just too soon for a national wedding? Even regular weddings take months to plan.

Me: "My queen, wouldn't it be better if we postponed it for another...say a week? I'm starting my exams this Thursday and I'd be writing up until the agreed date."

Nobantu: "You want the nation to wait for you until you finish writing your exams?" I don't think they have much of a choice at this stage. I need to focus on school. This is just a wedding, yes for the nation. Not even for me, I was already married to my man and had a ball.

Me: "It would be difficult enough for me to focus on preparations and studying, my queen. If I can at least finish before the actual event."

Nobantu: "No. The date has been finalized and unless someone is dead, it can't be changed. Do you want to weigh in Nolwazi?"

Nolwazi: "Why am I here? I thought I'd made myself clear that I want no part of this."

Nobantu: "Unfortunately, you're a queen and you don't have the luxury of choice to not be part of it. You're still a member of this family."

Nolwazi: "You seem to be enjoying this, so carry on." She looked out at the garden.

Nobantu: "The tailor has started designing your dress, these are the first seven templates. Please pick one that you would like." She handed me some papers. I looked through them, the tension was so thick. If at least, Amahle was here. Even the twins ke to keep the air light.

Me: "This one looks okay."

Nobantu: "Are you sure?" I also can't change my mind about this later, can I?

Me: "It's just that, it's the closest to what I want."

Nobantu: "Can you design what you want?"

Me: "No. I'm bad at drawing. I know someone who's good at designing, they can help."

Nobantu: "We have an in-house tailor for a reason. Please learn to use the palace facility. This includes the help."

Me: "Is it about the baking?" She stared at me. Nolwazi chuckled.

Nobantu: "No. It's not about the baking." Was she being sarcastic? Its difficult to figure her out.

Me: "Mama-"

Nobantu: "Queen."

Me: "My queen, I apologize. I find it quite difficult to sit still and wait to be served especially because I have a specific way of how I like my food."

Nobantu: "Oh I can tell. However, here in the palace, the servants serve, the chefs cook, the cleaners clean, the tailors design and make clothing and the gardeners pick the fruit. You will be crowned queen in a few months, it is imperative to act accordingly."

Me: "But, That's not who I am."

Nobantu: "And who are you, Nobomi Sikhosana?" This is not happening. Nolwazi chuckled.

Nolwazi: "What is the chickens job again? Oh yeah, they come to roost."

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## SIBONELO'S POV\_

I woke up Sunday morning with knocking on my door. I got up to open. Miles stood there holding his teddy bear.

Sibo: "Hey buddy."

Miles: "Hello Uncle Bobo."

Sibo: "When did you get here?"

Miles: "Uncle Zwe fetched me." He walked in. I closed the door.

Sibo: "Did you eat?"

Miles: "Yes. I had a porridge and sandwich." What time was it then? I picked up my phone. Midday. Wow. I had a few messages as well from Jimmy. <Hi Prince Sibonelo. Can we meet up? There's something we need to talk about.> Was the first message. <Perhaps I could come to your house?> Was the second. <I know I asked for the weekend off and stuff but this is outside of work.> Was the third. What was going on? I thought she was in Golden Crown with Melo. These messages were from yesterday. I sent her a message back: <hey. I didn't check my

phone yesterday. What can I help with?> I sent it. A reply came: <We need to talk. Can I come see you?> About what now? I wrote back.

Sibo: <You can text, it's fine.>

Zimmy: <This is not a phone conversation. We can meet at Mngqobi's. We just came back from church.> The same person who was once refusing to see me and only wanted to communicate with technology? Into engiy'hlutshwayo emhlabeni Ka Nkulunkulu. (The things I suffer in God's world.)

Sibo: <I'll be there in 30.> I left Miles with my phone who had made himself comfortable in my bed. I took a shower and came back to dress. Some black fitted sweatpants, a black t-shirt and sneakers.

Sibo: "Let's go little prince." I carried him out the room because his focus was on his show now. I found Zwe in the lounge, playing with Mia.

Zwe: "Oh there he is." As if he didn't send him.

Sibo: "Hey. I'm going down to Mngqobi's house, I need to speak to Zimmy."

Zwe: "Okay, let's go."

Sibo: "I'm driving."

Zwe: "All good with me." I walked out, placing Miles in the backseat.

Sibo: "Do you see you need a baby seat? Look at how small you are." I fastened his seatbelt, tickling his face. He giggled. Zwe fastened Mia's and we drove off.

Zwe: "Work related?"

Sibo: "She says it isn't so I don't know." I checked the kids in the rearview then looked back on the road.

Zwe: "Maybe she's finally telling you how she feels."

Sibo: "About what?"

Zwe: "For one, she didn't go to the concert she had planned to go to."

Sibo: "That can't be my fault. She must have had her reasons." I parked the car.

Zwe: "Just keep an open mind okay? Whatever she tells you, try and be kind."

Sibo: "I'm always kind."

Zwe: "You forget I know you?" We got out with the kids, walking into the house. They walked out to the backyard as Zimmy came in. A nice aroma filled the air, making me instantly hungry.

Sibo: "I was being invited for lunch kanti? This is sweet." I sat in the dining table.

Zimmy: "Hi."

Sibo: "Hello."

Zimmy: "Do you mind if we talk that side..." She pointed down the passage.

Sibo: "I think I'm fine here. What's the problem." She looked nervous, fidgety. "Why didn't you go to your concert?"

Zimmy: "That's... This is why we're having this talk. I don't know how to tell you this. I'm just as confused. And I need you to know I'm not trying to trap you. If you don't want any part of this, its okay. I understand."

Sibo: "Zimmy, I'm really hungry. If you can just tell me what this is about."

Zimmy: "I'm pregnant."

Sibo: "No you're not." I stared at her. This had to be a prank.

Zimmy: "I took a few urine tests. They were all positive. I've been sick for a while, vomitting and stuff. I'm carrying your child Sibonelo."

## Chapter 126

### SASA'S POV\_

The talk with the Queens did not go well. I was not happy nor would I compromise my schooling for an event. That's not the deal that I made. We'll find a way around it. I went back to the kitchen to take my scones out of the oven but I found them already taken out. This pissed me off to no end. After I had specifically asked, nicely, to have this left alone.

Me: "Why." I asked.

Palma: "They were done, Your Highness."

Me: "I heard the timer go off five minutes ago. The oven is automatic, it switches off. Please don't ever do this again. I was specific. I do not want help. My hobby is not a group project. Please Palma. I'm asking just this one thing." She stared at me with an attitude I couldn't care to pay attention to. Ruining my whole appetite. How did this day go from happy news to this?? Just controlling and cold? I don't even want to share my scones anymore. I packaged them in a container and put them aside keeping two for myself. Where was Amahle at least? Nkosinhle was with his father painting and I didn't want to disturb them. I am not about to go sit in that courtyard. I could just read a book in my room. I boiled some water and made a rooibos tea for myself.

Nkosi: "Yes love?" I got a fright. "You called."

Me: "Huh?" Ohhh, everytime I think of his name he hears it. "I wasn't calling you love, I was only thinking about you."

Nkosi: "These smell nice."

Me: "I'm not sharing."

Nkosi: "Why not? You always share." He's right, I do always share. Palma doesn't deserve my snippy attitude. She was only trying to help. Those two ladies in the courtyard are turning me into something I'm not and I hate it.

Me: "Let's put some on a plate, put some butter and jam, you can have them with your father." I took the butter and jam from the fridge.

Nkosi: "Why must he get scones?"

Me: "You want to sit there and eat scones alone?"

Nkosi: "Preferably. He doesn't even like scones."

Me: "You don't like scones."

Nkosi: "I like yours." I spread the butter letting it melt and some bit of jam on four scones.

Me: "Here you go. You can grab these two." I gave him two cokes.

Nkosi: "Thank you. I love you." He kissed my lips walking out. I sighed, making my own buttered scones.

Me: "I'm sorry Palma, I know you were trying to help. Here, have some scones."

Palma: "We're not allowed to Your Highness."

Me: "Why?"

Palma: "We have our own supplies in the servants quarters, that's where we eat."

Me: "Palma, no one else in this house is going to eat these scones. Please take them or I'm walking to the servants quarters carrying them on my head." She chuckled.

Palma: "Thank you." I took my tea and scones going up to Amahle's room first. I knocked and opened, walking in. She was reading her book.

Me: "Hey, I made scones."

Ama: "Why?"

Me: "I was craving them. Taste." She took one, biting into it.

Ama: "It's good."

Me: "Hmm." I sat on the chair, eating.

Ama: "What's wrong?"

Me: "Your family." She laughed.

Ama: "I can't say I've never warned you. What happened?"

Me: "Your mothers summoned me to the courtyard. The date that's finalized is the day after I finish exams. I'm already swamped with school work but it's not allowed to be changed. Unless of course someone dies. Someone could be me."

Ama: "Not yet, mommy. I need my person."

Me: "All this time, you knew I'm pregnant? I took a test this morning."

Ama: "Yes I knew."

Me: "What else do you know?"

Ama: "He's another reincarnation." I stared at her. Who? Surely Ngidumise was the most cruel right? There's no more surprises right? And why do they all want to come back? Did they enjoy being alive? I mean sure, being a Sikhosana royal is enjoyable if you let yourself, like I

will. I'm going to let myself. Haters are gonna hate. Imagine not having happy times because people don't know how to dance? That will never be me.

Me: "Please tell me you're joking." She laughed.

Ama: "I'm kidding. Nkosiyokuthula is his spirit. He'll be a peaceful King. Very loving and warm. Like you." I sighed.

Me: "That's good to hear. I feel like it hasn't settled in yet. We've decided not to tell anyone for now. Just for a few days."

Ama: "Okay. How is Zimmy?"

Me: "I spoke to her earlier, they were on their way back from church."

Ama: "Would you like to attend church?"

Me: "Would that be possible?"

Ama: "No."

Me: "Then no."

Ama: "You chose to be queen, sweetie." I finished my last scone.

Me: "Truckload of adjusting. Hey, I wanted to ask you something. Why don't you talk to Nkwenkwezi and Nhlanhla?"

Ama: "And say what to them?"

Me: "Just sister talk?"

Ama: "That would never work. The twins are the meanest people you know but multiplied by 2."

Me: "So you've never had a relationship with them?"

Ama: "No and if you even try to make this your project-"

Me: "Oh, you do not have to worry about me. I have school to focus on. I'm already the number 1 villain here. My assignment needs to be done by midnight so that tomorrow I focus on studying."

Ama: "Really?" She giggled.

Me: "It's a juicy project, I won't lie but honestly I've had my fill. Maybe I'll try in a month's time." She laughed.

Ama: "It won't happen."

Me: "Fine then. I'll see you later housemate."

Ama: "Bye." I walked out with my plate and cup, taking them to the kitchen on our floor. I placed them in the sink and walked away because the staff was already looking at me. In my room, I set up my computer and learning system, pulling out my books. I yawned. Maybe an hour nap then I can start.

SIBONELO'S POV\_

Was this a joke? Surely I was being bamboozled.

Sibo: "Zimasa. You're not pregnant."

Zimmy: "I'm telling you I took home pregnancy tests that all came out positive Sibone- you know what. I knew you'd be like this. Forget I said anything."

Sibo: "FORGET? Zimasa, in case you've conveniently forgotten we used condoms and got your injection thing. How can you possibly be pregnant?" I hissed.

Zimmy: "First of all, there's a waiting period. We had sex the exact day. And I happened to be ovulating-"

Sibo: "OVULATING?"

Zimmy: "I'm not going through this with you. I just thought you'd like to know."

Sibo: "Zimasa. Zimasa, say you're joking. It's okay, I won't be mad."

Zimmy: "Why would I joke about THIS of all things?"

Sibo: "Is it mine?" She stared at me, shocked or hurt.

Zimmy: "Never mind." She took her bag walking out. Hey? I followed her out.

Sibo: "Where do you think you're going?"

Zimmy: "Home!"

Sibo: "Tell me the truth, is this my child-"

Zimmy: "Who else's child could this be!!! You are the one I was sleeping with!!!" She screamed. "As I said. I'll take care of my own. Don't bother." She typed on her phone. Cabs weren't allowed in so she's obviously not going anywhere especially not walking in those 6 inch heels all the way to the gate. How was she pregnant? This is not a thing that happens right? Yoh, Zwe is going to kill me. Nkosi said this yesterday and I didn't believe him.

Sibo: "Let's talk inside the house."

Zimmy: "I don't want to talk to you."

Sibo: "Unfortunately you have to. Walk." She stared at me. "Ngiyakhuluma Zimasa." She walked inside the house. My head was starting to spin so I sat down. "I am so hungry." I mumbled. Couldn't she have at least waited until I finished eating? She got up walking away. I didn't have the energy for this back and forth. I was stressed. Having a child was not a problem for me but Zwe would lecture for sure. For damn sure. No man, how did this happen? What's a waiting period for? Zwe didn't explain this. She brought a tray to the table placing it front of me.

Sibo: "What did you put in this food? You were screaming at me two minutes ago."

Zimmy: "Mxim. Go dish for yourself then." She tried to take the plate, I held on to it.

Sibo: "I didn't say take it. I just wanted to know so I can tell the doctor when it starts to work." I started eating. This was delicious. The mutton was succulent, the vegetables perfectly spiced and crunchy. I finished the whole plate and licked my fingers. "Thank you." She looked at me. "I don't know what to say Zimasa. I am still shocked and definitely wasn't expecting this. Are you sure? Nevermind. We can make sure, I guess I can't avoid Zwe. Wena, how are you feeling?"

Zimmy: "Half the time sick. But I'll be okay." Is that what's been happening to me? No, that wasn't it. I had a genuine medical incident. There's no way I can get her symptoms, we don't share a body and we're not even intimate anymore.

Sibo: "Okay. What is your plan?"

Zimmy: "My plan was to give birth, drop out and focus on the business and baby. The business will give me an income to take care of him or

her. Once she's 3, they can attend day care and I'll start school again probably part time."

Sibo: "Why does your plan not include me? You said I'm the father?"

Zimmy: "I didn't think you'd want to be part of it, of us. I thought you'd accuse me of trapping you with the baby. I really didn't plan this Sibonelo."

Sibo: "I know." I looked at her. The gods were on my side this time, weren't they? "Do you know how far along you are?"

Zimmy: "Not officially, no. I found out on Friday."

Sibo: "Is that why you didn't go to Golden Crown?"

Zimmy: "Mostly."

Sibo: "What else stopped you?" She looked at her hands.

Zimmy: "Just being sick, nothing much." I was hoping she'd say me.

Sibo: "We'll do this together Zim. I'm not particularly excited. I had planned to first get married before babies came along. And it wasn't even a now plan, I wanted to wait a few years but there's nothing we can do now. We'll soldier through."

Zimmy: "Really?"

Sibo: "Yeah. We'll talk the details through as we go. I still need to process this whole thing. I'm going to be a dad." I chuckled. "Have you told your parents?"

Zimmy: "Not yet. The only people who know are the girls. I'm sorry you weren't the first to know, they were here and encouraging me to do the test because of my symptoms."

Sibo: "That's okay."

Zimmy: "So uhm... Maybe we should go back outside."

Sibo: "Are you feeling any different, besides the sickness. Kicks and stuff?" She smiled.

Zimmy: "It's waaay too early for that. We have a long way to go."

Sibo: "Can we go to the hospital tomorrow? I want to check if everything is okay."

Zimmy: "Yes. We can."

Sibo: "Good." She looked like she wanted to say something more but held back.

Zimmy: "Would you like something to drink?" Okay it was sinking in. She was carrying my child. My baby. The excitement was starting to bubble in my throat.

Sibo: "Yes please. Any juice is fine. Please take off the shoes." She took them off, walking to the kitchen. Imagine straining my child in high heels? Yes they looked sexy but come on now. She brought me back apple juice.

Zimmy: "I'm going to go lie down in the sun and if I didn't mention it Sibonelo, thank you. I was really nervous and not expecting much. Working together with this means alot to me."

Sibo: "I'm upset that you'd think I'd abandon my first child but it's okay. You're welcome." She smiled, walking out the back door. When was Mngqobi coming back so I could tell him he's about to be an uncle. Zwe walked in.

Zwe: "Brother."

Sibo: "Hey."

Zwe: "How do you eat without me?"

Sibo: "I gave you a wife Zwe and you decided to play games. That isn't my business."

Zwe: "How do you go pimping me out like that?"

Sibo: "She's your exact type Zwe. She's perfect for you. She's very sweet, she's beautiful and...she loves history, probably more than you do because she has a degree in it."

Zwe: "A degree Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "Oh yes. A whole degree in it. I don't know what else you want. All you had to do is ask her out on a date and let everything work itself out."

Zwe: "Fine. I'll ask her out on a date." He smiled.

Sibo: "Good. Whilst you're still in that good mood, Zimmy is pregnant with my child."

Zwe: "Excuse me?!"

Sibo: "Just found out."

Zwe: "And you thought you'd just slip that in there? You're sneaky! How the hell did this happen? Didn't you ask for contraceptives?"

Sibo: "They didn't work. Abakwa Biyela are tired of games, you're not making a move."

Zwe: "How are you feeling about it?"

Sibo: "Still surprised but I'm warming up quickly."

Zwe: "Congratulations, brother. You're going to make the best father."

Sibo: "Thank you. We have to come for checks and tests tomorrow."

Zwe: "Just pop by anytime, I'll be there. This is good for you. Did you tell her you're happy?"

Sibo: "I expressed that I'm accepting it." He hugged me.

Zwe: "I'm proud of you."

Sibo: "For what? Taking responsibility?"

Zwe: "No, you idiot. You're growing up."

Sibo: "Yeah, you're now going to be officially Uncle Zwe."

Zwe: "I'm putting it on my number plates." We laughed.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

Sunday late afternoon, we had an early dinner. I'd spent the rest of my afternoon with my father while Sasa slept peacefully. I wanted to wake her up so we can do our fairy things but I let her rest. She'd be starting her exams soon and she needed as much sleep as possible. We all sat down for dinner, her next to me. My first mother, as well as the twins and Amahle. We received our starters and ate quietly. I don't know what my father's problem was but he still hadn't apologized to second mother.

King: "How was your day Thembisa?" I looked at him.

Sasa: "It was good, my king. I got alot of rest in."

King: "That's good. The scones were lovely. Thank you."

Sasa: "You're welcome, My King."

Nhlanhla: "I didn't get a scone."

Nkwe: "None of us did, my sister."

Sasa: "I wasn't sure you'd want them."

King: "And why is that?"

Sasa: "I didn't think the family would like them my king." He stared at her. I stared at him. Why is he not addressing his own wife?

King: "So there's still some left I can have with my evening tea?"

Sasa: "Uhm.. no my King. My apologies." The table went quiet once again. Usually I wouldn't mind the silence but I was not used to it anymore.

Nkosi: "I came to the bedroom earlier and you'd passed out." She giggled.

Sasa: "I was hoping to take a nap for one hour. I slept so peacefully."

Nkosi: "You missed a perfect picnic day." She gasped.

Sasa: "I have a new date idea for us."

Nkosi: "Tell me."

Sasa: "You can teach me how to paint in the garden."

King: "That's a wonderful idea." I hope he doesn't think this includes him again, he keeps hijacking my dates.

Nkosi: "It is. I'm looking forward to it. Have you finished your assignment?"

Sasa: "No. I'll finish it tomorrow, I have two classes only in the morning."

King: "When do your exams start?"

Sasa: "This Thursday, my king."

King: "I guess we'll be seeing less of you."

Sasa: "I'll come for a meal once a day." He smiled. "I do have a question, my King. Is it possible to change the national wedding date-"

Nobantu: "We spoke about this and concluded it Nobomi."

Sasa: "But I didn't agree, my queen. It would be very strenuous for me to focus on both wedding and studying until the day before the wedding."

King: "What's this about?"

Nobantu: "She wants to move the wedding a week ahead. That's not possible. The date has been announced to the nation. It would be risky moving it up especially because of something like a school test. They'll think she's incapable of being a proper queen."

King: "We can move the date, isn't that right Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "I'll make the arrangements, father."

Nobantu: "My King -"

King: "Please say it again." She kept quiet. "I'm the King. Our family comes first. If she needs a week, then she gets a week. Thembisa is carrying my grandchild, she cannot be stressed."

Nkwe: "Yoh, saze salala phandle." (We're going to sleep outside.) I needed to have a talk with my father because this was getting out of hand. All along, I thought he was changing as a person but no, he actually remained the same. He only reserved his softness for one person. That's going to cause way too big a problem for Thembisa.

Narrated\*\*

Nolwazi sat in her lounge writing in her journal. Her plan was to leave once everyone had gone to bed. Nhlanhla's and her bags were packed. It was difficult finding a city where she would be private but it would only be for a short while until she leaves the country permanently. Her door opened, the King walking in. She closed her journal and stood up, bowing her head.

King: "So you can respect me."

Nolwazi: "I've always respected you, my king."

King: "Then why not sit with the family for dinner? Why plan to sneak out into the night like a thief?"

Nolwazi: "I've already explained that I do not want to be here. You won't let me leave, you leave me no choice but to escape."

King: "You do have a choice. To live. Or to die. You're living in this palace, are you not?"

Nolwazi: "I think we both know that I'm not living. I think I've realized the reason you took me from my kingdom. You wanted to taunt the Osimiri kingdom up north because I was promised to them. I've noticed this because you and their King seem to be on opposing sides and have never gotten along. I'm not going to be your chess piece any longer King Sikhosana."

King: "You're not leaving this house unless you're dead. Are we clear? This rebellion comes to an end today. You're a queen, this is not up for debate-"

Nolwazi: "Would it hurt you to at least show that you care about our children? Do you feel nothing for your own blood?"

King: "Unpack those bags, Nolwazi." He walked out. She stayed in that spot contemplating if she can outmanoeuvre her husband of 24 years. She knew him better than herself. She had to find a way out.

## Chapter 127

### SIBONELO'S POV\_

Monday morning I was awake and as now my usual also Hungry. After a shower and getting dressed, I went downstairs texting. <Morning Zim, let me know what time I can send a car maybe before afternoon?> I sent it, sitting down at the table. I haven't yet told my parents. I needed to be sure of my story. Mum will be excited but will definitely want to take over. Dad, I'm not sure about him but he has expressed in the past that he won't be happy if any of us had children outside of marriage. He said this looking at me and I did exactly that. I always find ways to disappoint him shame. Zwe sat down.

Zwe: "Morning baby daddy-"

Sibo: "Can you be quiet? I haven't told your parents."

Zwe: "What are you waiting for?"

Sibo: "We still have the check up. I need time."

Zwe: "Weeeh. The longer you wait, the more difficult it will be."

Sibo: "It won't be long." Mngqobi and Khaya came to sit down.

Mngqobi: "My brothers."

Khaya: "Good morning."

Zwe: "I'm going to be an uncle."

Sibo: "Zwelethu!"

Zwe: "I'm excited."

Mngqobi: "Who? Sboni?"

Sibo: "Don't breath a word."

Mngqobi: "Aww!! Sboni!!!"

Sibo: "Shut up!" I hissed. What is wrong with them? They laughed. "This does not leave your mouths, do you hear me? Tata can't find out yet."

Khaya: "Hm..."

Sibo: "Khaya."

Khaya: "I can't lie to a king-"

Sibo: "You're going to learn today, Biyela. Eat your food and be quiet." The helper brought the eggs. "Fuck." I got up walking to the nearest bathroom, throwing up. This can't still be happening. I washed my mouth and flushed before walking back out. "When do these concussion symptoms leave Zwelethu I'm about had enough now."

Zwe: "I don't think that's concussion symptoms, my brother." He chuckled.

Sibo: "What are you on about? You're the one that said that I'll experience some vomiting."

Zwe: "Yeah, but not for this long. It's been the whole weekend for you. Come to think of it, the way you've been eating gave it all away and your attitude, you've been very moody."

Sibo: "What's that have to do with anything?"

Zwe: "You're experiencing the pregnancy symptoms. The cravings, the morning sickness, the mood swings."

Sibo: "Don't. Fucking. Joke." They burst out laughing. This is not happening. "Zwelethu, you're lying. That's not a thing."

Zwe: "You can check it out for yourself." I don't cry. I don't. But this? This was bringing me close.

Sibo: "Sibonelo, I'm a public figure. I can't be vomitting and eating strange things."

Zwe: "I'm not Sibonelo." Even my brain is switching off. Why are they laughing?

Sibo: "Please make it stop."

Zwe: "I don't think I can." Why the urge to cry then? What's that about? "Come sit."

Sibo: "Not with those damn eggs." They almost dropped to the floor, laughing. Zwelethu was lying. He was obviously just scaring me. I went to the lounge, taking my laptop to hop on Google. Imagine lying about something that I can actually prove is a lie? UZwelethu akanawo amahloni. (Zwelethu doesn't have shame.) I searched on the search bar: Do men experience pregnancy symptoms? It even has a name. Sympathetic pregnancy. I'm in hell. There's no reason for this. Why must this happen to me? Surely it doesn't happen to everyone so why choose me?

King: "Sboni, good morn-" I quickly shut my laptop closed. "What was that?"

Sibo: "Uhm, porn." He stared at me.

King: "Sibonelo, what are you hiding?"

Sibo: "Nothing."

King: "Give me that laptop."

Sibo: "Absolutely not." I got up, walking to the dining entrance. "Zwe, I'm leaving."

Queen: "Sweetheart, come have something to eat."

Sibo: "I'm already late mama, I'll have something at the office."

Zwe: "Mnqobi, Khaya. School today. Council meeting is at 4. Your exams start this week, I'll be heading Bi-motive with father, your company Khaya, will be undertaken by Sboni."

Mnqobi: "What about that other thing we spoke about?"

Zwe: "We'll discuss it at council. Have a good day. Bye mama."

Queen: "Bye my angels."

Zwe: "HAHAHA." Why is he like this? We walked out the house.

"Jackson will be out at 8. I'll get the kids, taking them to the house so they can see him one last time. We'll leave and when he takes off, I have a car ready following him, it'll drive him off the road."

Sibo: "Are you sure this will work?"

Zwe: "The guy is a professional. He has a 98% mortality rate. I like that about him." He smiled. I chuckled.

Sibo: "I'll come to the hospital with Zimmy probably in the late morning."

Zwe: "No problem." ...

## ZWELETHU'S POV\_

After dropping Sibonelo off at work, I came back to pick up the kids at Mnqobi's. I knocked.

Siza: "Come in."

Zwe: "Hi Siza." I walked in the house, Miles came running.

Miles: "Uncle Zwe!"

Zwe: "Hello my little milo." I picked him up.

Siza: "How are you Zwe?"

Zwe: "Good. How are you?"

Siza: "I'm okay." She busied herself in the kitchen.

Zwe: "So Jackson is getting released on bail this morning."

Siza: "Oh." She looked at me.

Zwe: "I thought I'd take the kids to say Hello to him and bring them back. He'll communicate with our lawyers on visitation and such. You won't have to deal with him."

Siza: "I can't expect that of you, Bhuti. You and your family have done so much already."

Zwe: "We haven't done enough, Sizani. I won't allow Jackson to bully you and abuse you any longer. Are they ready?"

Siza: "Uhm, yeah. I just finished dressing them ready for school."

Zwe: "And the baby is still sleeping?"

Siza: "She's with Petu and Nothando. I wanted to get the babies to school first." I smiled.

Zwe: "Siza, you don't ever have to explain yourself, especially to me." She smiled.

Siza: "Let me...go get her." She walked out the kitchen going upstairs.

Zwe: "How are you little prince?"

Miles: "I'm fine."

Zwe: "Have you eaten your porridge?"

Miles: "Yes and a fruit."

Zwe: "And a fruit?? That's big boy things, man. Give me a high five." He high fived me. "Do you know where we're going today?"

Miles: "To school."

Zwe: "Not yet, little prince. We're going to go see you daddy. Do you miss him?"

Miles: "Yeah."

Zwe: "I'm sure he misses you too. We'll go and say hi before you go to school, okay?"

Miles: "Okay." I walked over to Mia, who was watching TV and singing.

Zwe: "Hi Princess."

Mia: "Hello Uncle Zwe." She carried on singing. I waited for Siza until she brought the baby down, dressed and ready.

Siza: "Should I come with?"

Zwe: "No, not for this. You don't have to. Maybe when you have to talk about custody and things of that nature with the lawyers then you'll see him."

Siza: "Thank you again, bhuti." I took the baby from her.

Zwe: "Does she also go to day care?" She laughed.

Siza: "Only three times a week. She'll go full time when I get a job."

Zwe: "Or, besides looking for a job, you can accept the bursary from Bi-motive. It pays a 7k book and essentials stipend. The only downside is that you'll have to work for the company for 3 years."

Siza: "That doesn't sound like a downside." She giggled.

Zwe: "Well... What do you say?"

Siza: "Okay. I'll apply."

Zwe: "I'll give you the number for Wanda, she's in charge of that department, she'll help with everything."

Siza: "Okay."

Zwe: "I'll see you soon." I led the kids out to the car, fastening their seatbelts. I sat in the back with them while the driver drove to Oceanview. I checked the family's individual locations then spoke to someone who was watching the court house for Jackson to come out. Mpendulo was already waiting for him and I know he'd come here. We parked and I went into the house. The kids pulled out their toys and sat on the floor playing quietly. I sat the baby next to me, switching on the TV to let her watch her show. She loved Gracie's Corner, I've seen her clapping happily while watching it. I took my phone out doing some admin until almost an hour later, I heard a car drive in. Jackson walked in the house, hesitantly.

Zwe: "Good Morning Jackson." He stared at me. The kids ran up to hug him.

Jackson: "What are you doing in my house?"

Zwe: "Your children missed you. I figured before you skip the country, you might want to hold them at least." He looked at the kids, picking up each one. I continued with my work on my phone.

Jackson: "I'm not going to skip the country."

Zwe: "Sure you won't." Mpendulo walked in. He too stared at me like I had grown a second head. He stood by the door, not taking another step in.

Mpendulo: "Prince Biyela." I focused on my emails.

Zwe: "You have one hour Jackson. They need to get to school." ....

It took all of my patience but for the sake of the kids, I let Jackson have his time and finally we left. I dropped the kids at day care and went to the hospital. I had to appoint a manager for the overall operations of the hospital. Each department had a head and they were running things well. They just needed someone to report to because I'll be busy with Bi-motive for a bit and also council. Then there's Sibonelo's request that I take out the librarian. She's gorgeous, yes. I just don't know if I'm in the space for a partner just yet. One dinner though. I got on the florist company website ordering an arrangement of roses with a note. <Good Day, Nomzamo. I apologize for the misunderstanding between my brother and I. If you can make time for me, I'd like to book a restaurant, so we can have a dinner and get to know each other. - Zwelethu.> I sent the order and typed the library address. It's a Monday afternoon so she was probably at work until 5. They'll be delivered by then. I'll give her a call right after she receives them. Sibonelo walked in my office.

Sibo: "Brother Zwe."

Zwe: "Uncle Zwe please and thank you." He laughed.

Sibo: "At this point, you want your father to kill me. He's already started chasing me around. Please Zwe, give me a second."

Zwe: "Fine. I'm giving you a week. Where is Zimmy?"

Sibo: "In the bathroom." She knocked on the door, coming in.

Zimmy: "Good morning bhuti."

Zwe: "Hello mama. How are you?" She smiled.

Zimmy: "I'm okay, how are you."

Zwe: "I'm good. Let's have a check on little Bons. Follow me." I walked out the office to my consulting room just down the passage. It was already prepped. I washed my hands. "You can lay on the bed, and lift up your top." She got on the bed. Sibonelo standing beside her pulling up her top and rubbing her belly.

Zimmy: "Thank you." He's going to be such an amazing father. This pregnancy has already started turning things around, for the first time in

days he looks more alive. He's already agreed to seeing a therapist so I know it can only get better from this point. I put on my gloves, going over to them.

Sibo: "Can you tell the gender? Is there a heartbeat?"

Zwe: "I haven't even switched on the machine?" I switched the machines on, prepping her belly.

Sibo: "Can you tell how many weeks?" Okay, he was really excited and I couldn't resist the urge to delay it even longer to frustrate him.

Zwe: "Relax."

Sibo: "Zwelethu please stop playing." I placed the transducer on her belly after having applied the gel. I looked at the monitor.

Zwe: "There. You won't see much other than a little bean."

Sibo: "Are they healthy?"

Zwe: "Everything seems good so far but we'll do blood tests to confirm."

Sibo: "Okay. What are the developments so far?" My brother, the CEO. I chuckled.

Zwe: "The main parts of the eye are starting to form, the digestive system as well."

Sibo: "That's amazing, all in this small little bean?"

Zwe: "Yep. The size of a blueberry." He laughed.

Sibo: "Zwe, unamanga wena. I know you." (You're lying.) I laughed

Zwe: "Sibonelo, read more. I'm done telling you things." An urgent knock on the door disturbed us. "Yes?" I gave Sibonelo the wipes for Jimmy's belly. My intern peeped in.

Yanda: "Dr Biyela. There's a patient who's just come in. He was in a car accident, currently in the resuscitation ward. It seems really bad, this may need you."

Zwe: "Okay. I'm on my way." She rushed out again.

Sibo: "I take it's done." He carefully wiped her belly.

Zwe: "Just a few minutes. Still clinging clearly." I smiled at Jimmy. "Do you have any questions about the baby?"

Zimmy: "Is there any food I can eat to help with the nausea? I'm not vomiting as much but I hate certain smells."

Zwe: "I don't have much information on this specific part, but I can refer you to a lady, one of our best obstetricians. She'll have much better ideas since this is her specialty." My buzzer went off.

Zimmy: "Thank you Bhuti."

Sibo: "Do we get goodies?"

Zwe: "What goodies now?"

Sibo: "Ama vitamin and stuff to keep the baby healthy Zwe." I chuckled shaking my head.

Zwe: "The obstetrician will give them to you, you'll bring them to me so I can double check. Here." I wrote a note for him. "One of the interns will open a file and you'll take it to Dr Langa. She will take care of you."

Sibo: "Okay then. I'll see you later." I walked out the room, making my way to the rescue ward. I know my staff is capable of keeping the patient alive whoever they may be but I strongly felt this was Jackson. I walked into the ward, three doctors working around him. They moved way to let me in. I was right, it was Jackson. Why is he still clinging on to life?

Zwe: "Please prep the O.R."

Doctor: "Dr Biyela, this doesn't look promising. There's nothing more we can do for the him. He's quickly dying."

Zwe: "We can hold on, just a bit longer. As surgeons, I expect you to only give up when his heart stops. And even then, try again." Mostly because if he still has viable organs, those would be fantastic for donation to other living patients who aren't deadbeat abusers. That I know of at least. "Prep the o.r." ...

Chapter 128

NKOSI'S POV\_

My morning started off with a busy itinerary. I had a virtual meeting with the construction manager eMthinomkhulu building the community center. They were almost done. Perhaps I could drive down with Thembisa during the weekend and we can see her parents. This will be amazing. I walked out of my office, going upstairs to see my wife. She's probably done with her assignment, and studying now. I entered our room, finding her in her desk, packing up.

Nkosi: "Good afternoon my love."

Sasa: "Hi baby." I kissed her, hugging her close.

Nkosi: "How's your day been?"

Sasa: "Tiring but at least I've finished my assignment. I'll start studying at 4. How was yours?"

Nkosi: "Great. It's time for us to eat now. My baby is hungry."

Sasa: "Indeed he is." She put her shoes, and I led her out the room holding her hand.

Nkosi: "How do you feel about us going down to Mthinomkhulu for a visit this weekend?"

Sasa: "Really?"

Nkosi: "Yes. I want to see the progress of the community center and the roads are done. I need to do inspections. The shopping center is also under construction."

Sasa: "Zanele says everyone is excited. She's been bugging me for a clothing shop." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "There'll be a few." We walked down the stairs. I heard what sounded like crying, which was very strange because Thembisa was right next to me. "I wonder who's that." We walked over to the lounge. The twins were on the couch, Nhlanhla crying, Nkwenkwezi trying to console her.

Nkosi: "What's going on?"

Nkwe: "We can't find Mother."

Nkosi: "Can't find her? How?"

Nkwe: "She's not in the palace bhuti."

Nkosi: "Maybe she went shopping. Why is she crying?"

Nkwe: "She didn't. Mother told her they'd be leaving last night. She never came to fetch her. We've searched the whole house, twice. She's gone."

Nkosi: "The whole house Nkwenkwezi? You? Twice?" She stared at me sarcastically. "Nkwenkwezi do you realize how big this palace is?"

Nkwe: "She's nowhere here."

Nkosi: "Okay. I'll look for her."

Sasa: "I'll find Amahle. Perhaps she knows." She went back up. I looked for my father. This had him written all over it. I found him in the garden, having a tea.

Nkosi: "Father."

King: "Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "Where is my mother."

King: "Upstairs reading, why do you ask?"

Nkosi: "My other mother."

King: "In my room." He sipped his tea.

Nkosi: "Doing what there?"

King: "She's my wife?"

Nkosi: "I don't think that's why she's there, father."

King: "Okay."

Nkosi: "Fine." I walked back into the palace.

King: "Nkosinhle Mehluli Sikhosana!!" I walked up to his wing. His room was furthest down the passage. I tried opening his door, thinking he had the decency to lock it but nope. It was unlocked. I stepped in his enormous spacious bedroom. Right there in the middle, my mother sat on the chair, unmoving.

Nkosi: "Mother." She didn't respond, didn't move or flinch. A single tear rolling down her cheek. A spark of rage bellowed inside me. He walked in behind me.

King: "I told you she was fine."

Nkosi: "Why are you like this?"

King: "Like what?"

Nkosi: "Do you not see how you are? Do you not see how you've broken your family beyond repair? You would rather hurt the woman who birthed and raised your kids instead of showing her you care. Instead of granting her one wish and letting her free. Why are you like this?" He walked over to her, standing next to the chair.

King: "There's nothing broken about this family."

Nkosi: "You're only creating problems for my wife! You're horrible to everyone else and only show kindness to her and they don't even know why! You still refuse to explain it! Do you want them to hate her?!"

King: "You can preach like a pastor all you want, your mother isn't leaving this palace and the quicker she understands that the better because I don't have the patience to explain it to her again."

Nkosi: "If this carries on, we'll have to leave."

King: "Leave?"

Nkosi: "Yes, leave. If you can't treat my mothers well, I'm taking Thembisa home, to our house. I'm not going to allow this toxicity near my wife and child."

King: "Are you threatening me?"

Nkosi: "This is not a threat, father. Simply a promise. You will only hear of your grandchild on TV." I walked out the room, out the passage of his wing toward mine. He appeared right in front of me, shocking me back a few steps. So he can teleport too? Dear God.

King: "Don't ever speak to me in that tone."

Nkosi: "Let's not do this again. I don't want to fight with you again." He chuckled.

King: "Because this time you'll lose. You're not taking her away from me." He hissed. My blood grew ice in my veins.

Nkosi: "Father, don't force my hand."

King: "Or else what." He said behind me. I turned around finding another him behind me. A duplicate.

Nkosi: "Calm down. Please."

King: "I'm a king. No one tells me what to do."

Nkosi: "I'm not telling I'm asking." Thembisa walked out of Amahle's room. Please don't look this way, please. Seeing two of my father when she knew he doesn't have a twin would not be a good idea. "Father." The second him disappeared.

King: "Don't, ever again." He walked back to his room. I went over to Thembisa.

Sasa: "Have you found her?"

Nkosi: "Yes love." I pulled her hand back to Amahle's room, closing the door. "He needs to be stopped."

Ama: "Nkosi, let it go."

Nkosi: "What do you mean? He's holding her hostage!!"

Ama: "You do not want to anger him. Leave this alone. Mother will be fine, she'll be strong. She knows she can be. If you interfere, he will kill her. Stop it now."

Nkosi: "So we just sit by and do nothing?"

Ama: "Yes. You sit by, Nkosi. And this time listen. It will work itself out."

Nkosi: "How Amahle? You already see the tension in this house!"

Ama: "Then let's ease the tension together. Let's work together only on that, including the family and talking to them. But when it comes to father? He'll defeat Satan himself including all his demons, there's no use trying."

Nkosi: "How safe is my wife in all of that!!"

Ama: "She's the safest one of all of us. His blood and soul won't allow a shred of hurt from her. Remember, he is your blood. The protection you feel for Sasa, all of it, he feels that too. He'll protect her more than protect you."

SASA'S POV \_

Things have risen in tension. I had so many questions. And I was terrified. Nkosi had called together the family and we sat in the lounge. How he managed to bring Queen Nolwazi as well, I don't know. The only people who weren't present were Amahle and the king.

Nkosi: "I don't want to keep you all, I just feel that as a family we haven't really spoken but instead kept secrets and often lashed out. This is important and can't be delayed any longer."

Nkwe: "Where is father?"

Nkosi: "Amahle is entertaining him."

Nhlanhla: "Is she dancing for him?" That would be hilarious.

Nkosi: "No. She's not dancing. They're simply having a chat. Mothers, you already know that Thembisa is a treasure blood, what we didn't explain is what this actually means. There was a village, called eMcebo village. This is the village Ma Nonkosi was born and raised in. This is where King Ngidumise met her and their love story began. Mcebo village wasn't just any village. It is said, that soil births companions of the throne. Anyone born on it, is treasure blood and they are destined to marry a ruling King for there to be balance. Are there any questions so far?"

Nobantu: "Then how does she have treasure blood? The village was long gone before she was even born."

Nkosi: "Her father was born eMcebo. He is the only one who managed to wake up and escape while the village was burning. We have spoken and he described it as, it felt like someone told him to wake up and run. He just started running without hearing or seeing, then further away stopped and looked back. He remembers only then, he could hear the screams, the burning of homes and people. He remembers seeing Papa and he ran away, hiding. As our family, we know we have abilities. Papa could whisper."

Nhla: "I can also whisper."

Nolwazi: "Nhlanhla. Let your brother speak." I looked at Nhlanhla. She knows what I mean, I know she knows so why would she say that?

Nkosi: "We believe Papa whispered to Thembisa's father and got him to run. We are still not sure why but he managed to escape and later conceive Thembisa. She has been confirmed twice. As we'd explained,

she has dreams. The most prevalent one being Mam Nonkosi in the time she was alive. Her latest dream however, was as her spirit after she had died. Thembisa has given father something no one will ever be able to give him. She didn't choose it. She didn't ask for it. This doesn't mean she's here to take your place as his wife or his daughter. We're only learning, getting guidance from the ancestors through her on how to fix this family."

Nobantu: "And what is she giving him?"

Nkosi: "Answers, closure. She's here to work with us to grow this family closer."

Nolwazi: "What about this village? This treasure village. You said it births companions?"

Nkosi: "Yes. It used to. The only one we know so far is King Ngidumise's wife, Mam Nonkosi. We're trying to understand which other king has married treasure blood and why was there a disconnect between them and King Bhekizizwe."

Nolwazi: "So... Your lineage is only supposed to marry hers?"

Nkosi: "I don't know mama, but what I know is father does care. That's why he doesn't want you to leave. He just doesn't know how to show i-"

Nolwazi: "No he does!! He does know how to show care because he's showing it to her. Our only sin is that we weren't born with her blood."

Nkosi: "That is not a sin, mother. It doesn't make you any less than."

Nolwazi: "So this means, she's a princess?"

Nkosi: "No."

Nolwazi: "Yes Nkosihle. If her blood is aligned to be a companion to only kings, that means she's deemed royalty. She's a princess." He looked at me, I looked at him. I could see him trying to calculate something in his head.

Nkosi: "Yes."

Me: "No."

Nkosi: "Thembisa, your father has never struggled. Anything he touches is a success instantly. From escaping the village to finding the family that

took him in and having to run away with nothing to his name, losing a job. He got to eMthinomkhulu and became successful once again."

Me: "That doesn't mean he's royal. He's just good with his hands and very smart in business."

Nolwazi: "Sisi, stop trying to hide. This is not about his talents. The Sikhosana royals have been ruling for centuries. If their ruling is accompanied by your blood centuries deep, that makes you royal. You are a princess in the underworld. A high rank one at that." The lounge was quiet. I don't know how I felt about that but it didn't really matter in the grand scheme of things.

Nhla: "Thembisa is a princess, so she belongs in our family, mother?" She wasn't looking at Queen Nolwazi, she looked at Queen Nobantu.

Nobantu: "Yes. With or without her blood, she is your brother's wife. She is family."

Nkosi: "We all need to work together. I understand feelings of envy may arise, that is normal. Perhaps, if you all took time and got to know Thembisa individually, you'll understand that her nature is very soft and caring. Also, it may help soften the king. This is not a time we should be against each other, we have a bigger problem that we've delayed for a bit. Being united as a family is the only way we can defeat it." ...

## MTHUNZI'S POV\_

While I still had a free moment, I decided maybe it's time I visited Busi. I haven't heard from her, she hasn't responded to any of my messages. I didn't want to invade her privacy still by spying on the camera to make sure she didn't hurt herself. I parked the car, walking to the door and knocked. No answer. I walked into the house, finding her in the bedroom.

Mthunzi: "Baby." She jumped up, shaking violently. "Its me. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you." Her eyes were swollen, body trembling. She was having another breakdown. "Busi? I'm so sorry my love." I knelt in front of her holding her hands. "I am so so sorry. I wish I didn't hurt you. From now, please, I will accept any decision you make. If it happens that you are pregnant, you can decide what to do love. I'll accept anything. I

don't want to lose you, Busi. I wasn't thinking about how much this would actually hurt you. Having a child is not more important than having you in my life. I can live without a child, I cannot begin to even think of living without you. Please forgive me, Busi." She wiped her eyes, sniffing.

Busi: "Mthunzi."

Mthunzi: "Yes."

Busi: "Are you seeing me?"

Mthunzi: "Yes, I am seeing you. I will do anything to make things right."

Busi: "I can't see you."

Mthunzi: "What?"

Busi: "Mthunzi, I'm blind. I cannot see anything." I stared at her. "I woke up this morning, went to the bathroom and when I came back, my vision dimmed to black." How the hell did that happen?

Mthunzi: "Why didn't you call me?"

Busi: "How?"

Mthunzi: "There's guards in the yard, love?"

Busi: "How would I know it's really guards or the witch again?"

Mthunzi: "Shit. I'm sorry. Okay, I'm getting you dressed, we're going to the hospital."

Busi: "I don't think that will help."

Mthunzi: "it's orth a try." I went to her wardrobe picking out a navy tracksuit a white t-shirt and sneakers. I sent a quick message to Nkosi explaining what has happened then helped her dress. I held her hand leading her out of the house but she was aware of corners and steps. It was her house after all. We got in the car, driving off. "How have you been? Have you had any dreams?"

Busi: "A few. A bit strange. Yesterday afternoon, I took a nap and had a dream about a house I've never been to yet I knew I had to call Bethany. It turns out, the guy she was dating is a ritualist, I gave her the instructions I saw in my dream so that she escapes him safely."

Mthunzi: "Unamanga! So he was a red flag?"

Busi: "Imagine. She's so rattled. I also dreamt of another woman I don't know, just this morning. She looks similar to Sasa, does she have a sister?"

Mthunzi: "Yes, describe her."

Busi: "She had long unkept dreadlocks, her eyes were the similar feature to Sasa. She was living in the woods somewhere." That's definitely not Zanele.

Mthunzi: "Baby, can we go to the palace instead? I think there's a problem we haven't figured out. Your dreams may be related to why you can't see and the healer can help."

Busi: "Mthunzi how disrespectful would I be to show up at the palace dressed like this?" I chuckled.

Mthunzi: "That doesn't matter in this situation." I changed my route toward the palace. I know I wasn't out of the dog box yet and I didn't want to irritate her. I could only be grateful that she is speaking to me at least.

## SASA'S POV\_

I know it was the worst time but I was really hungry. The family was still talking about royal things that were probably important. My brain was focused on food. Amahle walked in and gave me a plate.

Me: "I could kiss you."

Ama: "I know." She smiled. I ate the sandwich happily. I was the most fortunate person in the world to have her and Nkosi. Hopefully soon, the family will warm just a little. I wasn't holding my breath but it would be amazing if we could all just get along. Imagine the brunches out in the courtyard? I'm already sizzling.

Nkosi: "Mthunzi just arrived. Apparently there's a problem." The King walked in. I had gobbled up my sandwich and now felt awkward just chewing in silence. Mthunzi and Busi walked in.

Mthunzi: "Good day my king, queens and princesses." Busi also greeted right after him.

Nkosi: "Hello."

Me: "Hi Mthunzi, Busi."

Mthunzi: "I don't want to waste anytime. Busi woke up today going to the bathroom, by the time she came back she couldn't see. Currently as we speak, she is blind."

Nkosi: "I've called the healer, he'll be here in a few minutes."

Mthunzi: "Baby, tell them of your dream." She bowed her head.

Busi: "The dream I had this morning was of a woman I've never seen before. She was in the woods, looking to be in tatters. She also had a bit of resemblance to Sasa in her eyes."

Nkosi: "What was she doing."

Busi: "Nothing. She was sitting at some point. Singing."

Me: "Could it be Zanele? My sister looks very similar to me."

King: "That's not your sister. The person this girl is seeing is the witch."

Nkosi: "How can you be so sure?"

King: "The same morning she saw her face, she's gone blind. That's not a coincidence. She's the only person that can point her out, and now she cannot see because of that." ...

## Chapter 129

### SIBONELO'S POV\_

After seeing my baby in the monitor, I couldn't help but feel excited. The obstetrician did a second check, some blood tests and gave Jimmy vitamins that she made clear I am not allowed to drink. I had to ask. We drove out of the hospital.

Sibo: "What do you want to eat?"

Zimmy: "A triple cheese, smooth bun smashed patties with fried tomato, crispy lettuce and creamy sauce. Hmmm. I can taste it in my mouth already."

Sibo: "That sounds really good. Are you done with school for the day?"

Zimmy: "Yes."

Sibo: "Okay, let's get the food, we'll go back to the house so we can have a proper chat."

Zimmy: "About what?"

Sibo: "The baby."

Zimmy: "Okay." We drove into the drive-through, made the order times two, a side of chicken wings and also fries then we left. I didn't want to be in my house, I was thinking of moving to another one in fact. There was plenty of open property in the estate but the houses that were available were proper mansions. Mine was a medium sized double story, as well as Zwe's, Mngqobi and Khaya's. Any other house was as big as our palace and I didn't need that much space yet. Maybe when we have more kids. I did want more kids, I was hoping for twins but I guess we can do the Zwe and I method as well. I want my children to be very close in age that they live like twins. More like my brothers and I. I'll have to do a good job in convincing this lady. I looked next to me, she was munching on her fries. I drove into the estate, parking my car in front of my house. There were three guards around it and I traveled with three myself. The routine now, was first inspection before I enter.

Zimmy: "Why aren't we getting out of the car?"

Sibo: "We will when they're done inspecting the house."

Zimmy: "Even though the guards were already guarding?"

Sibo: "Yes. We don't want another security breach. Especially now that this little one is coming. That's why I need us to talk."

Zimmy: "Alright." The guards came out.

Guard: "All clear, My Prince." We got out the car, walking into the house. I hadn't been here since Friday. It no longer felt like my private space. I felt naked here, watched even. Zimmy set up the table with the food, pouring me juice then sat down to eat. I dove right into my burger, finishing it in minutes.

Sibo: "Perfection." I mumbled, munching on my chips. I waited for her to finish eating. Look at her trying to starve my child. "Why are you eating

like a lady? Zimmy ingane yami ilambile." She laughed, covering her mouth. I missed seeing that.

Zimmy: "You're going to make me choke." She finished finally, wiping her mouth. "So, what do you want to chat about?"

Sibo: "First of all, security. You're carrying a Prince or Princess. It's only a matter of time it goes public. Mostly because, apart from being a royal, I'm also a public figure with a very big influence and company. Tabloids are going to nitpick you, follow you around and possibly bully you. I need you protected at all times. First, you have to tell your parents. As soon as possible. Secondly, you can't live at that res."

Zimmy: "Telling my parents, yes I agree. I'll call them tonight. Moving out of res though? I don't know. Where am I going to live Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "Here in Stellars. I won't be using this house anymore. All the other houses are enormous so I will be building a new house just down the road."

Zimmy: "Sibonelo, I can't live with you."

Sibo: "Why not?"

Zimmy: "Do you not remember the reason we fell off? You refused to communicate properly about your space. You don't want anyone in your space, especially when you're not there."

Sibo: "But things are different now Zimasa, you're carrying me inside you."

Zimmy: "I understand you want the baby protected and I accept that it must happen but I think the living arrangement should be different. I don't want my own house here, as you said, this place is very overwhelming. Maybe I can rent an apartment in one of the secure buildings. Or Khaya's apartment, I can rent from him and then maybe you can appoint a guard."

Sibo: "No child of mine will be living in an apartment."

Zimmy: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "No, Zimmy. This is not up for debate. My child lives in Stellars. Whilst they are growing in your belly, this is where you live. If you want to leave after you give birth, then that's fine but my child stays here."

Zimmy: "I'll need you to listen to me, Sibonelo. This baby is both ours. We both get an equal say. I'm not willing to live in your house. I don't want this to seem as though I'm trying to worm my way into your heart. We've already established, you don't want anyone in your house. Changing that will have me questioning every mood you're in. I will be attaching it to my presence in your space and that won't make me comfortable at all. So, no."

Sibo: "Okay, I understand that but can we try? Mnqobi's house is only three bedrooms so you can't stay with the girls. Also, I don't want you to. They are his responsibility. You're mine. I have to take care of you. Unless, you want to live in the palace."

Zimmy: "I'm not your wife, that's not allowed. Why can't we try my idea first?"

Sibo: "Nope. I'm not willing to dangle with my child's life or yours."

Zimmy: "Fine. I'll give it some thought."

Sibo: "Thank you. I'll be telling my parents tonight. Zwe is already exploding with excitement. Can you believe he ordered his new car today? He calls it the baby car." She laughed.

Zimmy: "That's cute."

Sibo: "Babe, my family is going to overwhelm you. You're carrying the first grandchild. It's going to get suffocating at times. I'm going to overstep too because this is my first, so I'll need you to tell me if it's too much."

Zimmy: "Okay."

Sibo: "I don't want to go back to work, council has been postponed. I am sleepy and full."

Zimmy: "I have some work I need to finish-"

Sibo: "Later. For now, just rest. Wena you want my child to come out with muscles and a degree." She laughed.

Zimmy: "Yoh, usile. Let's go to the couch ke so you can sleep while I watch my show. Naomi took her husband back."

Sibo: "Unamanga! I knew it."

Zimmy: "His side chick is pregnant."

Sibo: "Weeeh. You see now you spoiled it? Please rewind. I'm getting a fleece." I walked to the second bedroom taking out a fleece.

## SASA'S POV\_

The healer had arrived and immediately started working on Busi. He even had his own room/consulting area in the house. He's very important here. He, Busi and Amahle only had gone inside. I waited anxiously but Nkosi distracted me a little by taking a walk in the garden. It was now dark but definitely more beautiful than anything I've ever seen. There were path lights along the pathway and also garden lights. They weren't just ANY garden lights. Each area light reflected off the colour of the flower. I wanted to jump up and down with excitement. It was the prettiest thing I've ever seen.

Nkosi: "You can take a video for your friends, baby."

Me: "Really? I'm allowed to do that?"

Nkosi: "Yes my love. They'll never get to see it physically so it will be nice for you to be able to show them." He kissed my head.

Me: "Thank you baby. I'm going to use your phone because it takes better pictures." He laughed. After taking a video and some pictures, we walked back down to the palace. We walked into the lounge where the family sat quietly. Queen Nobantu was reading her book. Queen Nolwazi on her tablet. I watched my videos, still marveling at how beautiful the garden was at night.

Nkosi: "You really like it?"

Me: "It's so beautiful. Imagine stargazing in the night? That would be amazing."

Nkosi: "We could try that. Like a picnic at night." Amahle walked in holding Busi's hand and the healer followed behind them.

King: "Well?"

Healer: "My King. It is true that she has seen the witch. Unfortunately her eyesight cannot return."

King: "What can you tell me that is of use to me?"

Healer: "She hasn't only seen the witch but knows exactly where she is hiding as well. On top of that, she can feel her."

Busi: "She keeps coming closer my king. She only sends her spirits in bodies of the dead to distract us. Meanwhile she is moving closer."

King: "Give me those directions and I'll bring her head." He stood up.

Busi: "There won't be a need for that my king. She is coming."

King: "Coming where? Here to my house?"

Busi: "Yes my king. The guards won't be able to see her. There's only one person who can. That's who she's come to take." The king chuckled low and deep.

King: "Let her in." my spine felt cold with his tone. I had no doubt in my mind he would ravage her the same way he did Samu.

Nkosi: "She's treasure blood, father."

King: "I don't care what she is. I'm painting that ceiling with her blood."

Nkosi: "That's not the concern father. What if the ancestors punish you for hurting their blood? We are still repairing what Papa did in the past."

King: "She's here to harm the only Good one left!! I'd rather fight through all spiritual realms to protect this throne. If they punish us for that then rather there be no throne."

Ama: "Father is right. Her intention is not good."

Nkosi: "Before we do something that cannot be undone, we should consult." He looked at me.

Me: "Why are you looking at me?"

Nkosi: "You can call on Mam Nonkosi, baby. You can ask her."

Me: "She won't appear here Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Love, she will-"

Me: "Something happened. I don't know what yet. But I think her spirit is no longer in the palace. It could've been chased out."

King: "She's right. I don't remember feeling her spirit after a while." He looked at me. "What do you think we should do, to the witch?"

Nobantu: "Wouldn't be surprised if she invited her in for tea." She turned the page on her book.

Nolwazi: "She'd probably want to hear the devil's side of the story too." The twins giggled.

Ama: "Mother, that's mean."

Nobantu: "She needs mean, she's too soft."

King: "Nobantu." He warned. "Thembisa what do you want us to do?" Was it such a bad thing that I wanted to hear this witch's story? Where does she come from? How are they a witch? How long have they been out there? Because if she's a child of another person that escaped, who is that person and how did they escape? Tea would solve these questions. I don't care if that makes me soft.

Me: "We could lure her close and trap her. Is there a way to block her spells? That way when she's captured she doesn't affect one of us. Once she's caught, then she can answer some questions. How many of them exist? Where are they? How did they escape the fire?"

Nkwe: "Did you bake more scones? Think she'd appreciate those."

Me: "Make fun but this is important. What if she's not the only one? The description Busi gave us is of someone she pictures as similar to me, not an older woman. The village burnt down when my father was only 11. Unless she has a spell or potion to make her look young."

Nolwazi: "Don't forget to put that in your questionnaire my dear, I will need it when I'm 60." I giggled. She's the last person to need a youth spell. She didn't look a day over 40.

Nkosi: "My love, you know she can't stay for long though. She has your blood. Our blood feels protective over yours in a short burst of time."

Me: "Yes, I know. And I'll need you. You can whisper so when I ask a question, she may not answer but I'm going to thought provoke the answer she doesn't want to say and you will access it."

Nobantu: "You can thought provoke? How does that even happen?"

Me: "You ask questions, my queen. As you ask them you also give answers to what applies to you. More like having a conversation with yourself. Eventually the next person starts thinking about their own answers even if they don't say it. They'll think it."

Ama: "Yeah, she's relentless. She'll worm her way into anything. Thembisa will talk for days."

Nkosi: "Asks alot of questions too."

King: "Then give the stupidest answers to those same questions." They chuckled.

Me: "Okay I'm not that bad. You've met Zanele."

Nkosi: "Your exact replica. Niyafana." (You're the same.)

Ama: "Zanele is actually funny. Remember the outside lunch when she told us about her mother's church?" We laughed.

King: "Where was I?"

Nkosi: "You were at Stellars. It was before you joined us."

Me: "Okay. So we're all on board with what must happen?"

Ama: "Yes. However, you might have to lure her. Busi, do you have an idea of how she'll appear?"

Busi: "She doesn't know she's been waited on. Sasa needs to be herself. I assume her way in would be around the trees. Treasure bloods love nature so Sasa can be in the garden doing something she usually does."

Nkosi: "Fairy things." We chuckled.

Me: "And when she approaches?"

Nkosi: "I'll block her spells. She won't be able to harm or flee. Because of your good nature you're the only one she can trust because of your blood therefore you can lure her in." I was nervous as hell. I've never seen a real life witch but I trusted Nkosi more than anything. He'd never let me get hurt.

Me: "Okay."

Busi: "She's close. It's time for you to go out. Remember Thembisa, act natural. Do what you usually do when in the garden."

Nkosi: "Do your fairy things baby. I'm right here, she won't dare harm you." I nodded and exhaled. Here goes nothing.

## Chapter 130

### SIBONELO'S POV\_

It's been a very relaxed day. I even fell asleep. Zimmy was still watching TV. I woke up, stretching.

Sibo: "Hey."

Zimmy: "Hey. You fell asleep."

Sibo: "Hm... I was really sleepy. Is there still food?"

Zimmy: "Yes, I left you some wings and fries."

Sibo: "What did you eat then?"

Zimmy: "I made macaroni and cheese." My mouth watered.

Sibo: "Is there still some left?" She smiled.

Zimmy: "Yes there is." She got up, walking to the kitchen. Another problem I now suddenly had was the hard one in my pants. A very strange uncomfortable feeling passed. I took out my phone checking for messages. Zwe had texted. I responded to him: <I'm at my house with Zimmy.>

Zwe: <I know that. When are you coming home?>

Sibo: <Haibo Zwe, I'm a father now. I can come back whenever I want.>  
I chuckled.

Zwe: <I'm telling your mother.>

Sibo: <ZWELETHU! I'll be home in an hour. Goodness.> He sent back laughing emoji's. This bully. Zimmy brought me a tray.

Zimmy: "Here you go."

Sibo: "Thank you babe."

Zimmy: "Can I pour you a drink?"

Sibo: "Just a juice is fine, where's your food?"

Zimmy: "I'm bringing it now. You don't want a whiskey? You usually have it after dinner."

Sibo: "Yeah, that was before the pregnancy. Just juice will be okay."

Zimmy: "What does my pregnancy have to do with your drink?"

Sibo: "It's not good for the baby."

Zimmy: "But I'm carrying the baby?" She giggled.

Sibo: "Yes but I'm carrying the support angithi?" She brought me my juice and her food.

Zimmy: "Thank you. Your support means a lot to me."

Sibo: "You're welcome." I ate my food. I appreciated this one part of the symptoms. Food tasted so damn good. By the time she gives birth I'll be carrying a food baby in my own belly. "I have to go the palace for about an hour or two. Please don't take offense, I don't want to leave you alone in this house. It's part of the reason I want to move. I'd rather you waited for me at Mnqobi's."

Zimmy: "Can you tell me why?"

Sibo: "Why I have to go the palace? To tell my parents babe."

Zimmy: "No, why you can't leave me alone in this house?" This is not something I felt like talking about.

Sibo: "Do you remember Megan?"

Zimmy: "Your girlfriend? Yes."

Sibo: "Definitely not my girlfriend. After that night at the club, I brought her here, yes. I didn't call her back after that. So she started to stalk me. Everywhere. And eventually, She broke into the house. She held me hostage in the basement. Zwe and Nkosi had to break open the door." I pulled up my sleeves.

Zimmy: "Oh my God. I am so sorry."

Sibo: "So do you understand why I don't want to compromise your safety? What if there's hundreds other women out there who feel jealous when they hear the news of our pregnancy and start attacking you? I can't risk that Zimmy. Sometimes, people who harm are not too far away. I can't risk our child like that."

Zimmy: "Okay. I understand but how did she get in here? Will we be safe here?"

Sibo: "She works for Reynard Smith properties and he lives here. So she disguised it as coming to his house for some work shit and she was let in. You'll be safe. She was arrested. Zwe has a meeting with my father and Reynard's lawyers this week. Either we buy the family out which is what we want to do or they'll have to sign a contract that prevents them from allowing anyone onto the property without our head of security checking them." I would never tell her she's already dead. No one would ever know that. She'll be missing, yes. However, according to the royal detention center, she was released.

Zimmy: "This is so horrible Sibonelo." She touched my bruises.

Sibo: "I'll be fine but are we on the same page?"

Zimmy: "Yeah absolutely. If this can be done to you, a royal prince, imagine what they'd do to me. The girls at res go insane over you."

Sibo: "That's strange because I've never even dated in your res."

Zimmy: "They see you around the city. When you were out mostly."

Sibo: "Yeah I'm over that now. Nothing out there is worth it. All I need is right here." I held her tummy. I couldn't wait to see it grow.

Zimmy: "Is this your way of asking me to stop clubbing?" I laughed.

Sibo: "Zimmy, how can you club when you can't drink?"

Zimmy: "I won't be pregnant forever."

Sibo: "It's fine then, you can go clubbing and leave me with my child. I don't mind." She giggled.

Zimmy: "It's good that you don't mind because it will happen."

Sibo: "Ngivele ngik'mithise after 3 months uphelelwe amandla." She laughed.

Zimmy: "Do you think I'd sleep with you again?"

Sibo: "Haibo Zimasa, how will our child have a sibling?"

Zimmy: "This one is barely showing and wena you're thinking of siblings? Do you want me dead?"

Sibo: "i-Dead yeyani, uzohlutshwa ubani?" She shook her head, laughing.

Zimmy: "I'm not doing that with you again."

Sibo: "Hawu? Am I that bad?"

Zimmy: "No but we're fine like this."

Sibo: "Ingane ifuna i-sibling Zimmy. He's lonely."

Zimmy: "Don't lie about my child. He's very happy in there. In fact, let me manifest a girl. I want a daughter so bad."

Sibo: "We might have to try a few times. Do you see how long it took my mom to get Zinhle? Abakwa Biyela want their princes first." I watched her cackling on the couch thinking I'm joking. I was not, I do want a daughter, maybe two but it's unlikely we get one the first time and she's carrying all of these babies. I don't want anyone else to. "Do you think I'm joking Zimasa?"

Zimmy: "I refuse to believe you're not." I chuckled.

Sibo: "Don't cry when you're carrying me every year. You started."

Zimmy: "Started? I didn't start anything. This is the last baby you're getting out of me." I laughed long and hard.

Sibo: "I'll print you a t-shirt with that slogan, you'll wear it in every labour." We laughed.

Zimmy: "Mxim. Please take me home."

Sibo: "Already? You don't want to rest a little?"

Zimmy: "I was resting all day though. This was fun but I need to study and do some work. Plus I have to talk to my parents tonight." I didn't want her to go but I had to tread slowly if I want to win her back.

Sibo: "Okay. Think about what we talked about."

Zimmy: "I already have. I know my parents will be disappointed but it might help that you're supportive. I'm not sure how they'll react to moving in though."

Sibo: "If they need to talk to me, you can give them my number. Nami, I'm telling mine tonight and they'll want to do things right."

Zimmy: "Okay. Let's go ke." ...

ZWELETHU'S POV\_

It's been a bit of a long day. Jackson's surgery went well but I did make a bit of insurance to make sure he doesn't wake up. The accident was bad, he didn't have much hope but he had made it to hospital so I couldn't risk it. I'd have to have the donor conversation with Siza tomorrow. She had come to the hospital to check on him. He was still her husband and father of her children so it was expected. I sat in the lounge watching TV with Khaya. Sibonelo was at his house, I'd checked the security and he was surrounded and safe. He seemed to be enjoying his new journey. I was excited. This baby was our first. There will have to be a sibling very soon because he or she will be suffocated with love. We'll probably fight over who takes care of the baby. He'll definitely need a sibling to share with. Mngqobi can't, he's still figuring out his marriage arrangement, so I had to? Because Khaya is not even thinking of being a dad. This would be a problem. I couldn't even call Nomzamo during the day because I got busy at work and now it was after hours. I could get her number but I didn't want to do that. She didn't give it to me so that would be invading her privacy. I'll have to go to the library tomorrow morning and ask. I hope she liked the flowers. I wasn't sure still about actually dating her. She seemed really sweet and her job is my hobby. But I don't like sweet women. I get bored. My kind of woman must be daring, bold, love taking risks. I didn't even care about degrees and beauty. Just be exciting. Nomzamo looked like she would break if I even held her arm. She had a thick body, with beautiful dark skin. Soft pretty eyes. No doubt her skin was just as soft. I was obviously attracted to her. I just hope she wasn't as sweet as she portrays.

Zwe: "Bug, what's up?" He's been staring at his phone for a bit now.

Khaya: "Nothing Bhut Zwe."

Zwe: "Looks like something. Talk to me."

Khaya: "Nkwenkwezi confuses me. I thought she really liked me. Texted me every second of the day. If she woke up at 3 in the morning, she'll text. Now, she's just kind of stopped. We spoke throughout the morning but she's suddenly gone quiet again. Saturday too. She said she's having family troubles."

Zwe: "Family troubles? Perhaps they're adjusting as a family to Thembisa. She's living there with them and remember the princesses are a bit spoilt so they may be feeling jealous."

Khaya: "Oh!! I understand now. Maybe that's the problem. So what do I do to help?"

Zwe: "They'll work it out. Don't worry about it. Just be supportive." Our parents walked in.

Queen: "Good evening sweethearts. Dinner will be ready in just 20 minutes. Where is Sboni?" Shit.

Zwe: "Uhm...he's working."

King: "What is he hiding? Tell me Zwe. He was acting very sketchy this morning."

Zwe: "Hiding? Sibonelo? He's the most open one of all of us. He'll crack eventually." I chuckled.

King: "You know him. He won't crack until he's pressured. Zwe, what did you do to my child? This is not like him."

Zwe: "But Baba, he'll talk when he's ready. You know I can't say anything about him." Just then, he walked in.

Sibo: "Family." He sat down.

Queen: "Hello baby. How are you?" He looked at me. I looked at my phone smiling.

Sibo: "I'm fine mama, how are you?"

Queen: "I'm well. We're about to have dinner. Your father wants to talk to you."

Sibo: "About what Baba?"

King: "I want you to feel free to tell us anything."

Sibo: "Zwelethu."

King: "It's okay son. We can talk about it as a family."

Sibo: "What are we talking about?"

King: "Are you gay?"

Sibo: "No Baba. I'm not gay. Why would you think I'm gay?"

King: "You're secretive, we just wanted to know what is happening with you lately. Maybe you met someone. Is that why you didn't want to settle with all the women you've been with?"

Sibo: "I think we're too close as a family and this might make things worse."

Queen: "What will?"

Sibo: "Uhm... A couple of weeks ago, I was seeing Zimmy. As you know. We just found out she's pregnant. With my baby." Our mother gasped, holding her mouth.

King: "Sibonelo, uthini?"

Sibo: "I'm going to be a father, baba." Mama started screaming and singing. This was expected, she was begging for a grandchild. Our father on the other hand wasn't too happy.

King: "Sibonelo, this isn't what I'd asked for, my son. I told you before, I don't want you four to have children out of wedlock. This will make things difficult."

Sibo: "I know baba. I wasn't planning on this. We got an injection to prevent but we didn't wait. It was honestly a mistake."

King: "What is your plan?"

Sibo: "I spoke to her today, we're planning on moving her in the estate-"

King: "No Sibonelo. You're not going to cohabit. You've already gotten this girl pregnant, you're not about to disrespect her father by taking her in without even honoring him with cows. That's not how I raised you."

Queen: "Kodwa baba, does that mean he must marry her?"

King: "I'm not saying he must. All I'm saying is, he's not going to disrespect that girl and her family like that."

Sibo: "I understand Baba. She's telling her family tonight as well, so I'm expecting a call from her father. I'll hear from him what they need. Do you have any advice?"

King: "We have to wait on him, son. Our traditions differ. If she starts showing and he doesn't make a sign then we will have to knock. She's carrying a Prince. He must be welcomed in our home and protected." He smiled. "MaBiyela, please pay me my money."

Queen: "Now? You can't even let me enjoy this moment Baba ka Zwe?"

Zwe: "Why am I in it?"

Sibo: "What are we paying for?"

King: "Your mother and I had a bet on who'd be the first to bring home a pregnancy. She said Zwe, I put my money on you. I believed in you, my son." We laughed.

## SASA'S POV \_

I walked out into the garden. It wasn't as dark because of the lights. I had my phone in my hand, I'd use it to act natural I suppose. I looked at the flowers in the garden, glowing like stars. It looked so enchanting, I walked further down the path. I reached the trees, their lights didn't reflect back. They were regular lights on the ground. I don't think this lady is coming. There is no way she can sneak into a palace. Unless of course she has abilities like the Sikhosana's but that's not possible. A witch doesn't have super natural abilities, maybe potions and spells but definitely not powers. I was in the safest place in the kingdom. Feeling a little more confident, I walked through the tree path humming a little tune. The weather was transitioning to winter from autumn. I forgot to take a jersey. Wait, do I even own jersey's? Surely I must have a few. I don't! I had to give up my clothes for royal wife clothes according to my mother. I'd only come back to Mountain Peak with a small bag of clothes that was a few dresses and shoes. At least I'm allowed to wear pants even though they weren't my favorite kind of clothing. I really loved my skirts and dresses. Are those guavas? It's a guava tree! I've had only but one guava in my life. I didn't like it but maybe it wasn't ripe yet? If that's a thing. I remember the day like it was yesterday, I was with dad in town shopping for the farm. I wanted to taste a guava but hated it immediately. Maybe this is different. The fruits that grow on Sikhosana soil are always sweet except, I can't reach up the tree to pick one. My height was an inconvenience at times like these. Jumping wasn't going to even help. Nkosi will have to come. His baby wants to taste a guava. I giggled, walking forward. Plums! Well, that was expected. There was hardly a fruit that didn't grow in this garden. It was huge. I was actually bored now and a little tired. Maybe even hungry.

Me: "Okay. So I can't reach the fruit, maybe a sandwich will do." I turned around to walk back, getting the shock of my life. Who. The. Hell. Was. This. I immediately started shaking. This can't be the witch. It isn't. It

obviously wasn't a guard, judging from the clothes. "Can I help you?" He smiled.

Him: "Hello." Definitely not a guard. Panic was setting in. Why is there a man following me inside Sikhosana grounds? I pressed the emergency button on my phone.

Me: "Who are you?" I backed away from him.

Him: "A friend." He smiled. My vision blurred, my body feeling limp but I didn't reach the ground. All went black.

## Chapter 131

### NKOSI'S POV\_

The cat came into the lounge, purring. That's new. Glacivory never leaves her mother's room. Amahle was also confused.

Nhlanhla: "There's someone in the garden."

Nolwazi: "Yes Nhlanhla. Thembisa went outside."

Nhlanhla: "No there's someone else."

King: "There's guards throughout the palace grounds Nhlanhla."

Nhlanhla: "Father, it's not a guard." We looked at her.

Nkosi: "I can't feel the witch's energy yet. Busi can you feel anything?"

Busi: "No, it's just blank." The healer confirmed.

Nkosi: "Nhlanhla why are you saying there's someone in the garden?"

Nhlanhla: "The cat says so." This wasn't the time but I let out a small chuckle.

Nkosi: "Nhlanhla."

Nhla: "I'm serious bhuti. Go check." I saw the alert go off on my phone. Emergency. I didn't even feel the witch here yet so what was going on? I took off running towards where she was. In less than a minute I reached the dark dimly lit pathway her energy was in. She wasn't here. Father appeared with dozen of him searching through the trees. Her phone lay

on the ground. This cannot be happening. I picked it up, searching through the garden.

Nkosi: "Thembisa!!!" Nothing. Silence. I could feel the ice in my veins. Back in the palace, I ran in to the healer. "Find her. NOW!!"

Nobantu: "Mehluli, are you saying she's missing?"

Nkosi: "Yes!! This was on the ground. She only managed to send an emergency alert. Nhlanhla, who did you say is in the yard?"

Nhla: "The cat said so Bhuti." She was about to piss me off with this.

Nkosi: "Nhlanhla."

Nolwazi: "Nhlanhla, please darling. Tell us exactly what the cat said. Ask it even."

Nhla: "She said there is someone in the garden. There's a man in the garden. That's all." I went back out searching through the garden once more. I climbed up to the roof, looking down in the gardens. There can't be a man in the garden. Was the witch a man? That can't be. They've only been described as a woman. Did they send someone? Did they know we're waiting? My heart was hammering in my chest. How could I not feel the danger in our home? How did they get past all of us? It wasn't just me. It was Amahle, and father as well. How did they do that? I climbed back down, going back to her last spot. Amahle was there as well looking for any clues.

Ama: "It's like she just vanished into thin air."

Nkosi: "That can't happen Amahle. We need to find her."

Ama: "Let's go in." We went back to the house. My chest was burning inside, my hands shaking. Father walked back in, visibly pissed. He stood in front of Busi.

King: "Take me to where she is. You said you know where she is right? Move."

Busi: "My King, I've only seen the area she is in, I don't know how to get there."

King: "You better make a plan, little girl. I'm giving you five minutes!"

Ama: "Father."

King: "Don't." I walked back out to the garden. Maybe we're missing something. No one can come in and out of here unless they have abilities. I combed through the entire garden once more. Nothing. My wife was gone. I went back in the palace.

Nkosi: "Mthunzi, what's on the cameras?"

Mthunzi: "I only see a shadow. Nothing else."

Nkosi: "Show me." I watched and couldn't see a thing. It was truly a shadow, nothing else. "Busi, is there a way you can find this place you speak of?"

Busi: "I can try the best I can, Your Highness. It's in the woods. I could hear running water so maybe a river is close by. There were more boulders than trees and bushes."

Mthunzi: "What about your other dream? When you said you dreamt of her hiding. Do you remember that?"

King: "What dream is that?"

Busi: "She was in this village, hiding from something or someone. I couldn't really see it but I could feel the negative energy around her."

Ama: "A village? Did it look abandoned?"

Busi: "Yes, my princess."

Ama: "It's Bakhoyo village. The forgotten lands."

King: "Mthunzi tell the pilot to fire up the helicopter." Mthunzi contacted the pilot.

Ama: "Father, that's not a good idea. Helicopter is loud and will cause panic. What if they hurt her?"

King: "I dare them to try that." My hands started flaming just at the thought.

Nobantu: "Isn't Bakhoyo village on the outskirts? How would she end up there so quickly? Clearly whoever took her has some ability, so you need to be careful."

Nolwazi: "And how safe is everyone else if one can just disappear like this? What are the guards jobs?? Why didn't they see this happening?"

Mthunzi: "The helicopter is ready my King."

Nkosi: "Everyone stays inside the house mother, not one of you move. Amahle, Busi and father are coming with me. Mthunzi will stay behind and guard here."

Mthunzi: "You can't go into the forgotten lands without guards Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi, I don't care about guards right now. I want my wife. I'll deal with everything else with my hands. Let's go." We rushed out to the helicopter.

The flight was just 30 minutes. We hovered above the village looking at the empty abandoned grounds.

Nkosi: "Amahle, do you see anything?"

Ama: "Nothing brother. I can't even feel her energy. She isn't here."

Nkosi: "Lower the helicopter." The helicopter lowered. I took off my seatbelts, my father doing the same. I opened the door, jumping out the rest of the way to the ground and landed on my feet.

Ama: "Nkosi!!" she screamed. I transformed into my tiger, running through the woods, sniffing around for her scent. I combed through every corner and rock finding the river. I dove right in swimming under the water. The river had nothing inside it. I got out after almost an hour, walking through the woods My father was searching in with Amahle next to him.

Ama: "Nothing. There's not even life in this area."

Nkosi: "Let's go into the village then."

Ama: "First of all, you've torn off your clothes when you turned and you're Kings. It's not a good idea to wander into an unknown village. Especially without security."

Nkosi: "They know my face, but not the tiger." I turned into my tiger once more, running into the direction of the village. Even if it's a drop of her blood. That's all I need. My love, if you're out there, please, just a drop and I'll come find you. The village was truly abandoned but it definitely felt heavy. As if the people were hiding. Well, anyone would hide if a tiger walked through the street. But why were the lights off? Only one street light per street was on. What was that about? After combing

through the entire village I went back to the woods, turning back to human form.

Nkosi: "Nothing. We have to be missing something Amahle. Where else could she be?"

Ama: "Maybe they haven't arrived yet. We flew here, whereas I doubt whoever this is had flight as a mode of transportation."

Nkosi: "Then how did they get into the palace grounds!! How did they walk in and out with my wife and nobody saw this?!" I breathed. My whole body was cold with fear, rage and anguish. So cold it was shivering despite the fire emanating off my skin. "So what do we do? Wait? Do we wait until her blood spills??" She knelt on the ground, taking her herbs out and setting them alight. Father walked back to us, holding Busi's arm.

King: "I asked you once to show me where they are. This is the last time I'm asking. Where. Is. She."

Nkosi: "Father, that's not fair. Busi is blind-"

King: "She must make a plan and see Nkosinhle!!! Every minute that passes, the further away Thembisa is!! Who knows what could be happening to her now!"

Nkosi: "So threatening Busi will bring her back? Do you think she enjoys not seeing?!"

King: "I don't care what the hell she enjoys." He pushed to her knees, his hands sparking electricity. I grabbed him, pulling him away.

Nkosi: "Stop it!!! We can't be fighting at this moment, please. We have to find her, father. Please stop." He switched off. I waited on Amahle, she was trying the best she can.

King: "What if they're eMcebo? Aren't there woods there?"

Nkosi: "There should be but how do we get there."

King: "I'll find it. Amahle, let's pack up."

Ama: "Yes father." She switched off the fire. I helped Busi up, taking her to the helicopter. I looked around once more, hoping. But she wasn't here. We had to keep moving. The helicopter flew up again.

My heart was bleeding in pain. The fire wasn't switching off any longer. I needed to find my wife. The second I get my hands on whoever did this, I will spare no second in snapping their neck. How did I not feel this happen? Why? I'd promised to keep her safe and I let her go into the unknown by herself. God please, don't do this to me. Please bring home my wife. Whatever is out there currently listening to the beating of my heart, please calm hers and bring her home safe.

King: "We're here." The helicopter lowered, I jumped out again before landing but I landed on my feet....on grass. How is that possible? Can grass grow on ashes? Were we in the right place? Surely not. My father got off and stood by me. Also, confused.

Nkosi: "Are we in the right place?"

Ama: "Yes. This is Mcebo."

Nkosi: "Isn't this the...."

Ama: "Ashes? Yes. I can feel the energy of all the souls lost here." My father started running towards the forest, I transformed following right after him. My father was a fast runner, this wasn't surprising. It was of course challenging running with a tiger but I paced around him. We split up in the woods to cover more ground. I sniffed the ground, finely tuning my ears to listen to any sound, my soul awaiting even a sigh of her breath, my lungs ready for a sniff of blood. I climbed up the tree, scanning through the forest from the top.

Nkosi: "Baby, please. Where are you?" I climbed down searching through the grounds again. My father had duplicated himself more than ten times. Each one of him, carefully scanning the trees and bushes. I still couldn't get used to that ability. It was the strangest of them all. I walked all throughout the village to the river.

Nkosi: "I won't give up. If you can hear the sound of my voice. If you can hear me in your heart, my love. I'm coming for you. I will not stop searching until I find you." I pray she's still conscious. Thembisa knows I will come running if I smell her blood. Did this mean, she was not awake? What was happening? I know she's scared, she wouldn't have pressed that emergency button if she didn't want me to come for her. How could I not feel my heart when she was being taken from me?

Ama: "Don't jump into the water. Those are treasure blood waters, we don't know what would happen if you go in. You may not come back."

Nkosi: "How could I have missed it Amahle? How did this person come into the palace undetected and steal my life away? Guards aside, how did I not feel this energy?"

Ama: "It's not just you Nkosi. All of us didn't feel it. Whatever this is, is quite strong. I haven't even been able to see further from this point. I'm blocked. I can see everything else but her or where she is." I dropped to my knees, holding on to the ground.

Nkosi: "Sikhosana, ngiyancenga. Please hold her safe. She's carrying your future, please." Father walked to us.

Ama: "We have to go. We need to find more information. Maybe the person who took her left his energy in that area, I can collect it and trace that."

King: "I'm not leaving. I will search every inch of this country if I have to. I'm not returning home without her. You can go."

Nkosi: "I'm with father on this one."

Ama: "Father, I want her back as much as you do but we need to find different ways to search for her. This isn't working. She clearly isn't here and we're wasting time. We've searched this entire place twice over. Same as Bakhoyo."

King: "Fine. But you have one hour. If you have nothing by then. We come back out searching again." ....

Morning slowly crept in. My fear was growing bigger. There was still no sign of Thembisa and I was losing my mind. This was the third forest we'd searched through since going back to the palace last night. How can the ancestors just sit by and do nothing? Say nothing? I walked toward my father.

King: "If she can't give me tangible information, I'm killing her."

Nkosi: "You're not going to do that. Busi harmed no one. All she did was tell us-"

King: "If she had shut her fucking mouth and said nothing Thembisa would not be missing!!!!" He screamed. "I'm giving her until sunset." I know that Busi was innocent. She didn't harm anyone, she was trying to help. Even if she'd kept quiet, this would've happened because

Thembisa tends to go outside at dawn to pick flowers. My heart ached missing my fairy partner.

Nkosi: "Let's go to the villa. We need to call abooSikhosana. They have to show us where she is, she's carrying their heir." We walked to the car getting in. The guards drove off, after I'd told him to go to the villa. We arrived at the villa, getting off the car. We started the journey walking up the mountain all the way to the alter. We reached the top, I sat down with him.

Nkosi: "Sikhosana. Msamkhulu. Musi KaMhlanga. Mhlanga ayihlangani ihlangana mhla kwezithebe. Somboni.\* Sicela ukuthi indlovukazi yethu ibuye iphephile. We ask for your help, please bring her back." (We are begging to have our queen returned safely) Thunder crackled in the sky. I felt the movement around us. I closed my eyes, awaiting any sign.

King: "It's blurry."

Nkosi: "You can see something?"

King: "Yes but it's not clear. Keep pleading with them." I kept speaking, calling on our guides and ancestors, the energy grew stronger, colder. The presence of every single king that sat on the Sikhosana throne joined. This was a threat to their lineage and vessel. They needed her too.

King: "Siyabonga boSikhosana. Khanyisani indlela yethu ukuze simlethe ekhaya ephephile." (We are grateful, Sikhosana. Light up our path so we may bring her home safely.) We stood up.

Nkosi: "Did you get a clear picture?"

King: "Yes." We walked down from the alter. "We need her blood. Without it, we cannot enter the space she's held in. Call her father."

Nkosi: "Won't they take him too?"

King: "He'll be able to lead her out."

Nkosi: "You're sacrificing him?" He stopped and looked at me.

King: "Do you want your father in law or your wife?" This wasn't even up for debate. I'd choose my wife any day. Her father would choose to save her too.

Nkosi: "I'll call him. Let's go." ....

## Chapter 132

### SASA'S POV \_

I woke up, feeling a bit dizzy and uncomfortable. I looked around me. I was in a small space, looking like the inside of a cave. There was a fire burning just a few feet away from me. My hands were tied in front of me. Where the hell was I?

Me: "Nkosi." My voice was hoarse. I was terrified. Where was Nkosinhle? Where was I? The man I last saw walked in. He sat down opposite me. I inched away from him, my panic increasing. He kidnapped me. I had been abducted and currently held in a place I don't know, underground. "What do you want from me?"

Him: "Nothing." He sat comfortably, looking at me. I needed to escape. I don't care where I was, I had to find a way out.

Me: "Do you realize who I am?" He smiled.

Him: "The conceitment has settled in. Of course I know who you were. Thembisa Ntaka, now Nobomi Sikhosana. The future queen."

Me: "Why did you say were? I am still the future queen."

Him: "No you're not." I tried getting up. "I wouldn't do that if I were you."

Me: "Dare stop me then!!!" I knew my blood would call on my husband so quick his head would spin. I managed to get up.

Him: "The ones out there aren't as kind as I am. The tribe had a meeting on what to do with you, or rather your body once you are of no use. I volunteered to keep you, Thembisa."

Me: "Keep who? Are you mad??!!!" I walked toward what looked like the entrance to the cave. Walking out, a group of people who seemed to have been having dinner looked at me. Immediately drawing their weapons. I stepped back. They can't hurt me, can they?

Him: "Listen to me."

Me: "Take me home right now!!! Do you know who my husband is?!"

Him: "That's the reason they want to kill you." I looked around and truly the tribe was all on their feet, with angry looks and pangas in their hand. I kept my tears back. They would not see me fear. One of them, an older looking man stepped forward.

Man: "Mzingeli. Will we have a problem? You told us you would keep her tamed. What is this?" Tamed? I'm not animal! My captor didn't look shaken by his leader's questioning.

Mzingeli: "Come back inside Thembisa." I am not going back in there. There was nothing in there that could help me. The closest one held a knife. I just need it to graze my skin. I walked up to him, he stared at me confused. I felt an arm grabbing me, pulling me away. I punched and kicked with all my might but he held me tight numbing my movements. He dragged me back into the cave. "Why are you trying to hurt yourself?"

Me: "Please let me go home. I promise, I'll let you escape. I won't tell them anything. Anything that you want, I'll give it to you. Just let me go." Bargaining, was all I had. Even if I had to lie. I had to go back home.

Mzingeli: "I already have everything I want. Please don't try another stunt. The tribe will get aggressive."

Me: "Where am I? Who are you! What do you want from me?!"

Mzingeli: "You're in the forgotten lands. Unfortunately for you, these are the lands that no one has access to. Not even your husband and his family."

Me: "Who are you?"

Mzi: "My name is Mzingeli. I'm the hunter for the tribe." A dummy could've guessed that.

Me: "Mzingeli why am I here?"

Mzi: "You are here because a debt is owed."

Me: "I'm going to need you to stop speaking in riddles. Why am I here? I didn't do anything wrong to any of you."

Mzi: "No, you didn't. That is why I'm keeping you by my side. The tribe does not want your existing at all."

Me: "What is this tribe?! What's happening!!!"

Mzi: "I'm sure you've found out that you're a treasure blood? That tribe."  
A feeling of cold swept over me.

Me: "Wait... Treasure bloods exists? All of those people out there, they're all treasure?" I thought I was the only one left.

Mzi: "Yes."

Me: "That's not possible." He smiled.

Mzi: "Your husband's grandfather missed a particular area in the village. Where the healer and her family resided." That's not possible. No. King Ngidumise would've never made that mistake.

Me: "You can't be. There's no way that is true."

Mzi: "The family had been living a little out of the village in the nearby forest. That's where they stayed until the king burnt down the village."

Me: "And what, you just started your own village?"

Mzi: "Dont be silly, I wasn't even born yet."

Me: "H-how are there so many?"

Mzi: "Well, people get married and have children."

Me: "And the witch? Is she also here?"

Mzi: "You mean my grandmother? Yes." I gasped.

Me: "What's going to happen to me."

Mzi: "If you learn to listen to me, nothing will happen to you."

Me: "Mzingeli, bhuti, I don't belong here. I can't live here. I have a life. A family. They need me."

Mzi: "They won't need you any longer."

Me: "What does that mean?"

Mzi: "It means you belong here Thembisa." Begging wasn't going to work. I needed an escape. I needed information.

Me: "How did I get here? Do you have like super powers?" He chuckled.

Mzi: "No. I don't have super powers. My grandmother has ways of disguising a person, making them not visible to any other person. Because of our blood, you can see us and be here."

Me: "If I'm your blood, why do they want to kill me?"

Mzi: "Because you married the enemy. You would protect him more than your own blood." This wasn't happening. I was in an invisible village with a man I don't know and an army right outside, ready to kill me.

Me: "Mzingeli. I would do anything. Absolutely anything." He didn't even flinch or pretend to feel sorry for me.

Mzi: "As I said, I don't need anything. I just need you to listen." Even if they fell asleep, I was scared to sneak out. If one spots me, it's game over. I don't know about the witch and I don't even want to think about her.

Me: "Okay." He used a stick, poking at the wood in the fire. I miss my tiger so much. Nkosinhle, please come for me. I don't care if you have to burn this village down at this point.

Mzi: "Are you hungry?"

Me: "No." I was not about to eat anything he gives me.

Mzi: "You need to eat. I hunted bok earlier, it's nice."

Me: "I'm good." My stomach decided it was this moment to embarrass me. It rumbled out loud. My baby was now acting out and hungry.

Mzi: "I'll get you a piece." He got up, walking out. I needed to think of a plan but what? What was my plan? Stick by Mzingeli or risk it out with the tribe? If I stick by him who knows how long that would be? Would he eventually give up and take me home? I could wear a person down. I'll beg until he screams. He walked back in, squatting in front of me. He was quite tall with a lean strong build. His fingernails cut neatly and painted black. He had a sword secured on his side and was dressed in hunting-like gear.

Me: "I'm not hungry."

Mzi: "I'm obviously not going to poison you Thembisa. That would just be stupid." His eyes were dark brown and cold. I couldn't trust him. I don't care if I starve. "Eat."

Me: "No."

Mzi: "Fine then." He threw the meat in the fire and sat back down in his spot.

Me: "So what, we're just going to be roommates now?"

Mzi: "Yes."

Me: "What do you do all day?"

Mzi: "Hunt for food for the tribe." Oh my God, I hope they aren't cannibals.

Me: "What do you hunt?"

Mzi: "Any Meat. Bok, pig, goat, rabbit."

Me: "Why don't you join civilization?"

Mzi: "Like live lavishly in houses that can fit three villages and drive around in fancy cars?"

Me: "Okay, that sounds a bit jealous." He chuckled.

Mzi: "Jealous? That's one thing I am not and never will be. I don't envy material, Thembisa. The most important things are priceless."

Me: "Do you have kids?"

Mzi: "No." Damn. So I can't even use that blackmail.

Me: "Who lives here currently? Please don't say the tribe. Who is who? If I'm to live here obviously I'll have to adjust." I wasn't planning on living here. Nkosinhle would find me by morning. This I'm sure of.

Mzi: "Adjusting won't be easy for you because you don't mean it. You'd never accept defeat so quickly, it's not in your blood. However, eventually you would get to the point where you do accept it. My grandmother is still alive, she is the chief of the tribe. My mother died after I was born and my father is the man who spoke when we were outside. He has six brothers, each have a wife and between them all, eighteen children. My father has another wife, they had two of my brothers. They too, are married. That's my immediate family. The other members are relatives to us with our blood."

Me: "Your uncles, brothers and father's wives, are they also treasure blood?"

Mzi: "No. But the children are because of their fathers. Just like you."

Me: "How come you're not married?"

Mzi: "I haven't found my mate."

Me: "What is going to happen to me, Mzingeli? What is my purpose here? You can't just keep me here against my will. Are you trying to make me your mate?" He kept quiet and only just stared. I sat back against the wall, if my hands were tied behind me I could at least bruise myself on the wall behind me. I scanned the cave. He had a bed in the corner, neatly made. That was it. A small child called outside.

Child: "Malume. Ugogo uyeza. Ucela ukungena." (Uncle. Granny is coming. She's asking to come in.)

Mzi: "Okay." I tensed immediately. "This won't hurt."

Me: "What won't hurt?"

Mzi: "Don't fight Thembisa." My heart hammered in my chest. I moved back. The woman walked in the cave followed by another. The grandmother didn't look as frail as I'd expected an old witch to. She did look unmistakably scary though. My whole body trembled in fear. I was ready to piss myself. I moved further back. He held my arm.

Mzi: "Please be calm."

Me: "Mzingeli. Please take me home. Please." I shivered. The old woman stood in front of me, the second person stood beside her. I looked at her. She did look similar to me. My height, weight and all. She could've really passed off as my sister if she didn't have those thick dreads. Why was she here? The old woman smeared a black paste on the knife she held, murmuring something I couldn't hear. I moved further back but he held me still.

Mzi: "You'll be home. Just calm down. Close your eyes." He whispered.....

NKOSI'S POV\_

My father and I walked into the palace after coming from the villa. I'd called for Thembisa's father. Only telling him, we had an emergency. I didn't want him to stress all the way here. I stood aimlessly, not knowing what to do anymore. I was so close to screaming. How is this happening? To me? I walked into the lounge. The family was still here. Amahle was in her room, trying to search the energy she'd gotten outside. She's been at it all night. Busi was in the consulting room with

the healer. I felt so useless. Nhlanhla sat up. She had been sleeping on the couch. She looked at the cat who was starting to purr again.

Nhla: "There's someone in the garden-" I sprinted out instantly, my father popping up at every corner outside. I saw her laying on the ground under some trees.

Nkosi: "Thembisa!!" I ran over to her. "Baby!" My hands were shaking as I held her. I picked her up taking her to the palace. She had a foul smell that must have come with contact from whoever she'd encountered. Amahle and the healer came out with Busi.

Nkosi: "I found her in the garden."

Ama: "Take her into the consulting room with the healer. I'm coming." She ran out, followed by Mthunzi. I walked into the consult room, putting her down.

Nkosi: "My love?" She woke up, opening her eyes and got a fright backing away. "It's okay, my love. It's me. You're safe. You're safe now." She looked at the healer was burning incense, also backing away from him. What was going on? "We just want to make sure you're okay-"

Sasa: "I'm fine." Her voice was completely burnt.

Nkosi: "You're not hurt?"

Sasa: "No." Amahle came back in.

Ama: "Nothing."

Nkosi: "Let's focus on getting her better." Amahle stared at her. She at Amahle. "What is it?"

Ama: "I don't know."

Nkosi: "Let me get her in the bath. Get her something to eat." I picked up my wife taking her upstairs to our room. After carefully placing her down, I went to run the water in the tub, filling it. I went back to pick her up but she was looking around her in wonder. "My love." Her eyes darted to me. "I am so sorry."

Sasa: "Okay." I picked her up walking to the bathroom, helping her take off her clothes. "No." she held on to her dress.

Nkosi: "Did they hurt you?" Fire burnt through my chest.

Sasa: "No. I want to be alone." That broke my heart.

Nkosi: "Okay." I kissed her forehead. "I'll be right outside." I walked out the bathroom and our room. Going to Amahle. She was consulting.

Ama: "How is she?"

Nkosi: "A bit rattled. She says she isn't hurt but she's so scared of me." She looked at her burning incense. "Can you see anything?"

Ama: "Nope nothing. Her energy and aura is so low but very sad. I can feel her blood but I can't connect to her. Not like before."

Nkosi: "So they did something to her?"

Ama: "Yes. I don't understand why I'm blocked. I can't see anything regarding her."

Nkosi: "She's here now. We'll figure it out. Between all of us, we will find the solution and her father is on the way. Perhaps she needs him."

Ama: "Yes. That would be very helpful." I walked back out, contemplating if I should go in the room again. But this is my wife. Of course I'll go in. I walked in the room, sitting on the far chair waiting for her to finish her bath. There was no splashing of water, no movement. Just silence. My heart jumped. I hurried to the bathroom but she just sat there, in the bath, staring at the taps hugging her knees. I walked back out, an immense guilt sweeping over me. How could I fix this? I sat back in my chair, waiting. I heard the water, there was movement at least. After a while, she got out. I watched the bathroom door from my chair. In a few minutes, she walked out the bathroom, looking around. I stared at her stomach. My heart tearing in a way I'd never felt before.

Sasa: "My King." I looked at her face. She has never called me this, ever. I stood up walking to her. What happened to you? What is different? Amahle was right, her energy was very low and sad.

Nkosi: "Tell me what happened."

Sasa: "The place was dark. I woke up and there was a woman, an old woman." She looked down at her body.

Nkosi: "What about the man? A man took you."

Sasa: "I don't know where he went. It was only the woman when I woke up." So the witch did send another dead body. But how? How did a dead body kidnap my wife?

Nkosi: "Your hair is lighter and a bit shorter." What did they do to her? I'd promised my wife I would never whisper to her but I really needed to know. Thembisa was too forgiving for her own good. "What did the old woman say?"

Sasa: "She said, they are coming. They will avenge themselves and leave only when there are ashes."

Nkosi: "They? It's not one person?"

Sasa: "Yes. I don't know how many."

Nkosi: "Let's get you dressed." I need everyone in my family to assess this situation. She stood still in front of me. I went to the wardrobe taking out a dress for her. She got dressed. I held her body close to mine, kissing her nose. "I know I let you down, I am so sorry. This will never happen again. That, I promise. I won't let anyone hurt you." She nodded. I picked her up walking out the room, down the passage, down the stairs to the lounge. I walked in and placed her on the couch. Father looked at her, walking closer.

King: "What happened to my grandchild?"

Nkosi: "Father."

King: "Thembisa." He looked at her. She stared at him, scared. "Did you miscarry?"

Sasa: "Yes." He sighed, walking out. The lump in my throat kept bobbing back up no matter how much I swallowed.

Nobantu: "Nobomi, what happened? Did you see who took you? Where did they take you to?"

Sasa: "I don't know. I woke up in the woods."

Nolwazi: "How did you escape? Or Did they bring you back?"

Sasa: "I don't know. I just woke up here."

Nolwazi: "What if they'd taken her to kill the baby in her stomach?"

Nobantu: "Something is wrong here, Mehluli. You'll have to check. You have to whisper and find out. Maybe she's scared of telling us or she's hiding something." I looked at Thembisa, she looked back at me.

Nkosi: "I'm sorry." I seeped into her mind, flipping through the last 13 hours. Everything was blurry. Even worse when I went further back from

yesterday until it's just black. That has never happened before. I couldn't even make out a face or area. Was this an injury to her head maybe? But even so, I'd still be able to see. "That's strange."

Nobantu: "What is it?"

Nkosi: "It's blurry. I can't see anything, I can't make out faces, environment. Nothing."

Nolwazi: "Yoh. What if she's working with the witch to kill us all?" I need father to get out of his mood and help here. I walked to find him. He was in his lounge. The glass in his hand shaking, rattling the ice.

Nkosi: "Father."

King: "Someone came into my home, into my yard and stole our heir." He gulped down the drink. Just that, weighed my heart heavy. But I had to focus on fixing this problem.

Nkosi: "Not only that. I whispered, looking through her memories to find out what has happened. It's just blurry. Why would that happen?" He looked at me.

King: "Blurry? How can ones thoughts and memories be blurry?"

Nkosi: "You have to check it yourself. Maybe I'm blocked, you have the more advanced whisper ability." He walked out, going back to the lounge. He stood in front of her, looking at her.

King: "I can feel her blood, but not her energy."

Nkosi: "That's what I feel as well as Amahle."

King: "You're right. It's blurry."

Nkosi: "What could that mean."

King: "One of two things. Someone out there has an ability to counter our own or she needs to recover."

Nkosi: "The place you saw. When we were in the mountain, does the environment seem similar?"

King: "Yes and no. There's only small parts of it. Other parts don't feel similar at all."

Nkosi: "Let's wait on her father then. At least she's home, so no sacrifice needs to be made. However I want those people on their knees and

dead by the end of the day." We had to wait a few hours for Thembisa's father to arrive. She had managed to eat and nap in the time being. I stared at her while she slept. My heart aching at the loss of my first child. How could oSikhosana let this happen? A soft knock came on the door. I went to open.

Ama: "Her father is here." I nodded.

Nkosi: "We'll be down soon." I went back in the room to the bed. Even her skin wasn't as smooth as before. What did they do to my wife? "Baby." I kissed her cheek. She jumped up. "Hey. I didn't mean to startle you. Let's go downstairs for a bit." She sat up, stretching. "Are you hungry? Lunch is almost ready."

Sasa: "Yes." I helped her out of bed and wore her shoes. We walked out of the bedroom. Something didn't feel right. She didn't trust me anymore. I would understand why. It just didn't hurt less. We walked to the lounge in silence, something that we never do. My wife is always chatty. Even when she's mad she'll have something to say. Her father stood up as we walked in.

Nkosi: "Good afternoon Tata." She stared at him, not moving, no emotion. Nothing. I looked at her. That is so strange.

Nkosi: "Babe." I touched her arm. "Your father is here to see you." She nodded.

Sasa: "Hello father." Her father looked at me.

Xolani: "Nkosi, Where is my daughter?" ....

## Chapter 133

### NKOSI'S POV\_

Usually when Thembisa sees her dad, she runs up to him and hugs him. Often forgetting if she's upset or just breaks down in his arms. Not this time. She just stood.

Xolani: "Where is my child?"

Nkosi: "Tata, this is Thembisa."

Xolani: "She may look like her but this isn't her. My child would never look at me like that. Who is this person?" I looked at Thembisa. Was it trauma? What was wrong?

King: "An incident happened. Last night. The witch seemed to have been coming and in an effort to trap her, we all agreed to have Thembisa lure her in. Since she is of treasure blood. The witch wouldn't harm her and we would be able to disarm any spell she may have and captured her."

Xolani: "You. Gave. My. Child. To. A. Witch?"

King: "We didn't give her to a witch but I do understand that was reckless given the circumstances-"

Xolani: "Circumstances? Nkosinhle you promised me you would protect her!!!"

Nkosi: "I know, sir. I am sorry. It happened so fast-"

Xolani: "What happened?! What could've possibly happened so fast that it brought me this!?"

Nkosi: "She was taken, only returning a few hours ago."

Xolani: "What have you done to my child?"

King: "This is not the time we should be arguing as a family. We need to help Thembisa through the trauma she's dealing with-"

Xolani: "She's going through trauma because you've tried to kill her. Not once. Not twice but now a third time!? Did I not make myself clear that she wasn't to be harmed, Nkosi? You promised me! What is this!?"

Nobantu: "That is no way to speak to kings."

Xolani: "Thembisa, take your things. We're leaving. You'll receive back every cent of what you paid for that bride price. My child will not be your toy."

Nkosi: "Tata please-"

Xolani: "No! She's not just traumatized, She's a complete shell!! You broke my child!"

King: "Thembisa belongs to this family. She's not going anywhere."

Xolani: "We'll see about that. Thembisa, fetch your things."

Sasa: "I don't want to leave." He stared at her, not in surprise but confusion.

Xolani: "Thembisa, please fetch your things."

Sasa: "I'm not leaving."

Xolani: "Thembisa, please fetch your things."

Sasa: "I am not going anywhere." She hissed. Her father looked at me.

Xolani: "Is this your wife, Nkosi? Do you really think my own child that you know, would speak like that to me? Do you really believe this is Thembisa?"

King: "Thembisa is building a family here which she is happy with. Of course she won't want to leave. This has nothing to do with you." I turned her to look at me. It had to be her but why was there something different? Had they done something to her? Was it the loss of pregnancy? I sniffed around her. Everything in me said it's her. She was different. I don't know how. Maybe because her energy and aura had gotten so low? Is that even possible?

Nolwazi: "I don't know. Something is off."

Nobantu: "Very. I know I had expressed before that Thembisa is soft. But this person?."

Nhla: "She scares me." What's frustrating was that I hadn't bitten her in a while and her marks had long faded so I couldn't even tell. What I knew for certain though, Is this body was alive, there was a soul in it, it had her blood. No one out there has abilities like us. A witch couldn't have possessed her body.

Nkosi: "Busi. Can you feel anything?" I was hopeless, confused and desperate. I believed this to be my wife, maybe she was still traumatized from the ordeal.

Busi: "No, Your Highness. I can only smell something like muthi. That's all. Does she have any cuts?"

Nkosi: "No."

Busi: "Please check again, Your Highness." I looked at Thembisa.

Nkosi: "Let's go my love. I need to check." Without hesitation, she nodded. If it was truly the witch, wouldn't she be more resistant to being

checked? We went to the nearest room which was the healer's space. I carefully undressed her, checking her body. No marks, nothing. I got her dressed once more and we left for the lounge.

Nkosi: "She has no marks."

Busi: "Maybe she drank it?"

Nkosi: "Did they give you anything to drink?" Thembisa looked at me.

Sasa: "Yes. Water." I looked at her father, defeated.

Xolani: "Does she have her birth mark?"

Nkosi: "Yes. I saw it Tata."

Xolani: "Thembisa, where were you? Can describe the place?"

Sasa: "It was dark."

Nkosi: "Did you see who took you?" She shook her head.

Sasa: "I was in the garden, I fell. Then everything was black."

Nkosi: "Thembisa, you hit your emergency button on your phone before you disappeared. You had to have seen something, love."

Sasa: "I can't remember." I sighed in frustration before turning to the healer.

Nkosi: "What do you make of this? Would it be possible that the witch has taken her body?"

Healer: "No, Your Highness. I can smell the muthi as well but her blood is still the same."

Nkosi: "Mthunzi, please call Zwe."

Nobantu: "What does this have to do with an outsider Mehluli? Does Zwe specialize in witchcraft too?"

Nkosi: "I'm calling Zwe to do a health check mama. Maybe she hit her head and it has caused her to have a foggy memory. I don't know. We have to try everything." I looked at her once more, going into her thoughts. She stared back at me. (He loves me. He loves me. I'm safe with him. I'm his wife. He loves me.) She kept thinking over and over again. "Of course I love you." She stepped back, shocked, and began trembling.

King: "What is it?? What did you do?"

Nkosi: "I whispered, responding to her thoughts-"

Xolani: "And what does that mean?" He held her arm gently. She shrieked, pulling away. But she knows about my abilities, did she forget? I moved closer to her.

Nkosi: "My love."

Sasa: "You can hear my thoughts."

Nkosi: "Yes I can."

Xolani: "What does that mean Nkosi?"

Nolwazi: "The father of the bride doesn't know? Yoh."

Nkosi: "I'll explain everything Tata. I know I should've said something before. This will need us to sit down." I looked at Thembisa. I had to find a way to put my wife back together.

## ZWELETHU'S POV\_

I had made it to the palace within an hour of that phone call from Nkosi. In the lounge, I assessed Thembisa, checking her eyes, ears. Any possible problem. Her reaction to the light in her eye was far from normal. My mere presence scared her. She seemed to only respond to Nkosi. She didn't want the torch shon in her eye but for the second it did, her pupil did constrict which is normal. Her blood pressure was normal, all her vitals were.

Zwe: "She seems physically fine."

Nkosi: "She doesn't remember what happened."

Zwe: "Trauma does that to people sometimes. Give her a few days, perhaps it will come back to her."

Nkosi: "What do we do in the meantime?"

Zwe: "Keep her safe. Just reassure her that she's secure. She seems traumatized. I would suggest a therapist but, once she is more comfortable."

Nkosi: "And she has no injuries at all?"

Zwe: "None. We can do a scan at the hospital to be sure."

Nkosi: "Let's do that."

Zwe: "We can go." I could tell he wanted to ask or tell me something but he held back. Maybe because the whole family was here.

King: "Is this a good idea? Getting her out of the house just a few hours after she'd been taken? What if being outside triggers her?"

Nkosi: "Hopefully it triggers something she can remember. We can go, Tata." We walked out with Thembisa's father. I drove my car, they followed with the guards. The drive to the hospital was quick, I called ahead to have them clear the private entrance. I had a lot on my mind workwise. I'd spoken to Siza about the organ donation. She wanted to wait, hoped that he would recover. I knew he wouldn't. Siza was too good a woman for this, I'd have let him die because if roles were reversed, he'd do that to her. Hell, he's the reason that entire situation transpired. He was the one who'd tried to kill her first. And here she is, hoping to save his pathetic life. I'm glad I took that decision of putting a just in case he wakes, he shouldn't. There was no hope. He was brain dead. We drove into the hospital. The private entrance had been cleared. I took them up to my floor. Thembisa held on to Nkosi, looking around as if she'd never seen this place before. I wonder what happened to this poor girl. I couldn't help feeling sorry for her. It couldn't be easy being married to a Sikhosana royal. Then have to deal with all of this on top of it? I had faith in my friend though. He took care of her and treated her like an egg.

Zwe: "No one will be allowed in there once she goes into the scanner. Given her current state, she may feel scared."

Nkosi: "My love, you're going to have to lie on that bed. The doctor wants to check if you're hurt. I'll wait right here. Do you trust me?"

Sasa: "Yes. I trust you." The nurse gave her a changing gown, she went to put on in the bathroom. Her father had been very quiet throughout, since I got to the palace.

Nkosi: "Lay on this bed baby. We'll be right out of that window, watching you. Okay? Don't be afraid."

Sasa: "Okay." She got on the table. We went to the control room, watching her through the window.

Zwe: "Please lay on your back Thembisa, and try to keep still." She did as told. "The bed is going to slowly move, putting you inside the round scanner. It won't hurt at all. Are you ready?"

Sasa: "Yes." I pressed the button, the bed moved into the cylinder scanner.

Zwe: "You're doing great there." I watched on the monitor. "How are you feeling so far?"

Sasa: "I'm okay."

Zwe: "Perfect. Can you hear the little buzzing sound?"

Sasa: "Yes."

Zwe: "Good. That means the machine is doing its job perfectly. Are you still comfortable?" Silence. "Thembisa?"

Sasa: "Yes."

Zwe: "We're not too far from the end. You're doing well." Her images looked quite normal so far but of course I'll have to take a better look. After a short while. We were done. "Alright Thembisa, we've finished. I'm coming inside to let you out okay?"

Sasa: "Where is my husband?"

Zwe: "He's right here beside me." I walked in the room, pressing the button for the bed to move out. She sat up. "You can get dressed."

Sasa: "Thank you." She went out to the bathroom to get dressed and came back.

Nkosi: "Is everything okay with her?"

Zwe: "From what I see, yes but I will be showing a colleague for a second opinion. Maybe he spots something I missed." I know I didn't miss anything. She was clear. So why did he look so worried?

Nkosi: "Alright. Thank you Zwe, I should take her home to rest."

Xolani: "Thank you Dr Biyela."

Zwe: "You're welcome, sir." I walked them out.

Nkosi: "My love, please go to your father, I want to have a quick talk with Zwe." She nodded, walking ahead to Mr Ntaka.

Zwe: "What's wrong my friend? The tension is so heavy."

Nkosi: "I don't know Zwe. It feels weird. Do you see any difference? Since she came back, she's been different."

Zwe: "Different how?"

Nkosi: "Zwe, I don't know if she remembers me clearly. I don't know anything anymore. This is my wife but she is just different now."

Zwe: "Well, at least we know this is actually an alive human. It's definitely not the witch. Maybe you're paranoid, my friend. Thembisa doesn't have a twin, her father would know. Even if she did. There's no way in hell, they would look that identical. She's probably just traumatized."

Nkosi: "She was also pregnant before going missing, now she isn't. Apparently she miscarried."

Zwe: "Oh no. Let's do more checks. Some blood work too."

Nkosi: "Okay." ...

## SASA'S POV\_

The cave was very dark and cold. I could only see a far glimmer of light during the day but complete darkness in the night. I'd been awake a few times after the grandmother had visited. Each time, dizzy. I assumed it was now night again. Mzingeli walked in.

Mzi: "Hey." I stared at him, not responding. I wish I could spit in his face but he stood a bit far, I doubt my dehydrated spit would reach him. "You haven't eaten in a day. I thought I'd bring you something you might like. Duck." He held up the carcass of a small animal I couldn't pinpoint exactly. He pulled out what I assumed to be his chopping board and he chopped it up skillfully, into a few pieces. He brought a small rack with some hooks on the top where he hooked the pieces on letting it dangle on top of the fire. I stared at the knife, quietly planning.

Me: "Can you please get me some water?"

Mzi: "Sure." He got up, walking out the cave. I took the knife, cutting my palm. I let it drop onto the ground. I covered the knife with this hideous frock they'd given me to wear. He walked back in, carrying a makeshift bottle filled with water. I waited until he bent to me, giving me the bottle. I charged at him with the knife, he grabbed my arm as it sliced on his skin. His grip weakened my hand immediately, dropping the knife.

Mzi: "Why did you do that?"

Me: "I am not going to let you hold me hostage for the rest of my life."

Mzi: "I'm only saving your lif-"

Me: "I was safe until you abducted me from my home!!" I spat. Where was Nkosinhle? He had to feel me now. My blood was dripping and hitting the ground. Surely he could sense me.

Mzi: "Please calm down-"

Me: "Let me go."

Mzi: "Thembisa. Trust me when I say this, you will not survive out there if you leave."

Me: "Let me go!!"

Mzi: "No. Please don't make me put you back to sleep." I shut my mouth instantly. I don't know how but he could get me to pass out. I don't know how this affected the baby and I couldn't risk it any more. "Please stop fighting me." He took my other hand, looking at the cut. I took my hand back from him. He didn't look offended. "He won't come."

Me: "Who?" I played dumb obviously.

Mzi: "You cut yourself deliberately because you think he can smell your blood here. He can but you're currently sleeping next to him. He has no reason to come look for you." My heart raced.

Me: "What do you mean I'm sleeping next to him."

Mzi: "The girl uGogo cut you for is your duplicate-"

Me: "She looks nothing like me."

Mzi: "Didn't. She's you now. The knife that cut you drew your blood into hers when she drank it. She's already treasure blood, therefore she could change to you. Nobody will ever be able to tell." My body felt cold

and numb. This was pure witchcraft. This was nothing but actual dark magic.

Me: "You're just scaring me. That can't happen. Someone will know she isn't me. She doesn't look like me." He turned the meat on the fire.

Mzi: "Sikhosana is not the only one bred with ability. Why do you think they're using you Thembisa? Why do you not get a break from them, all you do is slave for their mistakes? On top of having to deal with their cold unwelcoming nature, you have to grovel for their ancestors too? Once you're done doing their work, you'll have to give birth to their next generation and raise them for that throne. You're powerful. You're not a slave. They know that yet they keep you as one and will do so until the day you die. In their hands. Like every other treasure queen has."

Me: "Nkosi is different." He chuckled. "Nkosi would never hurt me. He's protected me this far and will continue to do so. You're trying to scare me into believing you but that won't work. I trust my husband."

Mzi: "Except he's no longer yours, Thembisa. The Prince's wife is right beside him as we speak." My heart tore but I didn't show it. I kept my stare emotionless. There must be a time they all go to sleep. I'll sneak out. May the gods watch over me as I step out into the mystery of the night. He took the meat off the fire onto a metal like plate. He sprinkled a pinch of salt and a black powder probably black pepper but with him, how would you know? He took one piece and ate it. "Have some."

Me: "I'm not hungry." My baby will have to hang on. I would escape this hell and find our way back home.

Mzi: "You haven't eaten Thembisa. I don't want you to starve."

Me: "And why is that? You like your women thick?" I rolled my eyes.

Mzi: "Please eat. If anything, to be healthy."

Me: "No."

Mzi: "Thembisa, I don't want you hurt. Understand that."

Me: "If you didn't want me hurt, you could've left me in my home." He looked at me, then continued to eat. I was glad I didn't even have an appetite. The minutes passed by to what seemed like hours. He sat on the opposite of me, putting together a piece of wood. Humming a soft tune to himself. He had an almost angelic voice.

Me: "What are your abilities?"

Mzi: "I have none. Ours is not the same as theirs. It's not distributed like cheap candy. It gets passed down, to each generation once the leader dies."

Me: "How come you only use yours to harm?"

Mzi: "We've never harmed anyone -"

Me: "I'd like to beg your pardon?" I showed him my tied hands.

Mzi: "You haven't been harmed. Yes, the threat was to. And only because your loyalty lies with the enemy. Sikhosana has taken way too much from us with every chance they've been given. It's time we take back what is ours."

Me: "Yours? The throne belongs to Sikhosana, treasure blood is a companion."

Mzi: "Who do you think gave them that throne?" ....

Mzingeli was an obvious chancer. He and his witch friends were just like the other royals. Hungry to sit on a throne. What else could this be about? His grandmother was a witch and I think they'd chased her out of the treasure village which is why she lived in that forest at the time it burnt down. She had to have been jealous of mam Nonkosi. What if she wanted to be chosen by the king but instead he chose someone else and she turned bitter? I looked over at Mzingeli. He was asleep, finally. Movement outside was non-existent. I carefully got up and snuck out quietly. Indeed, everyone fast asleep in their homes. All fires burnt out. The air was crisp cold and it was pure dark. I had to brave this out. I tiptoed away from the cave going towards the woods. I held my breath as I crept through the forest. May God please cover me with protection as I walk through these dark shadows. Pave the way for me ahead and keep me safe. Shield me from harm. A branch cracked under my foot. I flinched, holding my breath. Silence. I kept walking, crouched a little to the ground. The air grew colder. I heard voices that seemed to be in a distance. I quickly hid, holding my breath. They moved closer. I held everything in. Please God. Please keep me safe. I heard movement behind me. I turned to look, coming face to face with an angry man with ugly scars across his face. I jumped and started to run with the speed of light. Nkosinhle please hear me Sthandwa sam! Sikhosana please save

me! Something grabbed onto my hair, pulling me with a breaking force to the ground. If my back didn't crack, then I don't know. However, I had bigger problems to worry about. There was a sword held in the air coming for my neck.

## Chapter 134

Four days later..

### SIBONELO'S POV\_

It was a cool Saturday. I'd had a demanding work week. Khaya, Mngqobi and Jimmy started their exams. Zwe and I had to distribute the work between us. I took over Khaya and Jimmy's, Zwe helped with Khaya's and took over Bi-motive Mngqobi's duties. He was also interviewing a few candidates for the hospital management position. It would be a board of five for all major decisions and then only one person running the day to day activities. Today was Jackson's memorial. This didn't interest me in any way but I only went to support Sizani. She's been through alot and kept a brave face throughout. His family didn't come. They were all the way across the world and couldn't make it yet insisted that his body be sent to his home country. How insane? If they want the body, they'll come dig for it in the ground. Jackson may have been a smart man. Even though he got Siza to sign a prenup. His estate fell to his children, well the first two. He hadn't yet added the last born baby. Everything would be liquidated and held by a trust, with an appointed attorney. Only releasing a specified monthly payment for school and necessities. The memorial was boring. Apart from supporting a friend, I wanted an excuse to see the mother of my child. She wore a beige straight cut dress that shaped her body in a sexy way. Her belly wasn't yet showing. Jimmy was starving my child, surely. After the memorial, which was held in his house, I went to the kitchen. The girls were sorting the refreshments.

Jimmy: "Hey."

Sibo: "Mama."

Jimmy: "Let me guess. You're hungry."

Sibo: "Starving, mama."

Zimmy: "Okay. The food is ready, you can find a seat. I'll bring it to you." She had swapped the heels for comfortable slip on's. I sat in the dining table, joined by Mnqobi.

Mnqobi: "Daddy Sbo."

Sibo: "Young Prince." Zimmy brought me a tray, placing it in front of me. "Please sit down. The caterers will take care of everyone else. Please fetch your food and come feed my baby." She chuckled walking back to the kitchen.

Mnqobi: "You two seem to be great." He picked a potato from my plate.

Sibo: "Yeah." I ate my food.

Mnqobi: "How is the baby doing?"

Sibo: "Perfect. Our next appointment is in a few weeks. I wanted to go this week to hear my baby's heart beating for the first time but Zwe says we must wait."

Mnqobi: "How are the talks with her dad going?"

Sibo: "He hasn't called me. She said she spoke to him and he's very disappointed. Her mother as well. This makes things difficult on my end. I need to make sure Zimmy is stress free and safe. I hate that she's living in that res alone."

Mnqobi: "You got her guards and she's moved in to Notha's old room, I'm sure she's safe."

Sibo: "I know but this is my baby Mnqobi. I don't want them in some commune."

Mnqobi: "Hehe. You're such a snob." He laughed. "Anyway, what's happening with council. Have you addressed the Phakamisa issue?"

Sibo: "Yes, we have. I'm doing my research on the business deal and who it involves. So far, I know their next meeting is in two weeks."

Mnqobi: "That's too short notice Sbo and very little information."

Sibo: "Indeed but I have faith we'll pull through." I finished my food, then looked for Zimmy. She was sitting with the girls in the kitchen, eating. I got up taking my tray to the kitchen. "Thank you Mama ka Biyela omncane." She smiled, hiding her mouth. "When you're done eating,

ngicela uphumule. You've been here since morning, helping to put things together. Ingane yami ifuna ukulala Zimasa."

Zimmy: "Don't worry, I'm leaving as soon as I'm done eating." She giggled.

Sibo: "Are you going to res?"

Zimmy: "Yes. I have to study. I'm writing on Monday."

Sibo: "Can I help?"

Zimmy: "That's sweet but I have an online study group."

Sibo: "Hm... Anyway, the architect is currently designing the new house." I wished Nkosi could do it but Zwe had told me something terrible had happened at the palace. Thembisa had gotten kidnapped by the witch they assume but she was brought back the next morning. No one else knew about this of course. Anyway, Nkosi was focused on getting her better. That must have been a traumatic experience.

Zimmy: "That's great. How did the negotiation with the Smith's go?"

Sibo: "Not good. They're refusing both offers on the table."

Zimmy: "That would be expected. So what will you do?"

Sibo: "I wanted to be a prick and use my royalty around it but Zwe said no." She chuckled.

Zimmy: "Zwe likes bursting your bubble." I laughed, leaning on the table.

Sibo: "He hates seeing me enjoy myself."

Zimmy: "Can I get you some juice?"

Sibo: "Just water babe." She went to fetch a bottle of water. "So I haven't yet gotten a call." I took it from her, drinking half the bottle.

Zimmy: "Yeah, my dad is giving me the silent treatment too."

Sibo: "Zimmy, we can't wait for too long. As soon as you start showing, you need to be fully protected. Not just with guards but my family needs the baby introduced to the ancestors."

Zimmy: "I've tried Sbo. I've been forcing and begging him all week."

Sibo: "Okay. I didn't want to throw my weight around. Will it be okay if my family contacted him instead?"

Zimmy: "It would be okay, maybe he will actually talk to your family."

Sibo: "Okay. So can I drive you to res to pick up your stuff so you can come study at my house?" She laughed.

Zimmy: "You think you're smooth ne?"

Sibo: "I know I am." I smiled.

Zimmy: "Why must I study at your house?"

Sibo: "You'll be more comfortable. I'll take care of everything you need. You won't even have to fart, I'd open your cheeks for you." She laughed.

Zimmy: "You are so crazy." I was winning. A very slow steady pace but I was definitely winning.

Sibo: "Come. Let's go."

Zimmy: "Okay. Let me grab my bag." Miles came up to my leg.

Miles: "Uncle Bobo."

Sibo: "Hello my little prince. Where do you come from?"

Miles: "in the bedroom. I was taking a nap." He rubbed his eyes.

Sibo: "Seems like you didn't finish sleeping there buddy."

Miles: "I didn't."

Sibo: "Let's find your mum." I scanned through the house. She was out in the back speaking to some ladies while watching Mia, the baby on her hip. "Sizani."

Siza: "Hello Prince Sibonelo. You came for the memorial?"

Sibo: "Of course I did, you're family. You seem to be a bit busy here, I'm taking these ones with me. Is that fine?"

Siza: "You don't have to do that."

Sibo: "Do you see me getting out of this situation?" I looked at Miles. She smiled, a very sad smile.

Siza: "Okay. I'll fix their bags." Siza needed to give herself a break honestly. She was a great mother. No one would've blamed her if she asked for time off today. Jackson was a shit but he was her husband. It's a lot to process. I buckled the babies up in their seats. Zimmy brought their bags.

Sibo: "We have a one day free trial with us today. Are you ready?"

Zimmy: "I'm telling Siza you're calling her babies free trials." I chuckled, starting the car to drive home. My phone rang, connected to the Bluetooth in the car. This number was a landline. I answered.

Sibo: "Sibonelo Biyela."

Caller: "Hi Prince Sibonelo. This is Nomzamo, from the library."

Sibo: "Oh, hey. How are you?"

Nomzamo: "I'm well my prince. How are you?"

Sibo: "I'm fine."

Nomzamo: "I was going through the history books in the library my prince and I found one book that isn't in the archives. It's quite old and I don't know if it has what you may want but it looked interesting. It is available but can only be loaned out to royals. I was thinking maybe you'd like to read it in the meantime we're waiting for a response from the royal judge."

Sibo: "Absolutely Nomzamo, I'd love to read it."

Nomzamo: "Alright. I'll put it aside, you can fetch it any time you're available."

Sibo: "I'll send someone within the hour Nomzamo. What time do you close?"

Nomzamo: "Today, we close at 2 but I will wait for your guard to arrive for collection my prince. I don't mind." She is so sweet, shame.

Sibo: "I'll make sure he's there before then. Thank you so much Zamo, enjoy the rest of your weekend."

Nomzamo: "You too, Prince Sibonelo." She hung up. I drove into Stellars, dialing for Zwe.

Zwe: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Hello Uncle Zwe."

Zwe: "Hm?"

Sibo: "I need a daddy favour."

Zwe: "You're not going to blackmail me into doing whatever you want by calling it a daddy favour Sibonelo." I chuckled.

Sibo: "That's not what this is. I got a call from the library. There's a book that's available right now, apparently it wasn't in archives but it can only be loaned out to royals. I can't go pick it up because I'm with Mummy and triple M."

Zwe: "Fine. I'll go later."

Sibo: "Please go now."

Zwe: "You're pushing it. I'm working Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Please Uncle Zwe. The library closes at 2pm today."

Zwe: "Fine." He hung up. I parked the car, the guards, parked next to me going inside the house.

Zimmy: "So, my books?"

Sibo: "Shit. I'm sorry love. I got distracted."

Zimmy: "We can rest for an hour then go pick them up."

Sibo: "No, let's go now while I'm still in the mood to drive. Once we're inside the house we'll be resting and not stressing about going outside." I called out the guard.

## ZWELETHU'S POV\_

Sibonelo was stressful. I was wrapping up in the hospital but I had work I wanted to go over. I guess I'd do it at home. I took my bag, phone and keys walking out. I drove to the library, arriving just five minutes before 2pm. It was still open at least so I wasn't exactly late. I walked in, Nomzamo was at her desk reading.

Zwe: "Good afternoon." She jumped.

Nomzamo: "Prince Biyela." She stood up, putting down her book. "I assume you're here for collection? I've set it right aside." She took a little key from her drawer, walking around her desk to the nearby cabinet.

Zwe: "How did you find this book?"

Nomzamo: "I was cleaning out the history section, my prince. I'd gotten around to reading some of the history books over the years but not this one. I always delayed it for some reason. When I saw it today, I realized it might be of interest to you and your brother. The title is gripping." She unlocked the cabinet, taking out the book wrapped in newspaper.

Zwe: "You seem to protect it so well." She looked at me, lowering her voice.

Nomzamo: "Prince Biyela. This book isn't supposed to be public. It belongs in the archives. Perhaps it is not as informative or detailed as the others, I wouldn't know but what I do know is that it doesn't belong here." She gave it to me. It was in pristine condition. I looked at the title first. Royal Treasure: The Peace Treaty. Okay, she was right, that did sound gripping. I turned the first page reading the content of chapters. 1: The First Kings. 2: Treasure Village. 3: In peace. 4: The Pieces. 5: The Handover. 6: The Reign. I was salivating at the promise of how interesting this sounded. I turned the page reading the first chapter. I've never heard of these people. It was five of them. I sat down, to read about each one. Busa, the first. Known as the God of peace. The leader. He was regarded as the final decision maker. He was reserved and kept the council of kings at peace. The best mediator and highly ranked by the nation. Busa lived a modest life and enjoyed the peace of nature. In all the five kings, none of them had children. This was not permitted. The kingship was appointed and not given as birth right. All the children in the village were raised to aspire for a position in the King's council. Everyone had to compete and only the best selected. Busa led the King's council for 70 years, having only been appointed at the age of 18. The second King, Siqongo. The God of war. He was second in command of the King's council and was a strategic planner of all wars. He knew how to start, stop and most important of all, win. The third King, Qhawelesizwe. The God of light. He was the warrior and spent a lot of his time in the front lines of all wars. He was a great leader to the soldiers and also blood related to Busa. He served for only 50 years before he succumbed to his injuries after a war with a nation up north. The fourth king, Nobukhosi. The Goddess of reign.

Zwe: "Wait, what?" The fourth king was a woman? Nobukhosi was a warrior alongside Qhawe and led wars with him. It is said there was a romantic involvement between them but it was never confirmed. The last King, Nobomi. The Goddess of Life. Why are the goddesses also

regarded as Kings? Shouldn't they just be queens? Was there a reason they were all regarded as just Kings? The name Nobomi has been recycled a third time now. Was it just a coincidence? There is no mention of Sikhosana anywhere in this intro. All of them, each and every god and goddess, was not regarded as Sikhosana. So....how did the Sikhosana lineage take over the throne? If there is no mention of them in the very beginning, where did they come from?

Nomzamo: "Are you still fine, Prince Biyela." I looked up, having totally forgotten where I was.

Zwe: "Yes. I'm sorry for holding you back from leaving. I kind of zoned out." I checked the time. 15:23pm. I have been reading for over an hour about the five kings and their respective roles in council, their lives and their achievements.

Nomzamo: "No worries. You can take your time. I'll be at my desk. I've closed the library, your guards are all inside." I looked at my guards, all standing in position.

Zwe: "Thank you Nomzamo." She nodded and went to her desk. I really wanted to read a lot more of this book. Yes I could do it at home but the scent of books wafting around me was quite hypnotizing. "What are you reading there? History?" She giggled.

Nomzamo: "No. I study it for a living so I like giving myself a treat every once in a while and indulge in fiction."

Zwe: "What's your favorite type of fiction? Let me guess, romance?" She laughed.

Nomzamo: "Mystery thriller."

Zwe: "You lie."

Nomzamo: "Honest truth. I love the suspense, the racing heartbeat, just when you think you've caught them they slip in your hands type of story. So damn thrilling." This was interesting.

Zwe: "And which side are you on Nomzamo? The good guy or the bad guy."

Nomzamo: "Trick question?"

Zwe: "Purely out of interest, no judgement."

Nomzamo: "I'm intrigued by the bad guy. How he thinks, how he plans, the careful steps he takes to cover his tracks and outrun the actual law, every single time. That's talent." I laughed.

Zwe: "Okay, I didn't expect that."

Nomzamo: "You promised not to judge." She chuckled.

Zwe: "And I'm not judging. I promise. I just thought you liked the happily ever after type of story."

Nomzamo: "Who says k.illers aren't happy after?" I stared at her. "Anyway, let me not disturb you." You're not getting away that easily.

Zwe: "What is your book about?"

Nomzamo: "I'm going to start feeling judged." She giggled.

Zwe: "Come on, tell me. I promise not to judge."

Nomzamo: "Okay. The book is about a serial k.iller, so far his reasoning isn't quite clear but it seems he is targeting older middle age women."

Zwe: "Hm.. and what do you think about that? Do you think a k.iller chooses his victim based on appearance and demeanor or they work on opportunity?"

Nomzamo: "Both. And also, the base reason. A serial k.iller rarely leaves their house to grab any and every person they come across. They calculate, they plan, they wait and then, they attack. Dependent on each k.iller, there's different stages that thrill them about the process. Others find the torture more thrilling than the act of death itself. Others find the scene more intriguing and so they visit it often to relive their moment. Others prefer the moment life ebbs out of their victim, a specific method of k.illing. Mostly strangulation. Others, they just don't care. It's more of a favour to get rid of the virus, that is their victim. They don't have a target. They don't feel personalized to the murder. They just don't care."

Zwe: "Why does this stuff interest you? Are you a serial k.iller?" She laughed.

Nomzamo: "Absolutely not. I don't have the stomach for it but I love watching true crime. True life Documentaries being my favourite but the fiction is just as thrilling."

Zwe: "And it doesn't scare you?"

Nomzamo: "It tripled my anxiety. I'm always on edge, looking around for any shady looking individuals, lock my doors if I'm in the house alone, and if I think someone is following me, I take a left turn three times before I sprint." I chuckled.

Zwe: "What if he's not a shady looking individual then? What happens if he's charming, sitting in a library, reading a book?" She stopped smiling instantly almost hyperventilating. "I'm joking, Zamo." She giggled nervously.

Nomzamo: "My heart stopped there for a second, Prince Biyela. Don't do that. In fact, maybe we should go. You can read at home."

Zwe: "Did I scare you?" She smiled, packing her things.

Nomzamo: "Like you wouldn't believe." My phone rang. Damn it, Sibonelo. I took it out, but it wasn't him. "Dr Biyela." I answered.

Yanda: "Good day, Doctor. Will you be back this afternoon?"

Zwe: "That's a very strange question to ask your boss, Dr Radebe."

Yanda: "I apologize, doctor Biyela. The reason I'm asking is, the blood tests you asked me to analyze and get back to you with." Thembisa's blood tests.

Zwe: "Yes?"

Yanda: "When I was uploading her blood work on the system, her name came up which shows she was a patient of yours a few weeks ago."

Zwe: "Yes, she had a gunshot wound. Spent a few days in the hospital. Please get to the point."

Yanda: "Doctor Biyela, I looked at her previous blood work and the recent. Something very strange. Her blood type is not the same." My brain froze for a second.

Zwe: "What do you mean, Radebe."

Yanda: "Her blood type was O- a few weeks ago. Right now, the results show she's an AB-. Sir, this cannot be the same person. Unless of course, it's a case of chimerism or Maybe it was a mistake entry?" But I never make mistakes. Ever.

Zwe: "Who's the doctor on the file? There was two of us when the shooting happened, I can't recall."

Yanda: "It was you, Dr Biyela." Did I make that mistake? I would never make that kind of mistake. How likely was chimerism? Quite rare. "I'll put it aside for you, Sir. It's no worries. I just thought it was worth noting."

Zwe: "Thank you Yanda. I must have made the error."

Yanda: "All well Dr Biyela. We're only human after all. Have a good day." I hung up, trying to put it together in my head. Trying to remember the day of the shooting. Yes I was at the hospital, Khaya arrived with Thembisa, Amahle carried by her guard. The doctor working with me took Thembisa to resuscitation while I tried to work on Amahle. Once she woke up, the doctor and I swapped. I went to the operation room to remove her bullet. I was worried about possible internal bleeding and had her blood drawn. It was O-. She was a blood type O-. I remember it clearly. My phone buzzed in my hand. I looked at the message I've received.

Nkosi: <We need to talk.> Definitely. I couldn't wrap my head around what was going on. I sent a message back: <Yes, I'm on my way.>

## Chapter 135

### NKOSI'S POV\_

I have been having a difficult time sleeping these past few days since Thembisa has been back. I smelt her blood Tuesday night, but she was fast asleep next to me. I don't know what that meant. I woke up this morning, looking next to me and she was staring at me. It wasn't just that. So many things about her had changed and it made me intensely uncomfortable each day. Something her father had mentioned. Thembisa would never look at him like that. He was very right. Thembisa had soft loving eyes. You could see her emotions in them. If she was happy, you could see it in her eyes, same as if she's sad. She didn't even flinch when I asked about how she felt about the miscarriage. Also, she had nothing to say to her father. Whom she now calls father and not Tata. She barely sat with him. Another thing that was strange was, she missed her wash day. Thembisa enjoys washing her own hair once every two weeks. Thembisa loves singing when doing basic tasks even humming a tune. Worst of all, she hasn't touched a single one of her

textbooks. Let alone her laptop and she was supposed to write her first exam. She blatantly refused. Each day, my doubt was growing and it was so frustrating because what if I'm wrong? What if this is my wife and she's just hurt?

Sasa: "Why won't you touch me?" I looked at her, trying to think of a proper answer. I couldn't bring myself to touch her. Her skin didn't feel as smooth and touching it made me feel guilty. I shouldn't have let her out that night.

Nkosi: "I want you to be comfortable, my love. We just lost the baby, we can wait a few weeks. We should get ready for the day. Maybe we can have a picnic outside? Seems like a beautiful day to do our fairy things."

Sasa: "What is a fairy?" I sat up, looking at her. No...

Nkosi: "A mythical creature."

Sasa: "Oh." She got out of bed, walking to the bathroom. I needed to speak to Amahle. I got out of bed, pulling on my track pants. "Mehluli." My body froze. I turned to look at her, stunned to hell and back.

Nkosi: "Did you just call me Mehluli?"

Sasa: "Yes. Am I not allowed to call you by name?"

Nkosi: "You've only ever called me Nkosi."

Sasa: "But that's your title. My King." My heart dropped. This is not my wife. It can't be. She walked over to me, standing directly in front of me, her hands on my chest. There's only one thing my Thembisa would do in this position. She reached up to me, placing her cold lips on mine. I pulled away. Thembisa would've kissed my chin.

Nkosi: "I need to go for a quick run." I took my t-shirt walking out the bedroom straight to Amahle's room. I didn't even knock, I walked straight in stopping as soon as I entered. She sat on her rug, staring at Glacivory who was laying before her, dead.

Nkosi: "Amahle." I closed the door.

Ama: "I haven't seen her in days, I thought she was just doing her usual hiding. She's always gone a few days tops. But I Found her in the garden this time. No scent. No prints. No blood. Nothing. It's like she choked on her own breath and died."

Nkosi: "I am sorry." She stood up.

Ama: "How is she?"

Nkosi: "That's what I wanted to talk about. I don't think the wom-" We looked at the door. It was closed but someone was standing on the other side. We looked at each other. Then, a knock. Interesting.

Ama: "Come in." The door opened and she walked in.

Sasa: "Amahle."

Ama: "Hi."

Sasa: "I was wondering if you'd like to join me for a walk in the garden today?"

Nkosi: "Aren't you afraid of being in the garden?"

Sasa: "Not when Amahle is next to me." She smiled. I looked at Amahle and whispered. (Say no.)

Ama: "I have some school work to catch up on. Maybe another time?"

Sasa: "Okay." She smiled then looked at the cat on the floor, and walked out. You can't convince me otherwise. I looked at Amahle. (That is not my wife.)

Ama: (Why do you say so?)

Nkosi: (Thembisa calls you Amy. Also, she looked at Glacivory and walked out. Seeing that she's dead. Thembisa and your cat are inseparable.)

Ama: (I had my doubts Nkosi but how can this be? Wouldn't we feel anything?)

Nkosi: (Amahle. That woman is not my wife. She called me Mehluli. When has Thembisa ever called me that?! She thinks Nkosi is my title. Amahle... That is not my wife.) My whole body was shaking at the realization. I've been living with a stranger for almost a week. Where was my wife?

Ama: (Should we tell father?)

Nkosi: (No! He would kill her instantly! And right now? She's the only person that knows where my wife could be, I just need to figure out a way of pulling that information out of her. And she's still standing outside this room!)

Ama: (Nkosi, if what you're saying is true. And this woman changed into your wife's body? Then what makes you think she can't hear us?)

Nkosi: (Let's go find her father.) I walked to the door, snatching it open. She stood in the passage looking at me. My fairy would have the look of sheer embarrassment right this moment but this one looked like she didn't even do anything wrong. I seeped into her mind, flipping through her thoughts.

Sasa: (Why were they quiet? They obviously didn't speak inside the room, why? I could hear them at first then they stopped talking? What is he thinking? Why is he looking at me like that?) See that's the thing! She should know by now that I can hear her thoughts but that still seemed to slip her mind or was she faking?

Nkosi: "Do you want to take a bath so long? I want to plan our picnic with the staff."

Sasa: "Yes. I won't be too long." She walked back to our room. Amahle and I went downstairs, I stood in front of the guard, whispering. (My wife doesn't come down these stairs until I give the go ahead.) He nodded. I walked out to the courtyard. Mr Ntaka, sat in one of the benches staring at nothing.

Nkosi: "Tata." He didn't respond. Since I explained our abilities, he hasn't said a word to any of us. "I should've listened to you the first time." I sat next to him. "That girl isn't my wife." He looked at me. "I thought I would be able to feel it. I thought she was only traumatized but..." I shook my head. "I don't know how. I don't understand how this could happen. A witch can't just clone a whole human being but I don't know what to think anymore. Not even the healer can feel something wrong. I don't know what else to do."

Xolani: "Nkosi. Are you saying my child is still out there?" My heart tore in a billion pieces at the thought.

Nkosi: "I believe so. The problem is, I think this imposter can lead us in some way to her but she can't know. I'm afraid if she figures out we know, something might happen to the real Thembisa." He put his face in his hands, his shoulders shaking. "We need to find ways to be sure this isn't her. One hundred percent sure."

Ama: "We need the rest of the family in on this."

Nkosi: "No Amahle. That will set everyone in panic."

Ama: "It won't. Each member of our family needs to ask her to do something only the real Thembisa would know." She went into the palace. My vision was shaky with anger. I had to bottle every bubble of it in. The more and more I thought about this, the more it started to make sense. Amahle brought our mothers and father out to the courtyard.

Nkosi: "We may have a problem."

King: "What?"

Nkosi: "Thembisa is missing."

King: "AGAIN?? You're begging me to kill you at this point!! How could you let this happ-"

Nkosi: "Can you keep it down!! She didn't go missing again, she's been missing this entire time!" I hissed.

Nolwazi: "Nkosinhle, Nkosinhle ha.a. No. This entire week, who have we been having dinner with?"

Nkosi: "We have reason to believe that is the witch. This person is an imposter." My father rumbled, flexing his first as bolts of electricity sparked off them. "Father, you have to calm down. She can't find out we know. Not yet. She is the only link we have to Thembisa's whereabouts."

Ama: "And she killed the only thing that could sense her."

Nobantu: "I beg your pardon?!"

Nkosi: "Amahle found Glacivory, in the garden. She's dead." I could feel the anger radiating off my father. "I don't know how but if it's true, if this truly isn't Thembisa then that means there is someone out there with far better abilities than all of ours combined. And that person, is holding my life. We need to find a way to get her back."

Nolwazi: "I knew it. I knew something was off."

Nobantu: "What do we do Mehluli?"

Nkosi: "Where are the twins?"

Nolwazi: "Sleeping... Oh not my children." She turned to run back into the palace. I held her back.

Nkosi: "Guards, bring the twins." Four of them marched in. "Each of you need to ask her to do something or answer anything thembisa would know. For one, she calls me Mehluli. She thinks Nkosi is my title not my

name. Thembisa has never called me Mehluli. She climbed a tree to pick a fruit. Thembisa can't climb trees, she jumps like a toddler until I help her."

King: "And you kept quiet all this time?!"

Nkosi: "How was I supposed to know that we're not the only ones with super natural abilities!" I snapped. "Don't you think I feel pain already that she's probably out there all alone!? Or even worse, in danger!! Do you think I want to pretend to not want rip that girls head off her neck?!!"

Xolani: "Nkosi, calm down." My chest heaved.

Nkosi: "I need to find her." The guards brought the twins out. "Are you two fine?"

Nhla: "Where's the cat?" Oh hell.

Ama: "Glacivory is dead."

Nhla: "Don't bury her in the garden." We looked at her. She spoke as if she already knew.

Nkosi: "Why?"

Nhla: "I just know she's not supposed to be there. I don't know why." Why haven't we asked Nhlanhla her opinion? Every time I've overlooked her. What if she knew something but was being ignored?

Nkosi: "Nhlanhla, what do you think about Thembisa since she came back?"

Nhla: "She's very ugly."

Nkosi: "What do you mean?" She looked around.

Nhla: "She has ugly hair and dirty hands." There's no way. Is it possible that my sister is not seeing the same person we are seeing? How?

King: "Nhlanhla, describe Thembisa."

Nhla: "The old one?" Some one will need to hold me back. I took out my phone sending Zwelethu a message.

Ama: "You're seeing a different Thembisa from the one of the wedding day?"

Nhla: "Yes. You're not?"

Ama: "Nkwenkwezi?"

Nkwe: "I don't know what you're talking about."

Nkosi: "Is the Thembisa you're seeing the same as the one I married?!"

Nkwe: "Please don't shout, bhuti."

Nkosi: "I'm not shouting." I growled.

Nkwe: "I...I can't see her." This cannot be happening.

Nolwazi: "Why didn't you two say anything!?"

Nhla: "I thought you guys knew. Bhuti brought her in the house mos." My father paced up and down the courtyard, trying to calm down. I was failing. Dismally.

Nobantu: "Nkwenkwezi, how can you not see a living person and be quiet?"

Nkwe: "Mother, Nhla is always talking to herself or people only she can see. I thought we were doing that mina." The two most ignored people in the house were the ONLY ones who could see there's a problem?

Nolwazi: "Yoh. You two could kill someone, you know that?"

Nhla: "I would never, mama!"

Ama: "Nkosi." I looked at her. I know what she was thinking.

Nkosi: "No."

Ama: "Yes."

King: "SPEAK!!" He bellowed.

Nkosi: "She'd asked Amahle to take a walk with her in the garden. We think she may be trying to lure her away and have her taken as well because Amahle can see beyond what we see and soon she might figure her out. So she's going to try to get rid of her."

Nobantu: "But Amahle doesn't have a clone."

Nkosi: "Thembisa didn't have a clone either, mama but here we are."

Ama: "If she lures me to wherever she is, from there I can find a way out for us or telepathically draw you in."

Nkosi: "Amahle, that's not happening!"

Xolani: "Then I'll go. If there is a way to get to Thembisa, I'll find a way to lead her out of wherever she is. I am good at escaping."

Nkosi: "Tata, this person is a witch who is quite powerful and seemingly has our abilities as well."

Xolani: "Thembisa is my daughter. I'll give my life for her. There is no ability in this world or the next that will stand in my way." I looked up at the door of the courtyard, she came out walking to us. I didn't even know what to call her now. Even the way she wore her clothes wasn't the same. Every part of me wanted to tear her apart. She stood next to the table, looking at me. I stared right back at her.

Nolwazi: "Thembisa, have you given thought to the dress you want to wear for the wedding?" She looked at mother.

Sasa: "Any dress is fine."

Nolwazi: "You were very particular about a specific dress. You even had a designer ready to sketch it and make it for you. Have you contacted them?"

Sasa: "Any. Dress. Is fine." She repeated, icily.

Nolwazi: "Yoh, No need to tell me twice dear. Crystal clear."

King: "Sing." She looked at him.

Sasa: "I beg your pardon, King... Sikhosana?"

King: "I said, Sing. You're used to singing for me. Sing me my song."

Sasa: "I don't want to sing." Amahle held father, walking him back to the house, he was hissing in anger.

Nolwazi: "I think. Me and the twins should visit the villa. Hm? Some greenery and spa treatments. Just for the week."

Nhla: "I can't go, mother." She whined.

Nolwazi: "Of course you can darling."

Nhla: "I can't because I have to-"

Nkosi: "Nhlanhla. You're going to stay here in the palace. All of you are." She was about to say something giving away that we know. I had to keep her quiet. If this person could kill Glacivory, targeting Amahle, she is obviously ready to shut anyone up.

Sasa: "Where is our picnic?"

Nkosi: "Uhm, we were still discussing the wedding."

Xolani: "Themبisa can we take a walk in the garden? We haven't had time to talk about the new adjustment of being a wife." She stared at him. I could see how that alone broke his heart. There was no emotion in her eyes.

Sasa: "Okay." She walked with him down the garden path. I nodded at the guards and they followed immediately.

Nolwazi: "Nkosinhle, are we safe? You know Nhlanhla just speaks anyhow, are your siblings safe from this person?"

Nkosi: "I'll keep them safe mother. Nhlanhla, promise me you won't say anything about or to Themبisa out loud. You can whisper to me."

Nhla: "Okay. She can't hear you when you whisper."

Nkosi: "That's good."

Nhla: "Yes but she knows you can."

Nkosi: "So her thoughts are pretending? Can you see what's happening in her mind?"

Nhla: "Her thoughts are not pretending, she just keeps forgetting. I can't see in her mind. Only the cat could."

Nkosi: "Did the cat say anything this week?"

Nhla: "The cat died on Tuesday night bhuti."

Nkosi: "Nhlanhla, is there anything else you haven't told us that has happened?" She looked thoughtful.

Nhla: "No. I told you everything."

Nkosi: "Nkwe?"

Nkwe: "I've just been having bad dreams. Like I'm being strangled." This was turning into a nightmare.

Nkosi: "Okay. From today, you two don't leave mothers sight. Okay? Even with sleeping, you'll have to all be in one room, Amahle will advise further. The guards will be present and surrounding all of you at all times." We waited until Zwe arrived. I was burning and shaking at this point.

Zwe: "My friend." Mr Ntaka and this girl were coming back from their walk, coming towards us. She looked at Zwe. He looked at her, suspicious of something. "Hello." He smiled.

She: "Hello." Mthunzi arrived as well.

Nkosi: "I'm going to be in a quick meeting with my council." I could hardly look at her but forced myself to. "You will be okay here, with my mothers and sisters."

Sasa: "You said we're going to have a picnic."

Nkosi: "A little later. I have a work emergency."

Sasa: "Okay."

Nkosi: "Tata." We left her out in the courtyard with the family. The guards were present, but we didn't move too far from eye view of the court yard. We sat on the balcony, watching from a distance.

Zwe: "Mr Ntaka, does Thembisa have a twin?"

Xolani: "No. I was there the day she was born. Her mother only birthed one child."

Zwe: "I got a call from one of my interns. They noticed a difference in blood types taken from Thembisa when she got shot and this week. It's two different blood types." I knew it.

Mthunzi: "So what you're saying is that person out there, right now, is not Thembisa?"

Zwe: "Yes." Everything was silent only for mere minutes. I needed to find my wife.

Xolani: "How." Mthunzi dialed on his phone.

Mthunzi: "Give my wife the phone." He waited a few seconds. "Busi. Love, you said you had a dream about a girl that looks like Thembisa. Do you think that girl could actually pass off as her?"

Busi: "Possibly. Yes."

Mthunzi: "She's the one that's here. Thembisa is still missing."

Busi: "Oh no. That's why I was smelling muthi. She could have disguised herself with it. If not one of you noticed till now."

Mthunzi: "Right now, I need solutions. How do we find the real Thembisa? She has to still be out there."

Busi: "I'll consult and get back to you." She hung up.

Zwe: "There's something else Nkosi that we need to talk about."

Nkosi: "What?"

Zwe: "Sboni had applied for the archives in the library. The lady working there found a history book. I've read the first chapter. It's something that might hurt or confuse you but I think you need to read it." I had no interest in reading stupid books, what I wanted right now was to find Thembisa. I needed to think clearly and strategically. She has to still be alive.

Nkosi: "What is it about?"

Zwe: "The throne. The original rulers of the nation were known as the five kings. None of them, being Sikhosana." My mind went blank for a few seconds.

Nkosi: "What does that mean?"

Zwe: "It could mean, before the Sikhosana lineage took over, the crown belonged to other people. Not appointed by birth right only on competency. And two of those five kings were actually women. One of them, named Nobomi." What in the hell is Zwelethu telling me?

Nkosi: "As intriguing as that sounds, possibly threatening, I can't focus on it right now my friend. I have to find Thembisa first."

Zwe: "I know. I'm telling you because, there's a chapter called Treasure Village. The second chapter. I think, the reason you didn't notice this girl isn't Thembisa at first is because she may have the same blood. Treasure blood. The ancestors boldly named Thembisa after the last of the five kings for a reason. This witch, has to be holding her somewhere because I doubt she can kill her. This book could help us find where."

Xolani: "Please bring the book, Dr Biyela." Zwe walked out, followed by guards. I was not taking any chances on anyone else. Amahle walked in.

Ama: "Where is Zwelethu?"

Nkosi: "How do you know- he's outside."

Ama: "I can smell him. He can't leave."

Nkosi: "Okay. I think I know why. He just confirmed, this girl isn't Thembisa."

Ama: "I have just been to consult. The ancestors are not responding." My world stood still.

Nkosi: "Amahle. What are you saying?"

Ama: "I'm saying, we have no connection to our ancestors. We've been cut off. Not one has come forward to respond to me." ....

## Chapter 136

### MTHUNZI'S POV\_

The palace was tense. Nkosi was pacing, shaking and unable to keep the fire off him. Thembisa's father was adjusting surprisingly well to seeing these visuals. Either that or he expected them. Zwe was reading the book, gathering some information with Amahle. I'd asked Sibonelo to drive up with Busi I didn't trust anyone else to. At this point, I had to stand in the courtyard in guard because the King was livid. He was ready to kill this imposter.

She: "Where is my husband."

Nolwazi: "He's working."

She: "Where is he?"

Nolwazi: "Sisi. Mehluli is a future King. You can't be hanging around him all the time. You heard there's an emergency. As a future queen, you need to be more independent. What happened to your studies?" This girl stared at her, with a cold expression. "A king needs an educated woman by his side, doll. Those big bums won't help you." This was not the time but the second queen was fearlessly funny sometimes.

Nhla: "Big bums." She laughed with her twin. The girl got up. The second queen, stopped her.

Nolwazi: "While we're still here, I think we should plan the wedding. Please sit. The theme needs some sizzle. I was told you love the colour

pink. We could slightly incorporate it with the gold. Maybe even darken it a little to a light purple, magenta. What do you think?"

She: "Okay." She sat down.

Nolwazi: "What is your favourite cake?" The girl looked at her confused. "Let me guess, chocolate? That's a lovely choice darling. However, I suggest a variety on your seven tier cake. I'm going to call the baker to come over and do a cake test. Wouldn't that be a great time for us to bond?"

She: "Yes." The queen was doing well in keeping her occupied in conversation. My phone buzzed. Sibonelo and Busi had arrived.

Mthunzi: "My queens. We'll be having an emergency council meeting for a bit longer, the rest of the council has just arrived. Please do excuse us for the day."

Nolwazi: "Yes Mthunzi, we will be right here. Thembisa and I have to pick the songs for the wedding."

She: "I want to speak to my husband." She stood up again.

Nolwazi: "He is busy-"

She: "I want to speak to my husband!"

Nolwazi: "Mthunzi, the floor is yours." I can't take her to Nkosi. He is way too angry to reason with at this stage.

Mthunzi: "The Kings are very busy, Thembisa. Once he has a moment, he will come to y-" She walked right past me into the palace. "Hey!" She walked up the stairs, opening the rooms. Nkosi was in his office but she obviously didn't know where that was. "I said, Nkosi is busy!"

She: "Tell him his wife wants to speak to him."

Mthunzi: "Yeah I bet she does!" I snapped. I hardly lose my cool but this situation with this woman was getting under my skin. "Please wait until we are done with our meetings. He will see to you soon."

She: "I will NOT wait. I am his queen. I come first!"

Mthunzi: "Thembisa, please calm down. I promise the prince will come. Okay? We just need to fix something else." Arguing wouldn't work, I had to calm down in order to calm her down.

She: "Where is he?"

Mthunzi: "I'll call him for you. You can wait in the courtyard." She walked down the stairs to the courtyard. How did they live with this thing for almost a week and not notice? Nkosi cannot possibly be this blind. Any person who knows Thembisa even after one meeting with her, knew how soft spoken she was. She never raised her voice and could never be angry. What was this?? I walked down to the visitors lounge.

Mthunzi: "Sboni. Hi love."

Sibo: "Hey Mthunzi. What's going on?"

Mthunzi: "Come this way." I helped Busi up and we went to Nkosi's office, closing the door behind us. The floor was charred. Furniture broken.

Sibo: "Good afternoon Your Highness and Your Majesty." Only Zwe and Amahle responded.

Mthunzi: "Busi, you said you had something to tell us?"

Busi: "Yes, I consulted after you called me. I cannot see any of the royal ancestors."

Ama: "Yes, they've cut us off."

Busi: "No, they haven't. None of the ancestors from both sides are showing up. There may be in discussion about what is happening. Which means, it's a big and serious problem."

Nkosi: "What do you mean."

Busi: "The relationship between your ancestors and those of Thembisa's, my prince, is centuries deep. Unfortunately, with all ancestors, there is good and there is bad."

Nkosi: "I need a path of where to go Busisiwe. We've searched through all forests in and around this city. I need more. Is Thembisa safe wherever she is?"

Busi: "Yes, my prince. She is."

Nkosi: "But...? You're hesitating."

Busi: "The only reason she is safe is because there is someone with her blood looking after her. A warrior."

Nkosi: "And this means what?" He hissed.

Mthunzi: "Let's rather focus on navigating to where this place is." The thought of there being another man near Thembisa will drive Nkosi insane. He might just kill us all. I can tell from the fire in his eyes.

Busi: "That won't be easy. You need to be prepared. I also don't think it's just a few people. This could be an entire tribe with super natural abilities and one of them being a powerful witch. They've managed to live undetected in plain sight for God knows how long. We can't just march in if we want to come back alive."

Sibo: "How advanced do you suspect them to be, Busi?"

Busi: "We can judge that from how this girl is. Are there basic things that shock her?"

Nkosi: "Everything shocks her. She seems to be more advanced with nature rather. Enjoys being out in the garden. Explains why she always wants to be there."

Mthunzi: "And the cat showed up dead in the garden. I think we can all assume that she did that. Now, she's trying to lure Amahle on a walk in the garden."

Busi: "That's going to be a problem. That means they can manipulate nature. Their portal could be in your garden. I don't know anything about super powers but I think nature related ones are more deadly. We need to be careful."

Nkosi: "So what's the next step."

Busi: "I need to be near her, I think. I'm still trying to figure my own thing with spirituality. I find things through dreams. So far, it's only been with people I've met. Once I've been in contact with her, I can try manipulate myself to sleep and possibly dream. Maybe I can find the portal or better yet, I can find more information about where this place they live is and how many of them are there and most importantly, how to get there."

Mthunzi: "Baby, this person is dangerous."

Busi: "Yes, she is. But you're all here to protect me, aren't you?" This didn't sit well with me but everyone was sacrificing. I just needed to be fully vigilant with Busi especially because she cannot actually see.

Mthunzi: "Yes. We're going to protect you."

Nkosi: "How far did you get with the book, Zwe?"

Zwe: "The second chapter details the treasure village. Not it's location, only it's existence and how the people there live. It seems to be a self sustaining environment. Anyone born of that blood is equipped for self enrichment. They're able to build themselves from nothing to comfortable. They do not rely on material, they're modest, natural, and mostly self sustaining. They can live alone for decades without contact to the outside world."

Sibo: "That is so dangerous. These people can self heal, self sustain and do anything and everything without assist. Our technology can not help us in any way if we're to face them."

Zwe: "That's true."

Mthunzi: "On top of that, they have abilities. Is it possible that the reason the Sikhosana family didn't notice this girl is because the treasure blood are the original rulers and those with ability? They gave them the ability?"

Ama: "That could be possible." She looked at her father. The king was blazing in anger.

Mthunzi: "I think we should get moving. Busi, I'll lead you to her. You'll sit and say hi as you usually do with the real Thembisa. How long do you need?"

Busi: "Until she's comfortable. I'll be able to tell."

King: "And what happens next?"

Busi: "I'll need to be in a room, my King. I haven't yet put myself to sleep for this purpose but I can try."

Ama: "I have something I can mix to help you."

Mthunzi: "Let's go." I led Busi out to the lounge, sitting her down. "If you feel even a slight change, just yell, I'll come. Don't let her lead you out anywhere Busi. I'll have two guards right here watching."

Busi: "Okay." I resisted the urge to kiss her, instead walking away to the courtyard.

Mthunzi: "Thembisa? My wife is here to see you. She wants to say hi." She looked angry at me and unable to hide it. If she even tried it, I won't wait on Nkosi, I will fuck her up. She followed me to the lounge. "Babe, here is Thembisa."

Busi: "Hey Sasa."

She: "Hi."

Busi: "How are you doing babe? I'm sorry I haven't called in a minute. Mthunzi said you were having a difficult time this week. Are you okay?"

She: "I'm fine."

Busi: "You don't sound good Sasa. You usually tell me stuff, hug me and describe your outfits. I can't even see you." She giggled. The imposter looked at me. I stared back at her. "Wait, is Mthunzi still here?"

She: "Yes."

Busi: "Hawu? Babe, leave. We're having girl talk." I struggled to move but finally stepped out, walking away. "Is he gone?"

She: "Yes he's gone."

Busi: "Perks of marrying royal guards. He will guard any and everything that is dear to him." She chuckled. I went to the office to wait. I'd appointed guards to stand watch of the lounge and also monitor that they don't leave the lounge. Sibonelo had taken over taking notes while Zwe read the book.

Zwe: "Just found first contact with Sikhosana." He looked up at Nkosi.

Nkosi: "What does it say?"

Zwe: "It describes, a man with stark black eyes competing in a dual at the arena. He was strong and sharp. It seems, he had taken a liking to King Nobomi. He defeated all his opponents and once given his medallion, he went over to the kings, laying his sword before her. His name was Mkhambi Sikhosana." That's the name of their ancestral flower. "King Nobomi had also taken a liking to Sikhosana, she invited him to her palace to get to know him. It is said, they married within the week. Their love had strengthened and blossomed beyond belief. As it is mentioned, the kings weren't allowed to have children. However, the village healer had a message to deliver. The marriage between Nobomi and Mkhambi was to purify the blood of Sikhosana. Sikhosana had abilities and struggled to maintain, control and use them. He was also the last of his blood line. With that, had permission to have their first and only child. The King's council accepted this decision and so they had their son. The family was joyful, Nobomi enjoyed the role of being the mother to her special child. As she was married, her husband had to join

council and crowned as one of the Kings. She didn't halt her duties as King, the new transition was seamless and worked well. As strong a leader she was, Sikhosana never once felt undermined. He respected her decisions, supported them and always listened diligently. He was in love with, in respect, and in honour of his wife. This made their union even stronger. Unfortunately, as do all love stories, there was tragedy. Nobomi fell pregnant a second time. The council did not take kindly to this because, it was specified by their ancestors that they are allowed only One son. The Sikhosana ancestors were pushing their luck. Nobomi didn't want to give up her second child. She would rather give up her seat in council, which she did. This enraged the council once more. Nobomi gave birth to a son, but succumbed to death almost immediately after. There were speculations that she had been poisoned but this couldn't be proven because the healer, too, passed away. It is also believed, she died because she didn't listen to her own blood lineage but offered another, an heir. The son she had given birth to had survived, surprisingly. Sikhosana now had two sons to raise by himself. The council was not kind to him. They believed he didn't belong. Even though he had proven himself over the years and made significant changes in the nation. He raised his children as royals, gave them the title of Princes and appointed help to guard and serve. This was unheard of at this point but he made the decision to be a full king with or without them. When the time came, the eldest son married a girl from the treasure village and so did the second. This was when one of the first kings died in war. King Qhawelesizwe. Over the next few years, the others got ill. King Busa, the leader, called a meeting of council. It was time to appoint the next King. This, came as a shock because remember, the appointment of Kings must make five. King Busa made a ruling, seeing the progression and leadership skill Sikhosana had, to hand over the throne on condition that his bloodline marries theirs and rule together as he did with Nobomi. This was a direct instruction from Treasure blood ancestors. The council was in agreement of this ruling, mostly because they couldn't argue that Sikhosana made a great King even by himself. He maintained them, took care of them, ruled beside them, and respected them. This was how The Only King was appointed."

Sibo: "Zwe must read my child bedtime stories. His voice is soothing." I chuckled.

King: "So this means, the rightful heir to the throne is Thembisa's father?" His voice was dark. I couldn't tell if he was angry from before or this was a new found anger.

Zwe: "No, My King. The throne's rightful heir is he who is appointed. It was rightfully given to Sikhosana, the problem is someone or multiple kings in the lineage broke the agreement. There is a disconnect somewhere that has caused the two lineages to be at odds. I think that is why there is a discussion on the other side currently as Busi said."

Nkosi: "That may mean, the treasure ancestors can take back their throne."

King: "That's all well and good but Thembisa could be held by the witch who is only intending harm! So who's side are they really on?!" He breathed. I got an alert from my phone, one of the guards watching Busi. I walked out, rushing to the lounge. She was sitting by herself.

Mthunzi: "Hey."

Busi: "Hi. Please help me up." I led her back to the office. "Yoh, that girl's spirit is so dark. I can feel the tension in my shoulders. Is Amahle ready?" Amahle walked in.

Ama: "Yes. Let's hope this works." She handed her the drink and looked over at Zwe. "Zwe, you can't leave." He looked at her.

Zwe: "Do I want to know why?"

Ama: "Probably not but I saw your accident. You don't make it out alive. You can't leave the palace anytime soon." ....

## Chapter 137

### PETU'S POV \_

Jackson's send off was quite endearing despite the despicable man he was. It was mostly attended by his business associates and they all had lovely things to say about him. At some point, I put on my shades just so I can roll my eyes in peace. The only person I was worried about was Sizani. She felt so guilty. It wouldn't be easy for her because she blames

herself for everything. Wanting to leave, causing him to react badly, having him arrested. All of it. We'd agreed she would see a therapist but for now, she wanted to grieve and I can only support her. After everyone left, Nothando and I cleaned up the house. Siza took a sleeping pill and went to bed. The kids had left with Sibonelo but he called when he took them to the palace, he had an emergency to attend to and also brought Jimmy back with strict instructions to rest and study. She was currently deep in her books in the kids room. Notha and I would start our studying soon as well. We'd stay over the night and go home tomorrow. I doubt Siza will go back to Stellars though so I will stay here with her.

Petu: "Can I get you a drink?"

Notha: "Yes please." I poured a glass of wine for her and I. Mngqobi walked in.

Mngqobi: "My sweethearts." He sat on the couch.

Petu: "Hey, how are the kids?"

Mngqobi: "Great. Sibonelo went to the palace."

Notha: "Where is Khaya?"

Mngqobi: "Working. You know Khaya is a control freak like a mini Sibonelo." We giggled.

Notha: "He's just like you."

Petu: "These days he's slacking off. I don't know how he's going to take us shopping if he has no money." We laughed.

Mngqobi: "So you're using me?"

Notha: "Obviously, did you think we actually like you?" He laughed.

Mngqobi: "Mmkay then. I'll work but you'll also have to work." He smirked. Notha and I looked at each other.

Petu: "It's your turn." She laughed.

Notha: "it's both our turn."

Mngqobi: "Turn for what?"

Petu: "At the same time?"

Notha: "We haven't tried."

Mnqobi: "Guys?"

Petu: "Are you sure? I'm ready."

Notha: "I'm ready too."

Mnqobi: "What is happening?"

Petu: "Come, let me show you my room."

Mnqobi: "Petu, Sizilile." He whispered. I pulled him to my room, Notha closed the door. "Are we... All of us?"

Petu: "Shhh." I pushed him on the bed.

Mnqobi: "Babies don't play with me like this." Notha took off my dress, leaving me in only my black lace thong. I took off her dress. "oh fuck." We climbed on the bed. I've never been with a girl before and I didn't know what was what but this would be a learning experience for all of us. I took off Mnqobi's pants, Notha took off his shirt sitting on his chest. I pulled out his hard dick, sucking it in. He pulled Notha closer to his mouth, I sucked on him, throating deep inside. He groaned, Notha sat on his mouth.

Noth: "Shhh..." She rode his mouth. He started leaking in my mouth, his precum tickling my taste buds. I massaged the base of his dick, while sucking.

Mnqobi: "Oooh..."

Notha: "Right there." She whispered. His body tensed, climaxing, cumming immediately in my mouth, his legs shaking. "Ohh." She moaned, riding faster. I sat behind her, kissing her neck, massaging her breasts. She threw her head back on my shoulder, shaking to a still while cumming on his mouth. She kissed my lips and we got off him. I placed her on the bed, climbing on top of her while kissing. Mnqobi knelt behind me caressing my back and ass. He kissed me softly all the way down, his fingers slipped under me rubbing our clits at the same time. Notha panted, out of breath, rocking into me.

Mnqobi: "Fuck her baby, keep going." I was so wet, so turned on and ready to cum. "That's my girl. You want to cum for us? Come on, butterfly, cum for us baby." Notha held me tighter, sucking on my lips. Mnqobi removed his hand from between us. My clit came in contact with hers. I shivered in extreme pleasure. I want to cry out loud. "You're almost there baby. Fuck, You look gorgeous." My climax shattered, clit

slipping on Notha, I trembled so hard I got dizzy as I came. "Good girl." He whispered. "You are so wet, baby." His finger slid into me, rubbing on my g spot. My whole body shivered once more, squirting in his hand.

Notha: "Oooh... Keep going."

Mnqobi: "You like that my love? Does it feel good?"

Notha: "Yes." She breathed. He rubbed in me again, again I squirted. She rubbed her clit on mine once again, moaning in my mouth. She held on my body so tight.

Mnqobi: "Let me see you cumming, love. These pussies look so beautiful on each other. Cum for me, my loves." I sucked on her lips, feeling her body coming undone as she climaxed, I joined her orgasm, throbbing on her. "Fucking beautiful." He kissed my ass, climbed on top behind me penetrating. Soft kissed on my neck and shoulders. His dick rubbing in and out of me. Notha kissed and licked my neck, squeezing my breasts gently. She kissed his lips and back on my neck.

Mnqobi: "Oh...." He groaned. She kissed him again, holding his head. He fucked faster, holding my neck kissing Notha. I moved to his rhythm under him, summoning another orgasm. Notha moaned as I was also rubbing on her. She opened some more, holding Mnqobi behind me. "Fucckk." He groaned, kissing my shoulder.

Notha: "Ohhh." I could feel her almost cumming, Mnqobi going faster.

Petu: "Yess..." He was hitting my right spot, I started leaking, almost there. Mnqobi reached his climax, cumming hard, silently also not stopping. Rubbing against Nothando's wetness and his strokes got me dizzy as I came once more and she followed the same time. Mnqobi flopped on the bed, I sat up catching my breath.

Mnqobi: "I think I almost had a heart attack. Yoh, how the hell can I die after feeling this good." We giggled.

Notha: "I hope we weren't too loud."

Petu: "Yoh, I even forgot we're not alone. But that was amazing."

Mnqobi: "I'm even motivated to work harder now but how will I focus? We obviously have to do it again, I must have been dreaming." We laughed.

Notha: "Now you're being crazy."

Petu: "Let me get us some refreshments. I'll be right back." I put on my dress, walking out to the kitchen. Zimmy was in the lounge, watching TV. "Hey babe." I took water bottles from the fridge.

Zimmy: "Mxim." I giggled. "If only I could take the sleeping pill that knocked Siza out. You're trying to make me beg my baby daddy now. Yoh."

Petu: "I'm sorry friend."

Zimmy: "No you're not!" I laughed, walking back to the room.

Petu: "Yeah, we were loud." I gave them water.

Mnqobi: "Amahloni." We laughed.

Petu: "At least Siza is fast asleep."

Notha: "That's good to know. Guys we're horrible guests."

Mnqobi: "Ningang'faki. I was dragged here."

Notha: "You were the loudest." We laughed.

Mnqobi: "Fuck I'm so happy. Come here." He pulled me on top of him, pulling Notha closer. "Ngiyanithanda niyezwa? You make me happy."

Notha: "You're sleepy aren't you?"

Mnqobi: "Hmm. Like you wouldn't believe."

Petu: "Looks like we'll just carry on without you."

Mnqobi: "I'll get a redbull." I giggled.

Petu: "Lala Mnqobi, we need to do girl bonding."

Mnqobi: "Nami ngiyi girl." We laughed. "Ey, I'll have to quickly speed up the weddings. Ngeke phela. Notha wants to steal my second wife."

Notha: "I've already stolen her, ngowethu. You must just learn to sleep early." He laughed.

Mnqobi: "Butterfly nawe uyavuma?" I smiled.

Petu: "We'll take care of you first, don't worry wena sthandwa sam." I kissed him.

Mnqobi: "Thank you my gorgeous love. Nawe noma uyang'zonda." He kissed Notha. She giggled, kissing him back.

Notha: "I love you." He looked down at his dick.

Mnqobi: "See what you've done? Ngicela ning'bhebhe ke." I laughed. This person doesn't get tired. I don't know how many times I've climaxed but I was still turned on. I didn't know how amazing it would feel with Notha. She kissed my lips, on top of him then kissed him too. One more time.

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

It was becoming evening. The palace was tense. Nkosi was beyond livid and every second grew angrier until he just snapped, transforming into a tiger. My heart stopped, I held on to my bladder. Dear God, not like this. As if this wasn't enough, the King transformed himself, looking as vicious and angry. I said a soft prayer. Both father and son crashed out of the office, Mthunzi ran after them. WHAT THE FUCK!!! Is he not afraid of dying?? OoMthunzi aboDie Hard, what the fuck is he doing?!

Thembisa's father looked too calm for my liking, he only flinched once. Why are people not reacting to this? Zwe is busy reading a book.

Sibo: "Is anyone going to stop them?"

Zwe: "You're welcome to."

Sibo: "Zwe, if they kill that girl, Thembisa is as good as dead." He sighed. Amahle walked in the office. "Amahle, your brother and father just tiger ran out of here, Mthunzi is after them."

Ama: "They'll be fine. They need to let off steam and do something. Mthunzi will shield the girl." Okay, that was good to know. Yoh my heart was still beating irregular.

Sibo: "Tata, are you okay?"

Xolani: "I'm fine, thank you Prince." I needed something to do, perhaps help Mthunzi. That man's job is so hard, I thought I envied him but I definitely don't. And never will. I took out my phone, sending a message to my baby's mum. A moment of normalcy is what I need. Just a minute of it.

Sibo: <Little ones mama, are you still fine?> My child needs a name. He has eyes now and a heart beat.

Zimmy: <Somewhat.>

Sibo: <What's wrong? Are you feeling sick?>

Zimmy: <Not at all. Mngqobi and his wives are having an orgy.> I've never hated my brother more than this moment. Lucky stupid boy. Does he have no shame? We are dealing with a crisis and he's having the time of his life? No I hate him.

Sibo: <Ufuna ujoina baby? Or ngize?>

Zimmy: <lol. Please work, I'm trying to study.>

Sibo: <Don't be shy, tell me.>

Zimmy: <I'll tell you when you're here. Go back to work.>

Sibo: <okay baby.> Maybe I should help Mthunzi, he needs my help. I feel motivated enough now.

Sibo: "I'm going to check if Mthunzi needs assistance."

Zwe: "He doesn't."

Sibo: "Why are you so calm?!"

Zwe: "Someone needs to be if we want to find Thembisa. So far, the book is only detailing history. I'm trying to find hints of a hidden tribe."

Sibo: "Is someone checking on Busi?"

Ama: "Yes, there's guards at her door." I needed something to do. I was going insane.

Zwe: "Sibonelo, please sit down."

Sibo: "How? How can I sit down Zwe?"

Zwe: "On your bums!! Just sit still, I can't focus with you pacing back and forth."

Sibo: "Oh? So you can't focus if it's me, but when Nkosi turns into a tiger, you're asleep?"

Zwe: "You're freaking out and I need you to calm down. Sit." I sat down but stood up again. Nope.

Sibo: "I'm going to help Mthunzi."

Ama: "Sibonelo, sit down. There's nothing you can help Mthunzi with."

Sibo: "Fine, so what can I do then?"

Zwe: "Check on ooBiyela. All their whereabouts and update uBaba that we'll be here at the palace until further notice, if they can be kind and send a guard with something for us to change into, that would be appreciated." I sat down, finally and checked the family's whereabouts. Mngqobi, Nothando, Zimasa and Petunia were at Jackson's house with Siza. Khaya was inside the palace with our parents and the kids. I dialed my father's number and spoke to him. Once I hung up, Amahle stood up.

Ama: "Busi is awake." She walked out. I'm struggling to keep up with these abilities.

Zwe: "Sibonelo, please call Mthunzi in." I walked out the office to the lounge. There was yelling. I walked in, Thembisa look alike was screaming for Nkosi. Mthunzi was blocking her way. She can feel something is wrong. The way she's reacting is suspicious, it's possible she wants to update her muthi things. I needed to find Nkosi, possibly calm him down enough to whisper to her. One of the twins walked to me. I think it was Nhlanhla.

Nhla: "Who are you looking for?"

Sibo: "Your brother. I'm thinking maybe he can whisper to her, make her sleep or something." I said in a low tone.

Nhla: "He won't hear you. Come." She took my hand walking out the the palace doors. The sun had just set and it was misty, you could barely see the outside furniture.

Sibo: "We should probably go back inside." She kept walking, holding my hand. The people in this palace aren't afraid of anything, are they? "Nhlanhla-"

Nhla: "Look." She smiled.

Sibo: "What are we looking at?" There was mist all around us, I couldn't even see the entrance door any longer.

Nhla: "The palace is being protected. These are our guides and angels."

Sibo: "Am I allowed to even be here."

Nhla: "You're a relative of the throne. Close your eyes."

Sibo: "Nhlanhla."

Nhla: "Close them." I obliged, hoping to God she isn't trying to kill me. "Open." Sparkles all around in the air, flying up in the sky.

Sibo: "That's beautiful."

Nhla: "Yes. It is. I wanted someone to see it once."

Sibo: "You see this all the time?"

Nhla: "No. Only when there's crisis. Bhuti!!" She called out. Excuse me? I was expecting a telepathic type of thing? Imagine shouting out like you're at a shebeen? I heard a low growl around me. Nkosi appeared, almost fully naked. This man just did not care.

Sibo: "My Prince. That girl in there is hysterical. I think she's sensing something is wrong, she's been insisting on seeing you, currently fighting Mthunzi physically. Busi has just woken up as well, she may have something to tell us. I think, perhaps you should whisper to that girl, get her to sleep or something just so she doesn't distract what needs to be done."

Nkosi: "Ok."

Sibo: "I'll get you something to put on." I managed to walk back into the house, finding a helper and asking for set of pants and a shirt for the prince. She was back in less than 3 minutes. Very efficient. I went back out to the courtyard, Nhlanhla sat with her brother. He got dressed.

Nhla: "Don't let her touch you, bhuti."

Nkosi: "Ok." We walked back in the palace. I was interested in seeing how this worked but also hesitant. Where was the king? We entered the lounge.

Mthunzi: "Nkosi, Nkosi No!! Sibonelo get him out of here!!" What is going on now?

Nhla: "Bhuti please calm down." I'm not about to touch him.

Sibo: "My Prince."

Mthunzi: "SIBONELO!!" I held his arm, almost burning my skin. Fuck!!

Sibo: "Zwe!!!" Amahle walked in, touched his back. His eyes were still in flames. I managed to hold him, leading him out the lounge. My palm was scorched. There was no reasoning with him any longer. Nkosi was ready to kill. We went into the office.

Xolani: "We have progress. Busisiwe saw the village but there's no way of going in unless brought in by someone from the inside."

Busi: "The good news is, I can send a message. I think. I just don't know how it will be received."

Sibo: "What do you mean?"

Busi: "I can send a message using Tata Xolani's blood, but I don't know if only Thembisa will get it or the entire tribe since he's also treasure. The village is somewhere nearby. Not too far."

Sibo: "Your Highness, is there a secret code or spot only you and Sasa know?"

Nkosi: "No." He gave it some thought. "Wait... There's a song. She sang it when we climbed a tree together. She was scared but when we sat on the strongest branch, she sang. Nkosi and Sasa sitting in a tree. K I S S I N G. If she has a way to mark a tree, that way we know the area."

Xolani: "Because of my blood, someone will come. I need to look injured, bleeding, calling for help. They'll come."

Ama: "We need a way to disguise Nkosi and father. They'll spring up on whoever comes forward, we will use them to go back in. Father can shapeshift."

Zwe: "But he doesn't have the blood. They'll know."

Ama: "Not necessarily. We'll use the same method, they brought that girl in here. I think Nhlanhla can reverse that spell. Since she's the only one that could see beyond her veil."

Nkosi: "Let's do it."

Ama: "Please call father in." ...

## SASA'S POV\_

I sat in the dark hut, I'd been dragged to. I didn't get any sunlight, I have no idea what day it is. In the opposite corner sat the witch. She sat there mixing her herbs, or doing something. I could barely see her. She never spoke a word to me and I didn't dare utter a sound. The night I'd tried to escape, I was caught by one of the tribesmen and he was ready to chop

my head off. If Mzingeli hadn't tackled him down, I would be dead and rotting in this place. Unfortunately, my attempt caused my punishment. Being placed under the supervision of the witch. The things I saw gave me sleepless nights. Her eyes glowed a sky blue grey at certain times of the night. The one time I looked, I choked on my saliva, again almost dying.

Gogo: "Uyabona inkani ingambulala umntu. Andithethi, ndenza. Andinguye umhlobo wakho. Esona sizathu sokuba uphile, yile ndoda uyibalekayo. Kwixesha elizayo, andiyi kuba nobubele." (You see stubbornness can kill a person. I don't talk, I act. I'm not your friend. The only reason you're still alive is because of the man you're running away from. The next time, I will not be kind.) Was all she said. I decided right then and there to shut my mouth. This was not a person to talk anyway you like to. It didn't help seeing the things she made fly sometimes. I was so scared of even asking for the toilet. I haven't eaten in days, my body was weak and giving up. Someone crouched into the hut, walking in.

"Molweni Gogo."

Gogo: "Ufunani Mzingeli." (What do you want)

Mzi: "Gogo, Ndicela uthatha uThembisa ayohlala nam?" (May I please take Thembisa to live with me?)

Gogo: "Inoba uphambene. Thembisa akaphumi apha. Andithi wena uyakubaleka? Uzohlala nam ke." (You must be crazy. Thembisa is not leaving. She's running from you, right? She'll live with me then.)

Mzi: "She made a mistake, Gogo. Ndicela umxolele." (Please forgive her.)

Gogo: "Mzingeli, ndicela undincede ushiye ubukho bam?" (Please leave my presence.)

Mzi: "Thatha mna ke. Let me take her punishment." (Take me then)

Gogo: "Weeh Mzingeli. Akakufuni lomntu. Utheni uyaphambana?" (This person doesn't want you. Are you crazy?)

Mzi: "Gogo, unzima uThembisa." I could feel her stare. "Ndicela umxolele Gogo." (She's pregnant. Please forgive her.)

Gogo: "Mzingeli, uyandihlonipha?" (Do you respect me?)

Mzi: "Ewe Gogo." (Yes)

Gogo: "Khona yintoni ekwenza ucinge ukuba andiyazi?" (Then what makes you think I'm not aware?)

Mzi: "Gogo, I'm willing to take the punishment. Ndiyacenga." (I'm begging.)

Gogo: "Andifuni Mzingeli. Ingaba uyafuna ukwazi isizathu sokuba?" (I don't want to. Do you want to know why?)

Mzi: "Ngokuvuma kwakho Gogo." (With your permission.)

Gogo: "Ndilinde umqondiso wakhe. Bafuna uzomlanda. Ndifuna ukuba basondele kancinci. uNobutsha uzamile ukubalumkisa, kodwa abeva. Abakhe baphulaphule. Usishiyile thina ubaginyile bona, uyalibona liyingozi njani elagazi labo? Ndizobafundisa esona sifundo ke namhlanje." (I'm waiting for her signal. They want to come fetch her. I want them to come just a little bit closer. Nobutsha tried warning him but they don't listen. They never listen. She has abandoned us and dedicated herself to him. Do you see how dangerous their blood is? It will turn anyone against their own family. I will teach them one hell of a lesson today.)

Mzi: "Xa ubafumene, Ndingamlanda uThembisa?" (When you get them, can I fetch Thembisa?)

Gogo: "Ngowakho." (She's yours.) ...

## Chapter 138

### SASA'S POV\_

I woke up, feeling a bit dizzy. After Mzi and his grandmother's conversation I fell into a dizzy sleep. My body ached and my throat sore.

Mzi: "Hey." Oh no... I tried getting up, my heart aching. "Don't worry. I brought you back to my hut." My tears finally gave in. I sobbed quietly. If I remember correctly, he was only allowed to take me once the witch got the signal. Which means, she must have captured whoever came to rescue me. "Thembisa." I stopped and wiped my tears.

Me: "You got what you wanted Mzingeli. Can I please go?"

Mzi: "I can't let you go. It's not safe. I took you from my grandmother because you're weak. You haven't eaten, slept or had anything to drink. You're pregnant. You need to be comfortable."

Me: "But she said..."

Mzi: "I may have tricked my way out. Don't worry about it. I can handle her punishment."

Me: "She hasn't captured them?" He took the water bottle next to me.

Mzi: "This is fresh water, please drink it so you can eat." I sat up, drinking the crispy fresh water and finishing the bottle.

Me: "Thank you."

Mzi: "She hasn't. And she won't." I looked at him. He handed me the metal plate with pieces of meat and veggies on the side. "This is chicken. I figured you might enjoy it."

Me: "You went to a store to buy a chicken?"

Mzi: "Don't be silly. I only know how to hunt. I got it from a farm nearby."

Me: "You stole me a chicken?"

Mzi: "I'm not a thief. I traded a pig for it."

Me: "That seems like an unfair trade. Pigs are huge and rare here."

Mzi: "I only want you fed and comfortable. No matter how much it costs."

Me: "Why?" I took the plate from him, trying to eat.

Mzi: "You're carrying a precious gift."

Me: "Your enemy's child. Seeing that you want to keep me here. Why do you care about my baby? You want to raise him as your own?"

Mzi: "Maybe. The gods know he'd be more suited here anyway." I laughed long and painfully.

Me: "If that's what the gods tell you, I think you should stop listening, Mzingeli." He watched me eat. I managed one piece of meat and some vegetables which were spinach and something else I didn't know.

Me: "What's this?"

Mzi: "Amadumbe."

Me: "Also traded from a farm?"

Mzi: "No we have a garden." I drank more water.

Me: "You said your grandmother hasn't captured my family, and she won't. What did you mean?"

Mzi: "I meant exactly that."

Me: "Why are you helping me?"

Mzi: "It's in my blood to."

Me: "What does that mean?"

Mzi: "You ask quite a lot of questions."

Me: "I like knowing things."

Mzi: "Some things hurt." He touched my belly. "This is going to be such a beautiful boy. The peaceful king."

Me: "How do you know my child's name?"

Mzi: "It's very little I don't know but mostly because he's my blood."

Me: "Oh yeah. Half treasure." I picked a bit from the food again.

Mzi: "Are there things that you like to eat?"

Me: "Like cravings?"

Mzi: "Cravings?"

Me: "Pregnant women crave things usually. Some foods make them sick but the cravings go down well."

Mzi: "A Sikkhosana heir will never make you sick." He chuckled.

Me: "How would you know that?"

Mzi: "You're treasure. They'll only ever treat you comfortably."

Me: "Is that why King Bheki ordered for Queen Nobomi to be fed poison right after she gave birth to his grandson?"

Mzi: "And that's why he isn't with the ancestors in the royal realm." I stared at him feeling overwhelmingly safe. Who was this man? The grandson of the most powerful witch Thembisa. Focus! "What would you like to eat?"

Me: "Uhm, nothing." Although I'd be grateful for ribs. My appetite was suddenly growing back. I was alarmed at how secure I was feeling and I

would fight it shame. I wasn't going to allow Mzingeli to trick me into moving into a forest.

Mzi: "Are you sure?"

Me: "Yes, I'm sure Mzingeli."

Mzi: "I'm not trying to hurt you. Please understand that. I only want to protect you."

Me: "We've gone through this before. I said it then, you should have left me at home if you wanted to protect me."

Mzi: "That wouldn't have protected you. If it wasn't me, it would've been someone else."

Me: "Why?"

Mzi: "I'm sure you know by now, the other royals contacted my grandmother. They know there's a link between treasure and Sikhosana blood. They know that link is the reason Sikhosana's have the throne. If they can dethrone them, it will be up for grabs."

Me: "And you want to let that happen?"

Mzi: "No."

Me: "Then why are you letting it happen Mzingeli?"

Mzi: "I'm not letting anything happen. I'm protecting the future, keeping you here. The others won't bother fighting Sikhosana. They'll take his prized possession. And they know it's you."

Me: "How do you know all this?" He looked at me. I focused on his eyes. My heart softened in an uncomfortable way. His eyes swirled turning into an orange glaze colour. I gasped. "No. What are you trying to do?!"

Mzi: "Calm down."

Me: "How did... Who are you?!"

Mzi: "I need you calm first." He had eyes like Nkosi. He had the Sikhosana orange eyes. Did he have the witch do this? It was a spell!

Me: "Are you trying to cast a spell on me, Mzingeli? That's rude!"

Mzi: "don't you think if I wanted to cast a spell on you, you wouldn't feel that something is wrong? Wouldn't it just work?"

Me: "How then? King Sizwe has only one son."

Mzi: "Yes he does."

Me: "King Ngidumise killed all his other sons after him. I saw them. We helped them over to the correct realm." He stared at me.

Mzi: "You're making my life incredibly difficult."

Me: "Who are you."

Mzi: "My father was only 20 when he died. My mother hadn't even figured out she was pregnant yet. Like I said, Sikhosana ancestors love the carriers of their heirs. She was treasure blood. Having met in the woods, falling in love and weeks later, King Ngidumise got to him. Nobody but my grandmother knew. They've since kept my existence a secret. My mother died while she was giving birth to me. The heartbreak got her. Apparently that's another thing about the two bloods mixing. The heartbreak is soul crushing. It's so bad, they can actually die from it. My mother's brother raised me as his own to conceal the fact but they've always been honest to me about it because it's difficult to prevent the abilities from showing up."

Me: "Oh my God." This was King Sizwe's nephew. Nkosi's cousin. He blinked his eyes back to brown. "Does anyone know?"

Mzi: "My tribe, yes."

Me: "That's why you're so protective over me. You can't help it." He looked down not in shame just indifference. "Why do you change your eyes?"

Mzi: "You know what they'd do if someone found out about me. I'm a threat to the throne." Oh they'd definitely kill him.

Me: "So you do have abilities."

Mzi: "I've locked mine."

Me: "That means what?"

Mzi: "I'm a mix of two of the strongest bloods. I have abilities from both. I've asked my grandmother to lock them because I have no use for them." I didn't want to trust him, I couldn't.

Me: "When you said your grandmother won't capture them, what did you mean?"

Mzi: "It's time for you to rest-"

Me: "I don't believe you Mzingeli. Why would you turn your back on your family that has raised you till this big age and help a family that will kill you without hesitation?" He looked up at me. The swirl in his eyes was so enchanting. The brown eyes with slithers of orange dancing like a potion in a bottle. It can't be. Mzingeli was a Sikhosana heir. How did the ancestors hide this big secret? I understand the witch is able to hide him but the ancestors? Did they want him to be king? What about Nkosi? Why name him the good king? What the hell was happening in that spiritual realm?

Mzi: "It's time for you to rest."

Me: "I want answers Mzingeli!! Do you want the throne? Is that why you kidnapped me? Is that why you're luring my family here?"

Mzi: "I don't want the throne."

Me: "Then what do you want!"

Mzi: "Sleep.." my eye lids were heavy, body feeling loose. He picked me up and lay me on the bed gently, placing a warm blanket over my body. His hand holding my belly. "Don't fight. You just need to rest." I drifted off.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

We had managed to send the signal, or so Busi said. We still hadn't been able to get a response or even know who got the signal. Thembisa's father was already wandering in the woods, I kept a close eye on him as well as my father. He could also be invisible, which is another shock I wasn't ready for. I know he had all abilities but to what end and for what? No one was coming. I moved a little further, even though we disguised our scent and presence maybe they could still feel us around. These people were closed off from the world and led by a powerful witch, they can sense much deeper than us. God, I hope my wife was safe. Finally, I saw Thembisa's father pretending to limp toward a figure by the river. I finely tuned my hearing to listen to what was said. I know my father was much closer.

Xolani: "Mfana, please...please help. I'm injured." He stood a few steps from this man. He didn't seem bothered nor made an attempt to move. "Can you understand? Uyandiva? Ndicela uncedo."(Can you hear me? Please help me.)

Man: "Tell them to reveal themselves."

Xolani: "Uthetha ngantoni?" (What are you talking about?)

Man: "Tell them to come out." How did he? I could sense movement, my father. I transformed running faster and leaped out, skidding in front of them. The man didn't move or flinch. My father appeared three times around him. The man simply broke his fire wood, working quietly.

Xolani: "Who are you?"

Man: "You're going to listen to me, clearly. Thembisa is safe. And she will continue to be. You need to leave."

Xolani: "I'm not leaving without my daughter!!"

Man: "I'm trying to help you. In a few minutes, the others will sense you and come. None of your abilities will work. They will capture you, strip you off your very being and burn you alive as Ngidumise did to all the treasures. For his sins, you will atone. Harshly. Turn away now before I open the veil." I turned to my human form, moving closer to him.

Nkosi: "I want my wife!!" I growled.

Man: "Then leave." It was then, I smelt the scent. He had her. He's the one who took my wife. I grabbed his neck ready to split him in half but my body blinked once and he was out of my hands. I looked around, trembling. I was back in the palace garden. My father and Mr Ntaka with me.

Nkosi: "What the hell happened?" Why was I trembling? Why did he disappear like that?

King: "We need to be more careful."

Nkosi: "Careful? I was this close, father!!!" I screamed. "I could smell her!! He has her!!"

King: "My son, calm down-"

Nkosi: "Father..." I hissed. "Did you just teleport me out of that place?" I was finding it difficult to breath. He couldn't have done that. I don't think he would.

King: "Yes." I stared at him, ready and willing to tear him down. "I had to. They were coming-"

Nkosi: "They?" I growled. "Who the fuck is THEY!!! There is no they!!!!" I screamed, attacking him. Several hims held me back. "Let go of me!!!! Leave me alone!!! You are a horrible father!!! How could you do that to me!!!"

King: "My son.."

Nkosi: "How could you do that to me?" I fell on my knees. "How could you let him take her when I was so close?" ...

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

I'd spent a bit of time reading with Zwe but I got hungry then sleepy. It's a good thing Nkosi and the King were gone. I managed to eat and sleep like my baby. By the time I woke up, they still weren't back. I joined Zwe reading the book he was so gripped by, he was halfway through.

Zwe: "Sleep."

Sibo: "I'm fine."

Zwe: "You can barely keep your eyes open."

Sibo: "I have to practice for when the baby comes."

Ama: "Congratulations."

Sibo: "Thank you." I smiled happily. Being a father was not in my plans for a while but I was really happy. Even though it was a mistake, they'll never feel that. Yoh Jimmy has made me a man. There's a whole human who's going to think I'm their universe then maybe hate me when they're a teenager but love me again in their twenties.

Sibo: "Zwe."

Zwe: "Hm." His eyes glued to the book.

Sibo: "I know you're busy but I'll need your help."

Zwe: "The guard can escort you to the toilet Sboni." Mthunzi chuckled.

Sibo: "Not that kind of help. I want the mother of my child."

Zwe: "Leave her alone."

Sibo: "Zwe. You know how I feel. I just need her to."

Ama: "Tell her." I looked at her. She was her friend, and also a seer. Which is advantageous for my problem.

Sibo: "Really? Will she accept me back."

Ama: "No."

Sibo: "Then what's the point?"

Ama: "That. You want everything to come easily for you. That's not how the world works. It's not how Jimmy's heart works. She needs to feel secure and loved. Your detachment to actively showing that is what will keep pushing her away. She's a good woman and will make a fantastic mother, but she will not compromise her heart by letting you have it easy. And that's all I'm telling you. I shouldn't even be telling you because she's my friend and deserves much better than you."

Busi: "I know that's right."

Sibo: "I am not that bad." They all laughed.

Busi: "You need to either listen to Amahle or Zwe. Maybe Amahle because you seem to really want to. It's worth a try. This macho hardcore CEO bachelor aesthetic is overrated. Be wholesome. Let yourself fall in love for once." I sighed. This is going to be difficult for me.

Sibo: "We'll see."

Zwe: "No. We won't see. If you even begin to stress the mother of our child, I'm going to hurt you. You either leave her alone or take the ladies advice." The door opened, Mr Ntaka walked in with the King then closed the door. What happened. Where was Nkosi? My heart started beating irregularly.

Sibo: "Where is Nkosi?" I blurted out. I couldn't hold it in. They can't just walk in here looking sullen. Where is he?

King: "He's in his room, resting." He sat down.

Ama: "What happened?"

Xolani: "We didn't find her." My hands were shaking with fear. This was horrible. I hate to even think this but is she even still alive at this point? Surely the ancestors can't be that cruel. "We came across a man from the village. Seemed to have been waiting for us. He knew the Prince and the King were around when I approached. He asked them to come out. He said Thembisa is safe and that we should leave." That's it?

Ama: "And you left, father? Why? What do you mean she is safe? Why couldn't he hand her over?"

King: "He warned that he would open the veil so the others can sense us and come for us. He said our abilities would not work. He also said, once we are captured, we would be burnt the same way the treasures were burnt by my father. That we will atone harshly for his sins. He had the option of letting us find this out ourselves but he warned us instead. So yes, I had to bring them back." So that's why they're angry? Then why take Thembisa?

Zwe: "My King, do you think this person is in charge of the village? Maybe he's their king?"

King: "No. If he was their king, we would be dead. He saved our lives."

Sibo: "Why would he do that, Your Majesty?"

King: "Because he is a Sikhosana heir." Silence swept over the room. I don't participate in gossip, but this? This was sizzling. HOW.

Ama: "I thought you only had four children, father." She hissed. I have never seen or heard Amahle that pissed off.

King: "I have never cheated on your mothers. All the children I conceived, are currently under my roof. I have no other children."

Ama: "We sent the spirits of the lost princes, your brothers, to the correct realm some weeks back! Wouldn't they have mentioned they have a very alive brother!? Or ...is he not alive?"

King: "He's very alive. He seems young. I don't know who he is but I know he's our blood."

Busi: "But my king, in my consult I was shown that the man guarding Thembisa is of her blood."

King: "Yes. That's him." I don't know but the king looked so sad at these news. He looked quite defeated. Or lost? What will happen now?

Zwe: "What did Nkosi say?"

King: "Nkosihle is...not coping." His voice broke. There it was. He was sad. "Please keep an eye on him." He said after fixing his voice and walked out. That broken heart King Ngidumise died of was probably crippling Nkosi as of now. How painful must that be? To actually die from emotional pain? I could hardly breath just thinking about it. Thembisa was his soulmate. He couldn't survive without her. This seemed like a curse honestly.

Sibo: "Can't we talk to this guy? Offer him something? Everyone wants something."

Xolani: "He doesn't seem like a person who wants anything. He has exactly what he needs."

Sibo: "What does that mean Tata?"

Ama: "If he truly is treasure blood and Sikhosana blood, then according to the book, he's the rightful heir. Currently, he has a treasure blood queen, uNobomi, carrying another heir. His blood. He doesn't need a palace or the outside world. Where he is, he's already King."

## Chapter 139

### PETU'S POV

Sunday morning, I woke up early going to the kitchen. I'd had such an amazing night with my boyfriend and girlfriend. In between studies, we spent some time together, our conversations were flowing and honest with each other. Seeing Mnqobi kissing Notha no longer hurt me, if anything I enjoyed seeing that. She's started becoming a little free and affectionate. She still doesn't like general touching and cuddling but she lets Mnqobi do it every once in a while. Jimmy was making breakfast.

Petu: "My babe."

Zimmy: "Hey you."

Petu: "Did you sleep well?" She sighed.

Zimmy: "Not really. I'm worried Petu. Sibonelo didn't come back from the palace and I didn't want to burden him with questions. He just kept asking how I was throughout the night. This morning he called, letting me know he's still there and I should stay with you guys."

Petu: "This must be serious."

Zimmy: "Petu what if something happened to Sasa?" Her voice quivered. She was ready to cry.

Petu: "let's not worry about something that we don't know. Sibonelo will update us if there's a problem. Remember he was hands on when she got shot and he was honest."

Zimmy: "To you. I wasn't told anything. What if.."

Petu: "Zimasa, things are different now. You're carrying his child. Yes he's trying to protect you but stop thinking he's hiding things from you because he thinks you're not important. You are important to him now. To the family. I know you're still hurt we never disclosed that incident when it happened but now, we won't hide anything. I promise. Also, let this man protect his child. He doesn't want you stressed." She chuckled. I know how close Zimmy was to Sasa. She would fall apart if anything happened to her. Especially since this pregnancy because she's become so emotional at everything.

Zimmy: "I'm sorry. I'm just feeling so weird today."

Petu: "You're pregnant. Just try not to stress. Let me make you food." I've dealt with pregnant Siza 3 times to understand how sensitive these people can be. I took over the cooking while she helped clean up. Siza came in the kitchen.

Siza: "Morning ladies."

Petu: "Hi sis. How are you?"

Siza: "Still a bit dizzy but I guess it's the sleeping pill still in my body. I need a lot of water."

Petu: "And food. Zimmy had already started, so I'm almost done."

Siza: "I don't have much of an appetite."

Petu: "That's okay. Some fruit then. To flush out the pill." She sat on the bar stool.

Zimmy: "Maybe a cocktail?"

Petu: "Zimmy!" Siza chuckled.

Siza: "We're going to suffer now that she's pregnant, we must drink on her behalf."

Zimmy: "It's going to be a long 7 more months for me." She laughed. After making breakfast, I went to go check on Mnqobi and Notha. She was still sleeping, Mnqobi was on the phone.

Mnqobi: "Yebo Baba. Okay, we'll be home soon. Sure." He hung up. "Good morning my butterfly." I climbed on the bed, next to him.

Petu: "Hey baby."

Mnqobi: "That was my father. He has ordered us to be back in Stellars within an hour. All of us."

Petu: "I was going to stay with Siza."

Mnqobi: "He mentioned her too. All of us baby." His phone rang again. "Sboni."

Sibo: "Are you on your way home?"

Mnqobi: "Yes, I'm getting up now."

Sibo: "Good. Take uMama ka Biyela omncane with you. Don't take no for an answer. Get her things from res and take her to Stellars. I've spoken to her."

Mnqobi: "What's going on Sboni?"

Sibo: "Alot. I don't want to alarm you and the girls but I need you back in safety. What I can tell you is from my understanding of this morning, the grids are losing power. Power stations all over the country are starting to malfunction and they are quite old. Soon we'll have to make means of securing electricity for the nation. I need our family in close proximity before then."

Mnqobi: "Okay. I'll take them home now."

Sibo: "Thank you brother. I'll update you during the day. We might not be home for a while so you and Khaya will have to hold the fort Kwa Biyela. Take care of my child and his mother please."

Mnqobi: "Not a problem."

Sibo: "Okay. We'll talk." He hung up.

Mnqobi: "We need to move, love. Now." I got up from bed with him. "Pack all of what you need." Most of my stuff was still in Stellars so I was quick. He was done getting dressed as well, waking up Notha. I left the room to tell Siza. They were in the lounge having breakfast.

Petu: "Ladies, we have to go back to Stellars today."

Siza: "Yes, you guys can go. I'll be fine."

Mnqobi: "Actually, my father asked for everyone. Including you, Siza. There is currently a problem that will start affecting all citizens and the family would rather have you with us. Nawe Zimasa. Sibonelo has asked that you collect your belongings from res."

Zimmy: "Is everything okay?"

Mnqobi: "No. I can't speak about it for now, not until it's been confirmed anyway."

Siza: "Is it similar to the lockdown?"

Mnqobi: "I think a little worse."

Siza: "I'll be okay here Mnqobi. Your family has done enough for me. I am not in danger anymore."

Mnqobi: "Siza, two people have called and stressed this in less than 10 minutes of each other. The next person to call will be Zwe and trust me, you don't want Zwe to call. He will have these guards outside physically carry us out of this house."

Siza: "Okay." She got up, walking to her room.

Mnqobi: "Sthandwa sam, the guards will take you home with Siza and Notha. I'm taking Zimmy to res to collect her things."

Petu: "Okay babe. Let me help Siza pack."

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

Sunday morning was a whole new stressful day. I managed to sleep a few hours but who could really rest at a time like this? The Sikhosana family was visibly hurting. The king and the prince hadn't resurfaced

from leaving for bed. Zwe had gone to check on Nkosi in his room. It didn't look good. This girl who looked like Thembisa was still here. Why? No clue. I don't think she could enter Nkosi's room so she roamed the passages until the king put her to sleep. I was in the office with Mthunzi and Mr Ntaka.

Mthunzi: "Tata, I've sent an army guard to look after Mrs Ntaka and Zanele."

Xolani: "Thank you." We woke up to troubling news. A few power stations had begun to malfunction this morning, causing outages in a few parts of the country. Most of those parts being busy business districts and factories, halting production for essential things such as food and banking services amongst many others. Talk about hitting where it hurts. The supplier for most of our power stations is? Phakamisa. I didn't see it coming and I hate that. It is so obvious that he's trying to destabilize us using the country. How low can one get?

Mthunzi: "What have you gotten Sboni?"

Sibo: "I've contacted a few people around the stations to service and supply them but it won't be long before they shut down again. This is intentional. Mthunzi, if the country doesn't have electricity, it will barely function."

Mthunzi: "What do we do? Can't we buy new ones?"

Sibo: "I wish it was that easy. The contract given to Phakamisa makes him the only one allowed to handle it. On top of that, if the contract is breached, he can sue the throne. And win."

Mthunzi: "We can't be at the mercy of a disgraced former king. What are our options?"

Sibo: "Intercepting his new business deal. I've managed to get a bit of information regarding it. It's a new energy supply deal with nations up north. So I suspect he knew this was going to happen sooner or later."

Mthunzi: "If the deal goes through?"

Sibo: "While we're in the dark, he will be partnered with other nations to supply means of energy to the country. Our banking systems will rely on his energy supply, if he cuts a deal with the banking sector, he will have a database of all citizens registered with banks. If he has access to our citizens money, he knows what they spend it on and what they live on

and need. If he has access to that information, he can redirect his businesses to supply that and manipulate their spending towards him. What I'm saying Mthunzi, this man will singlehandedly hold this country in his hands. He will have something more valuable than anything. Data. He'll be the richest man in the southern hemisphere in a quick burst of time."

Xolani: "So this must have been the plan with the witch. Distracting Nkosi and the King so that he can destabilize the country."

Sibo: "Could be."

Mthunzi: "We need to find Thembisa-"

Xolani: "You need to get Nkosinhle up and on his feet. The man in the woods said Thembisa is safe. I don't have a reason to believe him but I think we need to trust that. I want my daughter back safely. As much as I do, this seems to be an attack of some kind and it needs to be dealt with, with urgency." Even from his voice I could he was trying to hold it together. Trying to be strong. Zwe walked in, with the King and Amahle.

Zwe: "Is the family back in Stellars Sibonelo?" I checked on Mngqobi's location. He was at res.

Sibo: "He's at the residence. I asked him to get Jimmy's things and take her with them."

Zwe: "Sizani and the girls?" I checked.

Sibo: "Mngqobi's house."

Zwe: "Good. Have you spoken to Khaya?"

Sibo: "Yes, this morning. He's communicating with Langa from Golden Crown. He has an energy supply company."

Zwe: "Can he be trusted? What if he got that contract from Phakamisa?"

Sibo: "He didn't. I checked. Langa built his company from scratch. All his contracts are above board and not affiliated with Phakamisa." My phone pinged. I checked it. "More outages."

Mthunzi: "This is going to cause outrage with the citizens." We all looked at the king. He was sitting behind the desk, staring at his hands. Dear God, this man looked so sad. It definitely didn't look like him. Was this still about Thembisa or maybe the discovery of a new heir? Anyone would be rattled by that. Also not knowing forest guy's intentions.

King: "Nkosinhle is not in the position to deal with any of this so you will have to make the decisions that can benefit the nation, Sibonelo. From this point forward, you and Zwelethu are in charge. Perhaps, having the queens help as well, they may have ..." He held his chest, struggling to breathe. Mthunzi jumped up to him. "I'm fine." He breathed. "They may have a plan or idea on how to help. Please update me at the end of the day." He got up.

Mthunzi: "My King."

King: "I'm fine." He walked out.

Ama: "He's just as affected as Nkosi. He won't show it but it's breaking him just as bad. It's difficult." I did not envy this family's love. I always thought they didn't care and they were just cold. Turns out I was very wrong. Their kind of love is way too intense they can hardly operate without it. That is scary.

Zwe: "We will handle the country. The family can focus on finding a solution for getting Thembisa back."

Sibo: "Also, maybe you can talk to the lookalike girl? Find out more information from her or even manipulate her into being on our side?"

Ama: "She won't speak to anyone but Nkosi and we all know Nkosi isn't in the right frame of mind right now." This is awful. I looked back at my phone, Mngqobi was headed back to Stellars. I sent Jimmy a message. <Hey. I know I left without fully explaining what was going on and I'm still unable to disclose. I just wanted to let you know I'm still willing and excited to be a father to our child. I asked you to be in Stellars so that you're well protected even in my absence. Whatever you need, Mngqobi will make sure you have it. I'm right here on text so if there's a problem, send me a message. Please rest, mama wengane yami. And eat.> I sent it. Now it was time for work. We'd had a few lazy weeks as the council but now, it was game time.

SASA'S POV\_

I woke up in the morning and stretched. The fire was on and a huge pot on it, boiling. I sat up. Mzingeli sat in front of the fire moving the coals

around. Did he also have a fire ability because how is he not burning?  
He looked up.

Mzi: "Good morning."

Me: "Hi." I had surprisingly slept well through the night. No weird noises and eyes staring at me. Just peace. I couldn't be mad at the fact he actually put me to sleep but it was weird.

Mzi: "I figured you might want to bath. We usually bath down at the river."

Me: "And I'm a prisoner so I can't go."

Mzi: "Not that. The water in the river is cold and we're a family here so everyone is there. I doubt you'd enjoy that. Unless you would?"

Me: "No thanks." I stayed under the blanket, looking at him. It was a bit cold but this blanket was so warm. "There's no tub though."

Mzi: "No, but there is a bucket. It will take me a few weeks to carve a tub."

Me: "You're not planning on letting me go aren't you?" The sudden realization dawned on me. At first, I thought I had a chance. Maybe. Now... I don't know.

Mzi: "Are you ....craving something? I want to get you breakfast while you're bathing." My tummy found this perfect moment to rumble loudly.

Me: "My husband usually makes me a sandwich in the morning."

Mzi: "Sandwich? That's not filling."

Me: "The way he makes it, is. It's okay though. I know you won't be able to do that here."

Mzi: "What's in this sandwich?"

Me: "I'm not giving you the ingredients to replicate my husband's love for me so you can trick me into falling for you." He chuckled.

Mzi: "Trust me Thembisa. If I wanted you to love me, I would never have to replicate a thing. I don't piggy off the back of other men's work. I can build on my own. I just want you to be as comfortable as possible. I want you to eat whatever you want. Whenever you want. I want you to feel clean and warm. That is it." He stood up, tall and lean. He was wearing

only pants and boots, his chest bare and chiseled. He had a deep scar running down his chest.

Me: "What happened on your chest." He wore his shirt made from a precisely woven fabric.

Mzi: "Had to take down a bull a few weeks ago."

Me: "You want me to believe you wrestled a bull?"

Mzi: "Your husband turns into a tiger."

Me: "So you can too?"

Mzi: "No." He pulled on a jersey.

Me: "So what happened?"

Mzi: "The tribe wanted meat. The farmer refused to sell and told me if I can take it down myself, it's mine. Easiest trade I ever made."

Me: "It almost killed you."

Mzi: "It would take more than just a bull to kill me. It's a little cold, I'll get the bucket with cold water and help you mix to bath in then find you something you can eat."

Me: "What am I supposed to do here all day Mzingeli? Honestly, what? And don't even try to put me back to sleep!"

Mzi: "What would you like to do Thembisa?"

Me: "First of all, I'd love to go home."

Mzi: "What else."

Me: "Maybe read. Perhaps you can get something for me from the library." This wouldn't happen. I know. He looked at me for a while.

Mzi: "Okay."

Me: "What?"

Mzi: "Do you have anything specific that you'd like to read?" Was he being serious?

Me: "Uhm. Law books. Anything legal."

Mzi: "Okay."

Me: "Wait, what does that mean? You can't possibly find a law book Mzingeli."

Mzi: "For you? I'll find 10 by sunset." He walked out. My heart slowed to a still. Mzingeli was adamant on keeping me here and was willing to go above and beyond. He looks clean and normal so perhaps he will be able to blend in society to get the books? I wouldn't want him to get caught, only because if he's gone, none of the people here will make me comfortable. I'd probably die. I've been told already he's the reason I'm still alive. I don't want to accept this fate. I can't live here for the rest of my life. Nkosi is my life. My family is my life. I wanted to graduate, grow old with my husband and watch him bond with our children. My beautiful husband.

Me: "Please watch over him, almighty God. I know he's doing everything he can and often with neglect to his own safety when it comes to me. Please protect Nkosinhle for me. Help me find a way out." I whispered. Mzi walked back in with a bucket and some water. He mixed the two temperature waters and placed the bucket close by.

Mzi: "I'll be back with your food in 1 hour. After that, I'll go fetch your books."

Me: "Fetch? You're going to the library right?"

Mzi: "Library? No. I'm going to fetch them at the palace. They're there, aren't they?"

Me: "Mzingeli, you're going to break into that palace? If they catch you, what the hell will happen to me?! Your tribe will slaughter me!" I panicked. He knelt down beside the bed.

Mzi: "I'll never let that happen. Stay comfortable, I'll be home soon." ...

Chapter 140

SIBONELO'S POV\_

Zwe had managed to finish the book. A lot of it had to do with how the reign of the country had become successful and handed over to the next generation of Sikhosana. It isn't recorded why there was a disconnect in the later generations but I think we'll find out soon because I got an email from the royal board requesting an interview. Nomzamo had really come through as she had promised. This turn around time was fantastic. We sat in the dining table for brunch. The entire family excluding Nkosi and the king.

Sibo: "I got an email from the royal board. I have an interview coming up."

Mthunzi: "That's good but how will you pass?"

Nolwazi: "Royal board? What for, if I may ask?"

Sibo: "I requested to see the archives my queen. In any way that can help the throne currently, we were hoping it's recorded in history."

Nolwazi: "Why didn't you just ask the king or Nkosi to approve it for you?"

Sibo: "That wouldn't be ethical, my queen. I wouldn't want to put the king and prince through that decision."

Nobantu: "No one has ever been approved through the board. You do know that, right?"

Sibo: "Yes my queen. I have received a few pointers and articles from Nomzamo."

Nobantu: "Or Amahle can prep you."

Ama: "Nhlanhla will do it better. She knows the process and the understanding of the interview. Not only does she have the answers but she can simplify them to better understanding which you can improvise into your own answers."

Sibo: "I would be grateful for the help." We ate our food quietly. This was so different for me. My family always had a conversation during dinner. Here it felt rude to speak. I finished my food, eager to get back to working. Mthunzi excused us as we went back to the office. We entered the space, sitting down. Nhlanhla walked in.

Nhla: "Are you free now?" She looked at me.

Sibo: "Uhm. Sure, have a seat."

Nhla: "Not here. I have to reveal information only to you that can't be known by any other. We can go to my private lounge."

Sibo: "Right." This made me uncomfortable. Very uncomfortable. I didn't even know how to explain it or avoid it so I just stared at her and she stared back at me.

Zwe: "Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "Hm?"

Mthunzi: "You can use the courtyard gazebo outside."

Sibo: "Thank you Mthunzi." I took my notebook and pen, following her out. At least the courtyard was outside and guards were roaming about. We sat under the shade. The furniture was pure black matte with gold trimmings. This palace felt like heaven on earth, sometimes with a sprinkle of hell.

Nhla: "Why are you scared of me?" I looked at her. Nhlanhla was beautiful girl, hazel brown eyes and an intense gaze. She looked alot like Nkwenkwezi but not quite identical. Their facial features, body build and complexion were the same but there was different details in each girl.

Sibo: "I'm not scared of you."

Nhla: "Yes you are. You avoid being alone with me."

Sibo: "Because I'm not allowed to. You're a princess."

Nhla: "And you're a Prince."

Sibo: "I respect your family Nhlanhla, and you. Can we begin?"

Nhla: "I won't hurt you. No one will, ever again." I stared at her. That was a weird thing to say.

Sibo: "Thank you."

Nhla: "First you'll have to introduce yourself to the board. It will be uhm...good, if you look the part."

Sibo: "Sure, that can be done."

Nhla: "I don't mean royal suit. You need to humble yourself in front of them. A good presentable suit is fine."

Sibo: "Okay."

Nhla: "When you introduce yourself, you call your full title, surname and name. Title to announce your status, surname to assure the ranking of your status and name just because it's your name. It doesn't really matter."

Sibo: "Okay, so Prince Biyela, Sibonelo. Like that?"

Nhla: "Yes. Then, what you do for a living."

Sibo: "Oh that's easy. CEO and founder of Bi-connect. The largest netw-"

Nhla: "No." She shook her head. "Your companies are not important. What do you do for my dad and brother?"

Sibo: "I'm the royal spokesperson, research analyst and strategist of the Kings council."

Nhla: "That sounds fancy but yes, that is what is important. You are a big person in charge. Currently acting King." I chuckled.

Sibo: "I'm not the acting King."

Nhla: "Yes you are. The king appointed you to make all decisions about the throne. He trusts you to lead the country. You are the acting King." That didn't go down well with me, I shivered with regret. Being a king seemed like a very huge responsibility. One that i was not worthy of. "Don't be afraid. You're good at this. You have your father and Mthunzi and the other prince helping you."

Sibo: "Prince Zwelethu."

Nhla: "Yes, him. He's single." I laughed.

Sibo: "As far as I know, yes. But you'll have to ask him yourself. Do you have a crush on him?"

Nhla: "Yes."

Sibo: "Oh? I thought I was the cute one."

Nhla: "I was told you have a wife."

Sibo: "Who said that."

Nhla: "Amahle." I chuckled.

Sibo: "She's right, I do. Let's carry on working. What else do they ask?"

NoNhla: "What is the reason for your request. This one is hard."

Sibo: "Why?"

Nhla: "Because they don't care for the reason. No reason is good enough. The board swore to protect the archives, and every member that joins, has to swear on it too."

Sibo: "How do we get past it then?"

Nhla: "Tell them the king sent you."

Sibo: "It would be a lie."

Nhla: "It's not a lie if it benefits the throne." I smiled. She looked around.

Sibo: "What's wrong?"

Nhla: "Oh no."

Sibo: "Yini Nhlanhla?" I closed my notebook immediately, looking around.

Nhla: "Someone is in the palace." My heart dropped. I jumped up pulling her hand toward the entrance straight to the office.

Sibo: "Nhlanhla says there's someone in the palace." Mthunzi, Mr Ntaka and Zwe all looked at me. Mthunzi bolted out the office, calling on all guards to stand guard, ready for attack.

Zwe: "I'm checking on the family."

Sibo: "The prince and the king Zwe!"

Zwe: "I'll handle it." He walked out.

Xolani: "Princess, can you see this someone?"

Nhla: "No. I can feel them. I know he is inside."

Xolani: "Let's go."

Sibo: "Mr Ntaka-"

Xolani: "It's one thing stealing from a family but terrorising them in their home I will not allow!" We followed him out. Nhlanhla led us up the stairs, into the hall of the first wing. She stopped and stared straight ahead. I looked at her.

Sibo: "Nhlanhla."

Nhla: "Who are y-" she got a fright then looked around. "Where did he go!! He was right here! I saw him!" Amahle came out followed by Busi.

Ama: "What's happening?"

Nhla: "Where is bhuti?" She was shaking uncontrollably. Amahle led the way to Nkosi's room.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

A constant pain pierced through my chest in contraction. All night it's been like this. It would leave me trembling like a leaf. The physical pain felt like nothing compared to my heart. I could barely get out of bed or the very least pull myself out of my nightmares. Everytime I drifted off, I felt an unfamiliar fear. Something I've never felt. It was the possibility of never seeing Thembisa again. My breathing would just stop and I'd struggle awake. Several times I woke up drenched in sweat, shaking. Something needed to give. If I at least had the strength to go to the river. Maybe plead with them. Yes I could do that. I just needed some more time. The contracting pain pierced again, rendering me dizzy. I lay back in bed, hot tears rolling down my face. I closed my eyes, letting myself drift off into slumber. It didn't hurt any less than being awake. I tossed, turned and struggled then felt an uncomfortable cold despite being under the blankets. I gasped for air, sitting up involuntarily. He stood in the middle of the room. I got out of bed. Unimaginable anger swept through me. I inched closer toward him, growling. My fists lit up in flames. He didn't move, he chuckled instead.

Nkosi: "You have some fucking nerve."

Man: "Where are her books?" I jumped for his neck and he disappeared. I stumbled looking around. "I woke you up for a reason."

Nkosi: "You're a coward!!! Show yourself so you can face me like a man!!" He appeared in front of me.

Man: "You're not a man. You're nothing but a city boy. What you think you can do to me, I can do much better. Just Try." I transformed into my tiger, he flexed his arms, transforming into a white fur two headed tiger. I stepped back, blowing up in flames, roaring. His paw slapped the ground and he poured in dangerous flames that reach the ceiling. I focused on

his neck. (Split in tw-) my neck cracked. He transformed back to his human form as I fell to the ground wincing in extreme pain throughout my body. He stood over me. "Next time, take my word for it."

Nkosi: "Father.." I whispered. Black lace blinded my vision to unconsciousness.

## ZWELETHU'S POV\_

The guards couldn't find anyone in the house. The family was safe, all of them. I heard Nkosi's tiger roaring out. I ran up the stairs in full speed to his room. Sibonelo pulled back Nhlanhla and Amahle from the door. The room was engulfed in flames. Mr Ntaka held me back from going in.

Xolani: "His father is inside." My whole body was shaking. My ears ringing loudly, I couldn't hear a thing. The flames came down eventually.

Xolani: "Prince Sibonelo, take the princesses downstairs, the smoke isn't good for them."

Ama: "I want to see my brother!"

King: "He's fine." I went in the room covering my nose. "He's not burnt but his unconscious. His neck is broken." His hand was shaking as he touched his son. I took over, checking the injury.

Zwe: "It's not broken. It's only sprained, thank God."

King: "He tried to k.ill my son!" He hissed.

Zwe: "At least now we know his intention. He obviously wants the throne. Why else k.ill the next heir? Is this all Nkosi?" I signaled the destroyed room.

King: "No. Nkosi isn't this destructive. His fire is neat and controlled. If he's unconscious, it will stop."

Zwe: "I'm getting him out, the smoke will affect his lungs." He picked up his son, walking out the room. I looked around. Why the hell would this person do such a thing? I followed the king out to his lounge. "Sboni, please bring my medical kit from the car." He rushed out. I checked Nkosi once again. His pulse was still strong but his breathing very suppressed almost strained. The queens came in the lounge.

Nolwazi: "Oh my God." She held her mouth.

King: "He's fine. He'll be fine." He was more consoling himself than his wives, it seemed. Nothing scared King Sizwengaye more than the idea of losing his only son. He was visibly shaking. Sibonelo came running back in with my bag. I got to work, checking his vitals.

King: "How does this person come into my house? Where is that healer girl? Isn't she supposed to see this?!"

Nhla: "Father, he's very powerful. He isn't seen if he doesn't want to be."

Xolani: "Describe who you saw princess."

Nhla: "He was a tall man, with skin like father. He had sharp eyes, they turned from brown to orange then he disappeared in front of my eyes."

Nobantu: "This is obviously the witch. They want to kill our only son. Sizwe, you have to k.ill that thing, I refuse to lose my son!!"

King: "Nhlanhla, how does this person come into my house?"

Nhla: "His abilities are strong. He has two. Imita.. Eish. He can do anything like you."

Zwe: "He can imitate ability?"

Nhla: "Yes!! That. And he can shield his image. He can be invisible." What. The. Hell. This was a nightmare. So whatever is done to him, he can just throw it back.

Sibo: "Was he trying to k.ill the prince?"

Nhla: "No. I don't think he wants to hurt bhuti. I don't think he did-"

King: "BULL!!! He broke my child's neck and set him alight!!" He shouted.

Nhla: "He didn't fath-"

King: "Stop talking before I deal with you." Nhlanhla kept quiet immediately. By Nhlanhla's understanding, this person may have just broken into Nkosi's room and Nkosi being Nkosi, tried to attack but this man imitated the ability back to him and that's how Nkosi ended up hurt. His vitals were dropping slowly.

Zwe: "I need to take him to the hospital, his vitals aren't looking good."

Sibo: "I'll tell Mthunzi to call the pilot." He took out his phone, speaking to Mthunzi.

Zwe: "Please hang in there, my prince. You're stronger than this." I whispered to him.

King: "It's time she died. This attack warrants a response. I'm not standing by any longer. Her remains will be thrown in their location.

Ama: "Father, you can't do that. What if the blood that conceals her binds her to Thembisa and whatever done to her, happens to Sasa? What if they retaliate on her-"

King: "I am NOT going to be at the mercy of a witch who just tried to kill my only son!! I'd rather rot for eternity than let her get away with this."

Ama: "Father please!! Think this through-"

King: "Dead, is what she is." He walked toward the exit of the room. Amahle held on her father crying.

Nolwazi: "Sizwengaye please listen to the child. Please."

King: "If you want to live with a witch you can gladly join her-" he held on his chest, wincing in pain. Mr Ntaka jumped up to catch him, sitting him down on a chair. I'll have to check him too. There's something wrong with his chest, it may be a heart problem due to all the stress. "We're leaving the palace. Every one of you, take your belongings. We are moving to eNtabeni. Only the mountain can protect us now. Sibonelo, put that thing in Royal custody. I want her watched like a hawk."

Sibo: "Yes my king." Mthunzi walked in.

Mthunzi: "The helicopter is ready. Zwe, you'll be flying with Nkosi, the King and Sibonelo. I'm driving."

Zwe: "Please usher the family to eNtabeni."

Mthunzi: "Okay. We leave in 20 minutes." The guards brought in the stretcher to pick Nkosi up and we left.

SASA'S POV\_

It was getting dark by the time Mzingeli walked in. He placed a bag on the ground. I didn't know whether to be angry or stunned. That was my bag. He lit up the lanterns, giving the room light. I didn't even know I had to do that. I would've sat in the dark forever. I watched him take his jacket off then his jersey. His shirt had blood stains on it.

Me: "What happened."

Mzi: "Punishment." He looked....angry.

Me: "Why were you punished?"

Mzi: "I used my abilities."

Me: "Why?" All I could think of was a fight between Mzingeli and Nkosinhle. Nkosi wouldn't miss a beat tearing him apart so how did he escape?

Mzi: "I didn't have much of a choice. He wasn't listening."

Me: "You broke into his home, twice!"

Mzi: "I woke him up-"

Me: "You took his wife!!!" I screamed. "Would you let the man who steals your wife into your home and have a chat?! Would you let him roam about like he's above you?! What kind of person are you Mzingeli!! Have you no heart?!"

Mzi: "Are you done?"

Me: "No I'm not fucking done!!!"

Mzi: "What is it with you city people and anger? Always swearing. If you can just listen." My tears rolled down my cheeks. I was so angry I couldn't be bothered to listen to him.

Me: "I wish he killed you. At least then I'd die in peace knowing he got his revenge." He sat down, wiping off his cuts.

Mzi: "He wouldn't stand a chance. Your husband is weak. He can barely function because you're gone. He'd rather let his country burn to the ground than be a man and work. King Mkhambi Sikhosana lost his wife and went in to lead a great kingdom and legacy, raising two sons, grooming them to be king while at it. All for Nkosinhle to cry like a baby because you're not around? He's a weak boy."

Me: "Don't you dare call my husband a weak boy, you stupid fool!!!!!"

Mzi: "Insulting me is useless. The fact remains. He's weak. If he doesn't get up and fight for his people, he will lose and never see you again. He's acting like he already lost, making it so much easier for me." His eyes slid up to look at me. The dangerous Sikhosana orange gaze, locked into mine. "What do you want for supper?" ....

## Chapter 141

### SIBONELO'S POV\_

Monday morning, I was up at the crack of dawn. Nkosi and the King were admitted in hospital. The rest of the Sikhosana family was up in the mountain. I got dressed and ready to leave. Downstairs my father was dressed and having his breakfast, Mnqobi and Khaya as well. Zwe was at the hospital since yesterday. He was watching Nkosi like a hawk and I know he won't leave until he wakes up.

Sibo: "Good morning." I wasn't in the mood for my morning sickness today so I stayed far from the table. "I'm headed out to the hospital, I'm starting at Mnqobi's house to check on Zimmy. Khaya, Mnqobi. I want you studying today until I have something else for you to do but in the meantime please be focused on school. Dad, I'll meet you at the hospital."

Biyela: "Yes, I'm on my way there." My mother came to us.

Queen: "Hi sweetheart. Have some breakfast."

Sibo: "I can't mama. The smell of eggs still makes me throw up." Khaya and Mnqobi chuckled.

Queen: "Your father was just like that when I was having you."

Biyela: "No I wasn't."

Queen: "Don't be shy. It's sweet. Speaking of morning sickness, Sboni. When do I meet this girl that is carrying my first grandbaby?"

Sibo: "Uhm... I don't know mama. Perhaps when this crisis dies down. I'm quite busy right now."

Queen: "I don't need you to hold my hand Sboni, just give me her number." Absolutely not. I love my mother but she will swallow Zimasa whole if we're not careful and I don't want Zimmy overwhelmed so early.

Sibo: "Mama, it won't be long before you meet her, I promise."

Queen: "But Sboni, I just want to meet her. Nothing special."

Sibo: "Okay. This week. I'll organise a day. I have to go. Young princes, books. Now." I walked out with my guards. I got in my car driving to Mngqobi's house a few minutes away, parking out front. I walked up to the door, walking in. Zimmy was in the kitchen, leaning over the counter.

Sibo: "Hey." She looked at me.

Zim: "Hi." What did I do now?

Sibo: "How are you feeling? I'm sorry I'm not around. Things are abit busy right now with the throne."

Zim: "I'm fine."

Sibo: "You don't seem fine."

Zim: "I can't sleep. I'm always hungry and I'm feeling sick."

Sibo: "I'm sorry love. What can I do?" I got a bottle of water out of the fridge for her.

Zim: "Nothing." That's not even an option.

Sibo: "Okay, I came to see you to say hello. I'll call your doctor and find out what I can do to help your sickness."

Zim: "You don't have to do that, your job is very important Sibonelo. I can take care of myself."

Sibo: "You're not carrying some bum's child Zimasa. I'm going to take care of you. Also, my mother wants to meet you sometime. How do you feel about that?"

Zimmy: "Nervous as hell."

Sibo: "Don't worry. My mother is sweet. There is not one person in the world she dislikes. Not even one."

Zimmy: "Okay. Thank you Sibonelo. For just being here, and participating. It means so much to be honest. And it's worse because you have such an important job and all these big companies and I feel

like I'm wasting your time." She sobbed. I pulled her into my chest, hugging her.

Sibo: "You're not wasting my time. Do you understand? I want to be here at every step. If I'm not available, my family will step in but don't ever feel bad about anything."

Zimmy: "Okay but go work now, I need to get ready for my exam."

Sibo: "Okay. We'll talk soon." She let go of me, wiping her tears. I wanted to kiss her but controlled myself.

Zimmy: "Have a good day."

Sibo: "You too, mama." I walked out the house, getting in my car driving to the hospital. I dialed for the doctor on the way.

Doc: "Good morning, Prince Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Hi doctor. The mother of my child is feeling sick, she also can't sleep. What can we do to help this?"

Doc: "For sleep, I'd first recommend a more relaxed routine. Perhaps a relaxing bath and a massage after. I'll send a few techniques that can help set the relaxation in and her nutritional menu. I worked with my colleague using the foods she told me she prefers eating to make a healthy and filling eating plan for her to enjoy."

Sibo: "You're a star. And for the morning sickness?"

Doc: "I'll include it in the email I'm about to send."

Sibo: "Thank you doctor."

Doc: "You're welcome Prince Sibonelo. Please call me at any time you have any questions."

Sibo: "Will do." I hung up, driving into the hospital. I walked in the building. The prince and King had to be put at Oceans Medical Facility for privacy. Seeing that we're the only royals left, most of the staff were transferred to Zwe's hospital and only came into Oceans when there was an emergency. I started at the café, getting Zwe a coffee and went to the Prince's room. Zwe was with him, writing something down.

Sibo: "Morning brother."

Zwe: "Hey." I handed him his coffee. "Thanks."

Sibo: "How is he?"

Zwe: "Stable for now but he keeps getting these minor heart palpitations, making him unable to breath. I would think his lungs would be affected but no it's his heart."

Sibo: "Is it from the fire?"

Zwe: "No. Definitely not. He's hurting. Physically. Sbonelo, we need to find this man's wife and I don't even know how." I felt really sorry for him honestly. It's one thing feeling hurt but to actually physically feel the pain? That must suck.

Sibo: "Yeah. Let me get to the king and I'll think of something."

Zwe: "Okay." I walked out as Mthunzi walked in.

Mthunzi: "Sboni."

Sibo: "My Lord." I walked to the king's room, forwarding the doctors email to Zimmy. I walked in the room. My father was here sitting with the king, having a chat. At least he was awake. Thank goodness. Can you imagine if both King and future were unconscious? The country would stone us in blame.

Sibo: "My King, father."

King: "What are the new developments?" Right, straight to work.

Sibo: "We've managed to supplement the energy intake, my king. It won't be for long but it can buy us time. A few areas were largely impacted already."

King: "And the news?"

Sibo: "Panic is rising, I figured we will have to address this issue."

King: "You don't think we should wait until we have solutions?"

Biyela: "Judging from the past lockdown my king, I think it's best to be open this time and include the public."

Sibo: "In a way also not alerting the enemy how we're planning the way forward."

King: "Sibonelo. You prove to be an asset to this throne. You and your family have been fully hands on with fixing this country and standing in for us in times of crisis. I want you to know, I appreciate it. The throne is

grateful to the Biyela family for its continued support. As the kids of today say, having our backs." I smiled. A compliment from the king was more valuable than gold. My heart was gleaming in joy.

Sibo: "It is an honour, my king."

King: "I will need one more thing from you."

Sibo: "Anything, my ki-"

King: "Don't be so quick to say yes." I looked at my father and back at the king. "King Biyela, please borrow me your son for a bit."

Biyela: "Absolutely, my king." He got up and walked out. I looked at the king, suddenly more nervous than ever before. Nhlanhla's words rang in my head. When she said I was acting King. But why me? Why can't my father stand in or even Zwe?

King: "Because you're the most similar to Nkosinhle than anyone else. You are strategic with leadership. You work hard in ensuring equality and most importantly benefit for the throne. Zwe is a doctor, he needs to keep us alive." He can hear my thoughts. Okay.

Sibo: "I'm honoured, my king."

King: "As I said, I need one more thing."

Sibo: "Yes my king?"

King: "With every crisis, we have been through. You stepped in and in front of those cameras ready to assure the nation. This time, it will not work. I spoke to Amahle and what she saw for the next few days. The citizens want to see their king. Nkosinhle as you've seen...he's not..." He looked out of the window. "I need someone to step in. As him." He looked back at me with those jet black eyes that were somehow scarier than the orange he used to have. I swallowed the lump in my throat.

Sibo: "I'm not sure I understand, my king."

King: "I need you to be Nkosinhle for the nation."

Sibo: "I don't think that's possible my king."

King: "I have the ability that can turn anyone into anyone or anything. We can test it on you, by turning you into him." My heart raced.

Sibo: "You mean the whole of me, will look like him? As in, I'd be his exact clone. Like the lookalike Thembisa?"

King: "Yes." I held my mouth to disguise my shock or excitement.

Sibo: "Like I'd be him exactly?"

King: "Without the abilities because you are a normal human but yes, you would physically be Nkosinhle Mehluli Sikhosana."

Sibo: "I would be the future king for a day?"

King: "Please process this as quick as possible I'm running out of patience." I loved being me. LOVED, right? But to be Nkosi for a day? One day? I'd pass out. What does he even do all day besides stare intensely? Oh, work. Obviously. That's why we're doing this. This is going to be the craziest experience of my life. Zwe is going to kill me, as usual.

Sibo: "Let's do it." ...

## SASA'S POV\_

I woke up with a painful back. As comfortable as this bed was. I tried to stretch and flinched in pain. Mzingeli walked in.

Mzi: "Good morning."

Me: "What about this morning is good? I'm kidnapped, in a cave, little to no sun light, sore in my back, pregnant and scared. What about today is good?"

Mzi: "Would you like to take a walk to stretch your legs and body? Some exercise will help your back, I assume you don't want me touching you."

Me: "Of course I don't want you to touch me." I got out of bed. He stood in front of me. I was trying so hard to hate him but it just wasn't happening. It was the most frustrating thing. "What is it now?" He gave me a folded shirt. "What's this?" I looked at him.

Mzi: "His shirt. In case you miss him, you can smell him. It's good for the little one." I looked at the folded shirt. It was one of Nkosi's. Where did he.... I put it to my nose, sniffing his scent in. I sat down, feeling suddenly mesmerized. It was like he was right there. I was holding back my sobbing but the tears rolled rapidly down my cheeks. Mzi walked out.

Me: "I love you so much Nkosi. I'll always love you so much. You are my life. I carry you inside me. I'll find my way back to you, my love. I'm coming." I wiped my tears, folding his shirt and putting it in my bag. Mzi walked back in.

Mzi: "Ready?"

Me: "I wouldn't mind to freshen up first."

Mzi: "Here. That's mint paste to brush your teeth. There's a cup of fresh water over there." I took the paste that was a dark green colour but smelt so crisp and fresh. I washed my mouth and rinsed.

Me: "Ready."

Mzi: "You look better. Stronger."

Me: "Okay." What else did he want me to say? I followed him out of the cave. Everyone was out, doing something. The men weren't here. Some women were weaving, others working in the garden, others cooking. As soon as I stepped out, they stared at me in silence. Or disgust. I think it was disgust. I followed Mzi who was paying no mind to anything. He walked like a damn soldier, I had to run every few steps to catch up. Yes, he was tall and took long strides but at least think of the short person you're dragging with you? I felt like a child. Even so, I definitely wasn't going to complain because that wouldn't work here. My Nkosi would be carrying me around like his queen, he'd never let me struggle like this or hurt what he calls my pretty little feet. But this wasn't Nkosi and he didn't care about my feet. We finally reached an opening to the river. I gasped at the sight. This wasn't just some river.

Me: "Wow." This was the beginning of the river. A huge waterfall pouring dangerous waters into a stream that flowed into a rocky river.

Mzi: "This is where we get the fresh water for cooking and drinking. Further down the river is where everyone bathes. It's less aggressive, the water washes down the stream as to not contaminate this part again."

Me: "This is not just any water, is it?"

Mzi: "No." I sat down on the river bank, closing my eyes. The sound of the aggressive water sounded scary almost like it would scoop me up and throw me in the current but I believed it wouldn't. Even as the water splashed on me, moving closer and wetting my feet. I knew it couldn't

hurt me. The water reached my back, pooling quickly up my body. I felt warm and relaxed.

Me: "I've been feeling a block. Unable to think, unable to pray. The spirit of fear locked away my courage to call upon my guides. May this water wash off that fear. May it cleanse the darkness in my heart and purify my spirit to reach the all realms. Let my soul search through the sounds of the universe to match my mate. Let him hear me praise for him. May my voice reach the points of his spirit that need healing. Let it strengthen him. Let it draw from me what he needs to get up and be strong. I sing for him these words. Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders. Let me walk upon the waters. Wherever you would call me. Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander. And my faith would be made stronger in the presence of my Saviour." I opened my eyes. The water was around my waist just under my breasts. I stood up, my dress heavy with water. I stared at the waterfall, mesmerized by its beauty. Someone touched my arm.

Mzi: "You want to join them as well?" He led me out of the water.

Me: "Who?"

Mzi: "The ancestors you've called on."

Me: "I was praying."

Mzi: "And they listened. Come, you need to get dry. The storm is coming." I held my wet dress following him.

Mzi: "Did you always know you can connect to ancestors?"

Me: "No. Isn't that just a treasure blood thing?"

Mzi: "No. It isn't. You seem to be the only person they drop their pearls for."

Me: "Are you trying to be funny?" He chuckled.

Mzi: "It's a useful ability. They come to you whenever you call. And it's not just your ancestors. Sikhosana is not welcome in this space but they're fighting to tear into it because of you."

Me: "Yeah well, I'm carrying their heir."

Mzi: "It's not just about their heir."

Me: "You reckon they still want to use me? They have Amahle to convey messages through. They don't need me."

Mzi: "The same Amahle you took to them and begged for? You need to stop downplaying yourself Thembisa. You're powerful."

Me: "Yeah well, here I am, stuck. So am I really powerful?"

Mzi: "You're not enjoying your vacation?" I turned to look at him with murderous eyes. He chuckled. "I'm sorry. Uncalled for." I continued walking. "What do you want to eat today? I need to go out for hunting before it rains."

Me: "I want to have ribs." I snapped.

Mzi: "That's going to be difficult. You can't have pork, you just cleansed. I'll make a plan for another animals ribs." Mzingeli never had excuses. No wonder that was his name. We reached the camp. The ladies stopped talking and stared at me again.

Me: "So they don't like me."

Mzi: "No they don't."

Me: " I wish I cared. Even just a little bit. But out of curiosity, is it because you have a wife?" I looked at him.

Mzi: "No, I don't have a wife. I don't want this place to turn you cold Thembisa. I know you're trying very hard to be angry at me but you can't find it in you to hate me. That's not who you are."

Me: "Oh, you know me now?"

Mzi: "Yes. I know you. I'll bring you something to change into."

Me: "From your secret girlfriend's closet?" He chuckled.

Mzi: "Yes from my secret girlfriend's closet. Go inside." He walked away. Wait what? He actually had a girlfriend? As if this could get worse. I went into the cave, waiting for him standing by the fire to keep warm. He walked back in with a warm dress and jersey.

Me: "Thanks." I looked at him standing before me. His eyes were swirling orange now. I looked away, clearing my throat. "Maybe you should go spend some time with your girlfriend. I'll be fine here by myself."

Mzi: "That's kind of you." I stared at the fire quietly. He didn't move.

Me: "I'd like to get dressed please." He didn't respond. "Mzingeli?"

Mzi: "Why aren't you looking at me?"

Me: "Why must I look at you? We're not friends."

Mzi: "Look at what you've done to me Thembisa." I looked at his eyes. Still orange.

Me: "What? Change them back then."

Mzi: "I can't." I stepped back.

Me: "What does that mean?"

Mzi: "It means I'm stuck. I can't change them."

Me: "How do you reckon this is my fault?"

Mzi: "Well, it's never happened before."

Me: "Maybe you need to go to your granny and ask for a consult. And don't involve my name. I had nothing to do with it. I have enough problems as is."

Mzi: "Oh no..." He looked at the cave entrance. I heard footsteps, his grandmother walked in. My heart raced, my hands trembling at my sides.

Gran: "Uyibonile into eyenziwa lihobe lakho? Why ungamameli Mzingeli?" (Do you see what this pigeon of yours did? Why don't you listen to me?) He stood in front of me.

Mzi: "Bingezo njongo zakhe, Gogo." (It wasn't her intention.)

Gran: "Kutheni amadlozi Ka Yihlo wakho besivule isigqubuthelo sethu, behleli kuwe?" (Why then have your father's ancestors opened our veil and settled in you?)

Mzi: "That's not her fault, Gogo. She doesn't even understand her gift."

Gogo: "Yilungise, phambi kokuba ndimlungisele yona." (Fix it, before i fix it for her.) He turned to look at me. His orange eyes shining bright.

Mzi: "This is only for your protection."

Me: "What are you doing?"

Mzi: "I'm taking your gift."

Me: "Mzingeli, please. This is the only thing I have. I'm not trying to harm you, please." I backed away. he held my hands gently and firmly.  
"Mzingeli please. I am begging you, ple...ase." a cold wave shifted through my body, freezing my finger tips. His face blurred from my vision. I felt his arms catch me, placing me on the bed.

## Chapter 142

### ZWELETHU'S POV\_

Mid afternoon Monday, I was still in Nkosi's room with Mthunzi. He was alternating between checking on the king and Nkosi too.

Zwe: "Will you be going home with the King? I'm discharging him today." He looked at Nkosi.

Mthunzi: "I think I'll stay." His loyalty was strictly reserved for our best friend. Apart from it being his job.

Zwe: "Okay." The machine beeped. I looked at it. His heart was picking up. I stood up and monitored closely. His vitals stabilizing. "There we go, my prince. Fight harder." For a few minutes they remained stable. He breathed out loud, opening his eyes. Finally. Mthunzi stood by his side.

Mthunzi: "My Prince."

Nkosi: "Is she back?" I looked at Mthunzi, he at me. Not sure if a lie would work. This is Nkosi. He looks down heavily on lies.

Zwe: "No, my Prince."

Nkosi: "Help me up." I held his arm, Mthunzi on his other side. "I heard her voice. Her prayers. She's alive. She's well. Better than me at least." He exhaled.

Zwe: "That's good. Your vitals are looking great too."

Nkosi: "I don't feel much. Why does my neck hurt?"

Mthunzi: "The man came to the palace. You had a fight."

Nkosi: "Oh yes." He chuckled. "Now I remember."

Zwe: "What exactly happened?"

Nkosi: "I woke up from bed with him standing in my room. He said he came to fetch her books. I lost it, transforming, fire, and the new ability. He seemed to be double of everything I gave."

Zwe: "Nhlanhla says his ability is imitation."

Nkosi: "Not just that. His imitation is ten fold. He's powerful. Bloody bastard." He growled.

Mthunzi: "We need to make sure you heal. Try and be calm."

Nkosi: "I don't have time to heal, I need to bring home my wife. I'm steaming at the fact she's in the middle of nowhere with this dangerous specimen."

Mthunzi: "He's a Sikhosana. Surely he'll protect her instead of harm her-"

Nkosi: "Not all Sikhosana's are good Mthunzi. Some of them are very bad. Horrible. Evil. And the fact that this one was raised by a witch kind of makes me suspect he's just that. It's one thing having ability but to magnify it like that? No." He closed his eyes, holding on the bed, shaking.

Zwe: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I get this pain like I'm being cut open every few minutes. Hurts like hell."

Zwe: "Let me check it out-"

Nkosi: "No need.. I need to force throu-" he gasped, falling back on the bed.

Mthunzi: "Amahle must have a solution. I'm calling her." He walked out.

Zwe: "Your father is in the next room. Do you want to see him-"

Nkosi: "No."

Zwe: "He saved your life Nkosi."

Nkosi: "I don't care. He could've let me die. I'm not going to give up on Thembisa."

Zwe: "No one is giving up on her but it would break her if you die looking for her. See, now you've heard her voice praying for you. That's the first step. We need to figure a way for you to respond."

Nkosi: "Okay. Maybe I could go to the river. I connect better there."

Zwe: "Okay we can do that but I have to monitor you closely for the rest of today. We've also moved the family to the villa. We don't know this guy's intentions and we can't risk anymore."

Nkosi: "Did Nhlanhla see him?"

Zwe: "Yes. She's the one that alerted us that he was in the house."

Nkosi: "What else has happened?"

Zwe: "I don't think it's a good time for you to be worrying about anything."

Nkosi: "What happened Zwe."

Zwe: "The power stations are shutting down. There's been a few outages across the country. We've managed to supplement but they're bound to shut down soon again. The outages are in most banking and food production industries causing delay and chaos." I watched him suffer silently through another wave of pain. You could barely notice it on his face but I knew him. He was trying to be strong. He needed a bit more time to recover.

Nkosi: "Okay. The throne can budget new stations. How much would it cost roughly?"

Zwe: "Billions, Nkosi. And as much as that would've been an easy and quick solution, the throne unfortunately can't. Phakamisa is in charge of the contracts of all power stations in the nation."

Nkosi: "Surely there's a way to kick it down."

Zwe: "My father and I were going through the contracts and legislation. We'll find a solution. We need to work as fast as possible because Phakamisa's new deal is related to energy supply. If it succeeds, he will bring foreign nations to maintain our power, infiltrating our nation and its citizens data."

Nkosi: "He can't make that decision without the throne's permission. The legislation of all business that come into the nation was changed 12 years ago. No other nation can partner in our country without the throne board approval. Check if he's scheduled on the register for a meeting and if he is, I'll have to attend it." He breathed.

Zwe: "Let's hope by then you'll be better in health."

Nkosi: "I will."

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

I've worked closely with the king in the past few hours. Zwe discharged the king in the early afternoon and we left for the villa. I was always enchanted by this place. It was just something surreal about it. The air was pure and dreamlike. I followed the king in, going to his suite. Amahle walked in a few minutes after us.

Ama: "Are you sure about this father? We could wait a few more days."

King: "We can't. Nkosi is awake but not in the best condition. On top of that, the board meets in the morning to discuss the arrangement Phakamisa has with other nations involving our energy supply. We need someone in that meeting to put a halt in the project." Amahle looked at me.

Ama: "Have you told your parents?"

Sibo: "I'm a grown man Amahle. I make my own decisions."

Ama: "Okay, so how will we explain to your family your absence?"

Sibo: "It's only for a day. Zwe will only need to speak to me on the phone. I don't have to go to Stellars, I'll just tell them I'm busy here."

Ama: "Fine. Let's do it. Take off your shoes." She put her saddle on the floor, kneeling on the rug. I took off my shoes. "I first have to clear the space for any spirit so that nothing attaches to you while we're busy." She lit some herbs into a bowl, letting it burn, while pouring a pinch of black powder in it. The smoke filled the room. The nerves started to kick in. I was really about to do this. I had no time to prepare. "Bite on this, chew and let it dissolve on your tongue." She gave me a leaf that I did as she asked. "Father, he's ready." She stood up and backed away. The king stood in front of me. Oh my God, it was happening.

King: "Clear thoughts." I focused on the smell of herb wafting around me. A sudden cold trickled down from the top of my head down my whole body making me dizzy and stumble a bit. I held on, strong to my posture. "There..." He stepped back. I opened my eyes looking around. The smoke was clearing. I felt no different honestly.

Sibo: "Have we finished my king?"

King: "Yes. You'll need to change your clothes, those are looking a little tight now." I didn't believe him. It seemed to quick and easy. I scanned the room for a mirror and found a long one, going to stand in front of it. I got a fright at my reflection. Actually, this wasn't me. It was Nkosi. I smiled, and laughed in disbelief. Even my voice was his.

King: "Okay, that's just too much. I'm worried at how happy you look."

Sibo: "This is incredible. I sound like him. He has an electric laugh. I've never heard it before." He definitely needs to laugh more.

King: "Nkosinhle doesn't laugh. Please don't."

Sibo: "I think I like it."

King: "Don't like it. Amahle, take him to Nkosi's suite."

Ama: "Come." I followed her out to the suite across the villa. She walked to his closet, looking through his clothes. "This should be fine for now." She gave me a shirt and pants. I was standing in front of the mirror.

Sibo: "I hope he recovers soon. I won't hate being him, that's for sure. Hey Amahle?" I looked at her.

Ama: "Yes Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Do you think the girl can tell if I'm Nkosi? The lookalike?"

Ama: "What are you thinking?"

Sibo: "I could speak to her? Pretending to be Nkosi. Get information out of her or Get her on our side."

Ama: "I don't know Sibonelo, this won't...be good for you."

Sibo: "Come on. Let's try it."

Ama: "I can disguise you, using his blood. It's just... It will be uncomfortable for you, maybe even traumatic. She will be all over you, maybe even want to sleep with you." My heart pounded at the thought. Nkosi broke down a door to save me from Megan. His abilities saved my life. Surely I can sacrifice a few minutes or hours of discomfort for him. The therapist will help me deal afterward.

Sibo: "I can handle it-"

Ama: "Sibonelo-"

Sibo: "We're doing it Amahle. I'll do whatever it takes to help Nkosi and your family. He saved my life, I can do this for him." She sighed.

Ama: "Okay. Get dressed. I'll wait in the restaurant." She walked to the door. "You're a great friend Sibonelo. A good person even." She walked out.

After I'd gotten dressed in the crisp black shirt and black pants. I tucked the shirt in, wearing the black belt and shoes. The urge to roll up my sleeves enticed me but I kept them at wrist length. Nkosi was always prim and proper. Only one button undone at his neck. I gave myself one last look over to be sure I was in character and walked out to the restaurant. The whole family was sitting, they looked at me.

Nobantu: "Oh thank goodness you're okay."

Nolwazi: "We were so worried."

Nhla: "That's not bhuti." She drank her juice.

Nolwazi: "I BEG YOUR PARDON?!"

King: "Calm down. Sit down Sibonelo." I sat down, not sure if I should greet and if I do, what do I say? I've never seen Nkosi with family.

Nkwe: "Oh my God, Father you didn't."

Nolwazi: "Did you just clone our child!?"

King: "Yes. It's for a good cause and only a day. I need you all to assist Sibonelo in teaching him Nkosinhle's mannerisms."

Nhla: "What's that?"

Ama: "How he acts."

Nhla: "Oh that's easy. Just stop smiling." Okay that's funny but I had to stay in character.

Nobantu: "Sizwe, why would you do this? Your child is in hospital and your only solution is to make another him?"

Nkwe: "And how is this one's family going to respond? They'll call us witches. Can I distance myself from this decision?"

Sibo: "My family doesn't have to know. This is only for a day and they know I'm here for work so they won't bother me. This will work in our

favour. I'll attend the board meeting, with Phakamisa and his partners from the other nations. He is legally obligated to be fully transparent about the project, he just isn't planning on the prince being there. Not only will my presence shake him but it will destabilize his venture and partnership."

King: "See? He's already sounding like my son. Amahle, please teach him to have that semi dark tone Mehluli has when he speaks to me."

Nhla: "I thought that's just his voice."

Nkwe: "Please, have you heard him speak to Thembisa? He sounds like he's high." I chuckled.

Nobantu: "And what do you know about being high Nkwenkwezi?"

Nkwe: "Nothing mother."

Ama: "We can start now Sibonelo."

Nhla: "Can I help?"

King: "All of you, go. He needs to be ready by the time he goes to bed. Sibonelo stop smiling, my God." I chuckled, unable to help it.

Sibo: "I'm sorry. Okay." I followed Amahle out with the twins. We went to Nkosi's suite.

Ama: "Alright. We have a few hours. We'll need reinforcements. She can't have a way of escaping if she figures out what's happening. Currently she's out of power. Since being away from the garden, I don't know if she'll have the ability to fully run. Nhlanhla, can you disguise Sibonelo to the witch. She must believe it's really Nkosi."

Nhla: "I can't but you can. I can just tell you what to use."

Sibo: "And this will work?"

Nhla: "I hope so because we only get one try." ...

SASA'S POV\_

I woke up once again in bed, feeling an overwhelming bout of sadness. I sat up from bed, looking at Mzingeli who was on the other side of the cave, staring at me.

Mzi: "Hi." I ignored him, getting out of bed, I needed to use the bathroom and there was an inward curve that served as a toilet in this cave. I had so many questions because why doesn't it smell? Who taught them about plumbing? Okay that's a bit mean. But he deserves mean. Him and his whole magical tribe that seemed to be living just fine without the necessities I've grown accustomed to since birth. They did everything on their own here. Needed no money, no taps, furniture, or even internet. They were way too comfortable and I hated it. I finished up and went back to the bed.

Mzi: "I know you're mad at me. I'm sorry." I rolled my eyes, taking the shirt out of my bag and a book to read. Anything to escape this hell. Nkosi's smell, wafting all around in a comforting way. I looked up at Mzi. He had his hand up, swirling it in small circles looking at me. He was intensifying Nkosi's scent, surrounding me in it.

Me: "Why are you torturing me?" My voice shook in a way I couldn't control.

Mzi: "That is meant to comfort you."

Me: "Why Mzingeli?! You've already taken away any hope of connecting to him."

Mzi: "Do you even understand why I did that?"

Me: "Yes! Because your grandmother told you to!"

Mzi: "I wish one day you city people took the time to sift through your emotions and make proper decisions with logic. This thing of thinking with your heart will make everything unbearably long and tedious. Contrary to your belief, I actually do have a life to get back to. I'm not interested in doing this forever Thembisa."

Me: "Why did you take my power Mzingeli?"

Mzi: "You're almost there. You're still in defense mode. Breath." He was right about that, I wanted to scratch his eyes out. I breathed, closing my eyes.

Me: "Why did you take my power Mzingeli?"

Mzi: "I'm sensing the underlying anger. If you were to open your eyes it would flare up. Try again." I clenched my teeth, breathing in and out. I envisioned Nkosi's beautiful smile, instantly calming.

Me: "Why?"

Mzi: "Because the resistance you have, would've disappeared."

Me: "What are you talking about?"

Mzi: "As you know, Sikhosana and treasure blood are soul bound. Having the Sikhosana ancestors in me, would've broken down those barriers. You wouldn't be able to control how you feel. I wouldn't have been able to stop how I feel. It would've taken only days to solidify. Just like it did with Nkosinhle."

Me: "Nkosinhle is my soulmate. You're lightheaded and delusional if you think I'd fall for you under any circumstances."

Mzi: "I hate to have to say this but I will. You are Nobomi. A treasure queen. Who's first husband was Mkhambi Sikhosana. Your soulmate as Thembisa, may be Nkosinhle but your blood is bound to mine. Do you want to test how it would feel to have two soulmates in one lifetime? Would you like to watch them fight for the spot to death? Or feel like tearing yourself apart to be with both?" My heart skipped a beat in instant fear. "Exactly. I would hate to do that to you. Or him. Inviting Sikhosana ancestors here, now, would not be good. They mean well, but not for them to be present during this time. Do you understand now?"

Me: "So who was my power? You or your grandmother?"

Mzi: "I do. My grandmother is not involved in anything to do with you but doesn't want you to disturb her peace and that of this village. She's not after you."

Me: "What is her plan? To destroy the Sikhosana's? Who then will rule the nation?"

Mzi: "My grandmother is hurt. What hurts her is how the Sikhosana lineage burnt and tore down her history and erased it from existence."

Me: "The person responsible for that is dead."

Mzi: "He is, in real life but he roams the spirit world. To get him, his spirit, she will need his blood."

Me: "Sizwengaye."

Mzi: "Yes."

Me: "Have you tried to stop her?"

Mzi: "No. I've only shielded him."

Me: "And she punishes you. Why do you stay here Mzingeli? You clearly don't belong."

Mzi: "I do. This is my home. My grandmother understands my resistance is because of my blood. Her punishment is only for disturbance. She let me keep you safe because she understands how things work. I can't let you or watch you die."

Me: "Then if you're trying to help the throne, why not talk to them."

Mzi: "I tried and he started attacking."

Me: "But Mzingeli you broke into his home, who wouldn't attack?"

Mzi: "Thembisa, your husband needs to be stronger. I can't baby him to strength. He needs to pull himself up and stop thinking with his heart. I already let you to the river for a prayer to help him but he needs to do his bit. A king shouldn't have to be comforted like a baby everytime there's a crisis. Without his emotional crutch, he needs to make sound decisions. And he needs to learn quickly."

Me: "Okay."

Mzi: "Do you see you don't need anger to speak? You can hear me just fine?"

Me: "Mxim." Thunder erupted boldly above us, making me jump.

Mzi: "It's much louder here. You'll get used to it."

Me: "How did the other royals figure out the Sikhosana and treasure blood Link?"

Mzi: "Do you know which of the Royal families are as old as ours?"

Me: "No." I faced him, still holding Nkosi's shirt for comfort. He looked ready to spill some history tea.

Mzi: "Nakhamula."

Me: "Ohh... But how? From the beginning of the throne they've been wanting to overpower? Why?"

Mzi: "After Nobomi died, Mkhambi was still serving in Kings council. He was raising his son's as royalty flamboyantly before it was even a thing. Sikhosana's are known for their boastful ego. It comes with having

abilities unfortunately. I can't say they weren't envied. Just watching them everyone wanted to be royal. King Busa, one of the first kings declared Mkhambi Sikhosana as the first king to rule alone. Sikhosana then crowned his son after. The agreement was that every Sikhosana is to marry a treasure blood and rule with them. The son married a treasure blood. As much as the nation wasn't happy about the fact only one king ruled and also only by birthright, there was not much that could be done. A few generations down, a Sikhosana went into a business trade, which he agreed to marry a girl, to gain ownership of fertile land. She was a Nakhamula. After having being married to the king, she gave birth to his son. What was supposed to be the next heir. The king unfortunately met his soulmate then. And as you know, treasure with Sikhosana. He did not hesitate to marry her and she gave too gave birth. This time, this heir had abilities. He was unashamedly in love. He groomed him to be the king, putting aside the first heir and his mother." This was shocking.

Me: "That's where the disconnect begun. But how do the current Nakhamula's know about this? That was hundreds of years ago."

Mzi: "Just like every family, secrets are passed down, generation to generation."

Me: "So that's how they became royals?"

Mzi: "Yes. As much as he wasn't crowned, that first son was still considered a prince. The rebel. After watching how his father sidelined him for his much more able brother, knowing he can't defeat them. He left to make his name royalty away from the Sikhosana influence." ....

## Chapter 143

### SIBONELO'S POV\_

It had taken a few hours of practice but I'd gotten a hang of it. I was as close to being Nkosi than Nkosi. I don't know how I'm going to break it to him or Zwe but they haven't seen me and I doubt the king has mentioned our little project.

Ama: "I think you've nailed it."

Nhla: "Told you he should stop smiling." I stared at her, unimpressed. "Perfect. That's exactly what my brother would do. Our work here is done. I'm hungry."

Ama: "We're not done. We still have to prep him for the lookalike."

Nhla: "Ah?"

Nkwe: "I'll order snacks."

Ama: "Sibonelo. When it comes to Thembisa, Nkosi is very....soft. So you need to transition."

Sibo: "Transition how?"

Ama: "For example, you need to be cold and dismissive to the guards, show anger that your wife has been detained. As soon as your eyes set on her, the anger washes away. The spell will kick in from your soft demeanor toward her."

Nhla: "That's going to take great acting skills. Can you act Prince Biyela?" I've never acted a day in my life but this was obviously as good as being on set.

Sibo: "I can do my best."

Ama: "Do you want to practice-"

Sibo: "Let's not do that." She giggled.

Ama: "Are you shy?"

Sibo: "I'm not even me to be shy. I can only do it when I have to."

Ama: "Okay. We'll need a place to take her. She can't come here, father will kill both of you. The palace is too far. Nkosi's second house is off limits, not even I'm allowed there."

Nkwe: "He has a second house?"

Sibo: "We can use my house."

Ama: "Again, not a good plan."

Sibo: "It kind of is. I'll pretend to be saving her from everyone that wants to harm her and faking the house as a hideaway spot. She doesn't know Sibonelo's house, I do. I can pretend it's my hideout house from my family and their controlling nature."

Nkwe: "Interesting take."

Sibo: "No offense."

Nkwe: "I would be offended if it wasn't true. His plan is good Amahle but what if the girl realizes it's a ruse?"

Nhla: "A ruse?" Nhlanhla needed simple words, you had to be patient with her. It's not that she doesn't understand, just put it in simple words.

Sibo: "A trick. Is there a way to hold off on her realizing?"

Nhla: "Put a love spell on her. It will work quicker than trying to hide you aren't Nkosi."

Ama: "That's actually a genius idea-"

Nkwe: "Hey. How is that a good idea? Do you not realize the big elephant in the room?"

Nhla: "Who's the elephant?" I burst out laughing. This time I couldn't help it. Amahle turned away trying not to laugh.

Nkwe: "Oh my God."

Sibo: "I should've been friends with you earlier. There's no way you're this funny."

Nkwe: "Back to my question. The lookalike will fall in love because of the spell."

Nhla: "That's the point."

Nkwe: "IN LOVE. With Nkosi's duplicate. His clone. One that will not be here forever."

Nhla: "What's the problem?"

Nkwe: "Amahle."

Ama: "What?"

Nkwe: "You two are frustrating. The lookalike will be in love with Sibonelo, if she can't find her Nkosi!!!" She shouted.

Nhla: "Ohhhh. No, she'll be dead by then. Can we continue?"

Ama: "Yep. Right ahead."

Nkwe: "How am I related to you both?"

Nhla: "We have the same parents." I had to hold my laugh but she was making it so difficult. Amahle chuckled while sorting the herbs side by side. My phone rang. I answered.

Sibo: "Brother."

Zwe: "Hello Sibonelo. What's wrong with you?"

Sibo: "Nothing Bhut Zwe. Why do you ask?"

Zwe: "Why do you sound like that? Do you have a cold?"

Sibo: "Something like that."

Zwe: "Okay. Come to the hospital then, I'll give you something."

Sibo: "Oh don't worry about it. Amahle said she'll fix it." Amahle was the only other medical person Zwe trusted even though she wasn't a certified doctor.

Zwe: "Okay, good. How is everything going?"

Sibo: "Erh... Fantastic. We were going through the legislation with the King and uBaba. He left some time ago though."

Zwe: "Okay, have you found anything we can use in the meeting?"

Sibo: "Yes. The prince of the throne or any appointed by the King can pause the project and have it audited by the throne."

Zwe: "I feel like we're missing something. Do you think Phakamisa was banking on the prince or king not attending the board meeting? That's a heavy gamble don't you think?"

Sibo: "Isn't that why the witch kidnapped Thembisa to begin with? Remember, Nakhamula was the one who introduced the treasure blood Witch. And we've since established that he wasn't nominating himself to be the king, the actual nominee was Phakamisa. So the gain for Nakhamula could've only been financial and good standing with the new throne elect."

Zwe: "I still don't understand how Nakhamula knows about treasure blood. And this witch. How?"

Sibo: "Very difficult to understand, brother. I don't know. However, I'm convinced, the kidnapping of Thembisa was to destabilize the Sikhosana's. If he knows about the witch and could call on her then he

definitely knows the effect Thembisa has on Sikhosana blood. He knew it would affect them physically and emotionally."

Zwe: "True. When is your interview? Have you prepared enough? We need to unlock those archives Sibonelo. The answers lie in those books." The truth is no, I hadn't prepared more after that imposter interrupted us at the palace.

Sibo: "Yeah of course. I'm with Nhlanhla right now."

Zwe: "Good. Okay. Nkosi will be discharged possibly tomorrow. We'll be there probably in the afternoon." We'll be done then and the King will have changed me back.

Sibo: "Okay. No problem."

Zwe: "Will you be going home?"

Sibo: "I think it's best I just stay here at the villa. Keep an eye on the family."

Zwe: "Alright. Thank you brother. We'll talk soon." He hung up.

Sibo: "I have the next 18 hours in this body uninterrupted. Let's get through our tasks."

Amahle and Nhlanhla had concocted the spell on me. I made my way to the Royal custody detention center with my guards. As Nkosi, I had a total of 12 guards, I wasn't even allowed behind a steering wheel. I didn't hate it. Soon as we parked at the center and I got out the car, my guards surrounding me walking in. Episode 1, Scene 1.

Sibo: "Where the hell is my wife!!" I shouted. "I swear to hell if you've touched a single hair on her body, I will crush you with my bare hands. GET A FUCKING MOVE ON THEN!!" the whole center jittered, every employee running around, keys shuffling at a gate. I power walked to the holding cell. "Get out of my way." I unlocked the gate myself and entered the cell. She looked at me. I softened my demeanor. Shit, what does Nkosi call Thembisa again? My mind went blank.

Sibo: "My love." I walked to her, shaking the hesitance off my energy. Nkosinhle was always confident, it would be difficult to point out his mistake because he never had any. I softly touched her hand holding her up. "Hey." She stared at me for a while, unsure. "I'm going to get you

out of here. I am so sorry, my love. This is all a big misunderstanding. Let's get out of here." She hugged me tight. I almost sighed in relief. She believed me. Good. Perfect. I led her out the cells to the car. I was out of my depth but Amahle's brief was "Soft". That's it. Anything romantic, make it ten times soft. That's insane but let's see. I held her hand. "How are you feeling?"

She: "Cold." I pulled her closer to me, cuddling her. It was a bit awkward because she did look exactly like Thembisa and Thembisa is Nkosi's wife. There is no way in hell I can be comfortable holding her like this. But this wasn't the real Thembisa. I wasn't hurting anyone. We arrived in my house at Stellars, I walked her in.

She: "Where are we?"

Sibo: "This is my house. Remember I kept telling you we'd go back to our own house? This is it. I had to get us out of that palace."

She: "Thank you Mehluli. Thank you for coming for me."

Sibo: "Love. Please be honest with me. I will protect you with all of me. No one will get to you." She swallowed. "Who are you?" She stared at me.

She: "I'm Thembisa." I brushed her cheek.

Sibo: "Not like I know. Look, I'm not interested in going back to find her but if I'm with you, I have to understand you. Don't you want me to be in love with the true you and not your shadow?" She looked at me questioningly. "I have taken down my father when he wanted to harm you, I took you out of that center. I brought you to this beautiful home to protect you. I swear on the gods I will not harm you. I just want to know my wife." Her facial features softened. Her hands rested on my chest.

She: "You want to love me?"

Sibo: "The true you. Everything about you." She held my face pulling me in to kiss her. I swallowed the lump in my throat, my lips touching hers, holding her body on mine. I pulled away gently.

She: "Okay." I kissed her forehead.

Sibo: "Tell me."

She: "I am Nobutsha. I come from the hidden treasure tribe." I hid my shock well.

Sibo: "What made you choose to come here?"

She: "I was supposed to lure your father out to my grandmother. She wants his blood so she can avenge herself. His blood will help her find King Ngidumise in the spirit world. Once you had lost your father, I was supposed to distract you. The other royals had some plan to take over the throne."

Sibo: "Then why take Thembisa?"

She: "She would've found him."

Sibo: "Okay. Well, it seems her plan worked. The other royals are in the process of taking over."

She: "You can't let that happen. You have to be King."

Sibo: "Why?"

She: "You just have to."

Sibo: "Okay, how can I stop it then?"

She: "I don't know." She wasn't giving me proper information, information that I needed.

Sibo: "Won't your grandmother try to find you then?"

She: "She will. That's why you have to kill her first."

Sibo: "How?"

She: "There's only one way to find the treasure tribe. You need to open the veil. When doing that, you must also be in disguise. It's better to go during the day because their man power is not there then. Only the women remain."

Sibo: "How can I be in disguise and how do I open the veil?"

She: "This is very dangerous Mehluli."

Sibo: "I just want to make sure I protect you."

She: "Okay. First you need a cleanse, with the cleanse your ancestors will protect you. You can do this at the river. That is the only river that connects to the spirit realms. There is a herb called Ntleke Bayi Ntleke. This is a very dangerous herb, it strengthens you, Mehluli. There is a warrior in those grounds called Mzingeli. He is his name. He is of your blood but his loyalty is focused on protecting the tribe. He is very

powerful. This herb will put your abilities close to his. You will be able to fight him and maybe even win. After this herb, you need to find lintonga, these will have to be boiled in blood of any animal you slaughter with your own hands, it must be a big animal too, one that you take down with your bare hands and kill. Wash yourself with it for two nights. It will disguise you. After this, you need a bird call."

Sibo: "What is a bird call?"

She: "It is a call that opens the veil, you will be able to enter the tribe that way. I can teach you."

Sibo: "This is alot of work. Do you also have to go through this when you go there?"

She: "I haven't gone back and I never will."

Sibo: "I'll make sure of it my love."

She: "Mehluli? Please come back. Please. The people in there are powerful. I want to be with you. Please come back."

Sibo: "I promise I will. Let me run you a bath so you can feel clean and relaxed." I went to the bathroom, running a bath with some bubbles in it. The water was perfect temperature. "Perfect." I turned and she was right there. I held my composure not showing the shock she gave me. She smiled, unbuttoning my shirt.

Sibo: "Oh, you wanna do this now?"

She: "Yes." My front door. Thank the gods in all the universes combined. I kissed her hand.

Sibo: "Get in the bath, I'll be with you just now. We'll take a relaxing soak together and I'm going to fuck you until you scream." She gasped, her cheeks blushing embarrassingly. I walked out the bathroom, exhaling my anxiety. I walked into the kitchen, freezing in shock.

Zimmy: "Your Highness. I am so sorry, I didn't know anyone was here." She bowed, keeping her head down. Okay, this is awkward and very funny. I was holding back my laugh. "I'll make my way out. I am so sorry, Your Highness."

Sibo: "Why did you come here again?"

Zimmy: "I was bringing supper for Prince Sibonelo, in case he came home late, Your Highness." Aww that's so sweet.

Sibo: "He's a lucky guy."

Zimmy: "I'm the lucky one, Your Highness. My apologies again, for disturbing." I loved looking at her face, but she kept her head bowed the entire time. She truly respected Nkosi. Who doesn't?

Sibo: "You may leave Zimasa." She looked up, shocked and confused. I kept my expression clear of any emotion.

Zimmy: "Uhm." She kept staring.

Sibo: "You may leave."

Zimmy: "I Uhm... I... I'm sorry Your Highness." She stumbled out of the house. Shit, I fucked that up. I took out my phone dialing for Amahle.

Ama: "Did she open up?" I looked down the passage.

Sibo: "Plenty. We're good to go. Uhm, so Zimmy came over." I beamed.

Ama: "NO. Sibonelo what did you do!!"

Sibo: "Nothing! I didn't do anything. She just appeared, putting food in the fridge and was kinda spooked. She left. I didn't say anything outward. She's Thembisa's best friend, Nkosi would obviously know her name." I hissed.

Ama: "Sibonelo. You have a love spell on you." My brain froze.

Sibo: "No. No, I don't. The spe..." I looked down the passage, lowering my voice to barely a sound. "The spell was for the lookalike, right?"

Ama: "Right. When we didn't know you'd be in contact with other peopl-"

Sibo: "AMAHLE SIKHOSANA!!!" I snapped. The house went still. Fuck. I need to get out of here.

## Chapter 144

### SIBONELO'S POV\_

I paced the house after I'd hung up from Amahle. What did this mean? Would Zimasa be in love with Nkosi? Maybe the spell didn't work. It

couldn't have worked so quickly. Wet footsteps pat on the floor. I looked at Nobutsha. She was butt naked.

Sibo: "Why are you barefoot, you're going to fall." Shit, I was slipping out of character. My stress was peeking.

Nobu: "I heard you call your sister's name. Is she here?"

Sibo: "No. I was on the phone with her. I was warning her to stay out of my business. She doesn't know where we are but she can find us. I need to ensure she doesn't."

Nobu: "You can't leave me here alone." I felt bad for her. Especially because she didn't choose where to be born, to whom. You know what, I can't make excuses. Nkosi wouldn't compromise with his safety or that of his family.

Sibo: "You're safe here, my love. That I promise. To make sure my family doesn't come after you, I have to go to them and sort this mess out. Please promise me, you'll stay here and wait for me. Don't open for anyone. There's guards all around to keep you safe. Okay?"

Nobu: "Okay. You'll come back?" I held her hands, kissing her forehead.

Sibo: "I will always come back for you. You have my heart." She nodded, kissing my lips. "Stay warm." I walked out the house, getting in the car. The guard drove off. My hands were shaking in a way that made me uncomfortable. I dialed Mnqobi's number.

Mnqobi: "Yebo-"

Sibo: "Uthi Yebo?! Why did Zimmy leave your house and come to mine all alone?!"

Mnqobi: "She went with 3 guards, Bhut Sbo."

Sibo: "I don't care if she's with Jesus Christ himself, she doesn't go back there without my approval. Are we clear? Mnqobi, please keep her locked in if you have to."

Mnqobi: "Haibo Sboni. She's just trying to care for yo-"

Sibo: "It's not safe!! That house isn't fucking safe! Just..." I swallowed the lump in my throat. "Please keep the mother of my child protected. That's all I'm asking."

Mnqobi: "Okay. I'll do that, I swear." I hung up. The pills Zwe had prescribed for the anxiety were at home and it would be strange for Prince Sikhosana to rock up at the Biyela palace asking for Sibonelo's medication. I also can't go to the hospital because again, why is royal heir fetching Sibonelo's medication. I'd have to pull myself together. I typed a message on my phone: <hey, I hear you brought me supper. I might not be home for the evening but I appreciate this so much.> She responded:

Zimmy: <Why was the prince in your house?>

Sibo: <He was picking up my second laptop since he was closer than I was.>

Zimmy: <Oh.> What does oh mean?

Sibo: <I can't wait to see you.> Five minutes passed. 10. 15. 20. I am going to fight with Amahle. We have to fight. She needs to make this stop. The car drove into the parkway of the villa. I got out the car, storming into building.

King: "Nkosinhle? When did you get out of hospit-"

Sibo: "Not now, my King. AMAHLE!!!" I marched to the restaurant, huffing. "Amahle." I hissed.

Ama: "Hello-"

Sibo: "No! Not hello. You have ALOT of explaining and fixing to do!"

Nolwazi: "Now I'm confused."

King: "This is Sibonelo?"

Nobantu: "Sizwengaye! You're not going to clone your own son and then forget which one is which!!! Do not make me angry!" She screamed. I have never seen the queen that mad before. It was shocking but I had a bigger problem.

Nkwe: "This is hilarious." She chuckled.

Ama: "We can try and see where we went wro-"

Sibo: "Oh you're not going to try, Amahle, you are going to do!"

King: "No, she won't." I looked at him. An ice cold fear settled into my heart.

Sibo: "My King, I don't think you understand. Amahle and I decided I was to get information out of the lookalike girl, in order to do that, she put a love spell on me. The mother of my child walked in."

King: "Oh, I understand very well. Something was missing before. This anger. This will to fight. That is who Nkosinhle is. Not the cackle bunny you were before. And until you do this job to perfection, Amahle is not changing that spell. So you know what is at stake Sibonelo. If you fuck this up, the mother of your child will forever be in love with your boss." My heart bled at the very thought.

Nhla: "Father, that's so cruel."

King: "Cruel gets the job done." He walked out.

## SASA'S POV \_

I think it was evening. Mzingeli always lit a fire before complete darkness and the lanterns as well. He's been gone for some hours I think and I don't know where to. I stayed in bed reading my books. There was still a notepad and pencil case in my bag so I could make some notes as well. Mzingeli walked in.

Mzi: "Hello."

Me: "Hey."

Mzi: "So the storm is drawing near. Some of the tribe will join us for the night." I looked at him.

Me: "The tribe that almost chopped my head off some days ago? I must sleep in the same cav- No Mzingeli. Ha.a. We're gambling now."

Mzi: "None of the men will be here, only the women."

Me: "Your girlfriends who don't like me?" He smiled.

Mzi: "Yes, them."

Me: "I don't know about this."

Mzi: "Are you jealous you'll have to share me?"

Me: "Mxim." I looked back at my book.

Mzi: "I'll bring you supper in a few minutes."

Me: "Do you have candy here?"

Mzi: "Candy?"

Me: "Sweets. Sweet sugary things."

Mzi: "Oh. I don't know."

Me: "You don't have a sweet tooth?"

Mzi: "That would be unhealthy and sore."

Me: "I mean a sugar craving."

Mzi: "I don't crave sugar. My diet consists of all nutrients my body needs every single day. Also, I move around a lot for exercise."

Me: "Hmm. Back to candy, do you have?"

Mzi: "I'll ask."

Me: "Mzi?"

Mzi: "Mzingeli. Yes?"

Me: "Mzingeli. Don't you think we should perhaps explain to Nkosi, what is required for the success of the throne and protecting it? We could send him a message."

Mzi: "For how long?"

Me: "A message? It shouldn't take that long-"

Mzi: "How long will he have to rely on you? How will he be a proper King if his wife must direct and give instructions? Why don't you just be the King?"

Me: "How can someone know what to do if you just throw obstacles in their way?"

Mzi: "That is how you test competency, resilience, strength, leadership. He has it in him. Loving you is good but it shouldn't knock him down. Losing you must be his motivation not his excuse. Don't worry about Nkosinhle. I'm getting you food." He walked out. I hate that he was right. I was there, well dreaming as Nonkosi's spirit when Ngidumise fell apart. He couldn't even hold his child, he never recovered. Nkosi can't turn out like that. If truly something happened to me, I wouldn't want him to turn

his back on our child succumbing to heartbreak. As Mzingeli says, it's hard but Mkhambi did it and succeeded. Nkosi is strong, he can do this. Even if I'm without my ability that I didn't even know was an ability, I had a brain that could still think and a heart that still loved him. So I can still pray. I can still praise for him. Mzingeli walked in with a plate, placing it before me. His hand hovered above it like a magnet detector.

Me: "What are you doing?"

Mzi: "I'm not taking any chances with your safety Thembisa. All your food is prepared by me, today's meal was cooked by someone else so I have to be sure it's safe for you to eat." He took a piece and ate it. "You can go ahead and eat. It's safe."

Me: "I think we can wait a few more minutes, in case you fall down. One of us needs to call the medic." He laughed.

Mzi: "It's fine you can sacrifice me. I don't mind." He sat on the floor.

Me: "You said you had a life to get back to. What is it." He sighed.

Mzi: "I had plans to travel. I wanted to explore our nation possibly our continent."

Me: "That's cool. So you'll what, live in the woods, Check out new animals, Blog in your little sketch book?"

Mzi: "Where did you see my sketchbook?"

Me: "You always take it out at night and sketch in it. Are you drawing me?" He chuckled.

Mzi: "No I'm not drawing you. That would be suspicious. I sketch out my dreams." He took out his little notebook, giving it to me. I flipped through the book.

Me: "This is amazing. So your blood is artistic? Nkosi loves painting, his father loves watching and directing his portraits."

Mzi: "Really?"

Me: "Yep. Paints on my belly every morning." I smiled.

Mzi: "Bonding with the baby. That's good."

Me: "So you'll leave the treasure tribe?"

Mzi: "No, I'll come back sometimes. This is my family. I just need to see the world."

Me: "Have you seen the world that has cars and cellphones?" He smiled.

Mzi: "That one doesn't interest me."

Me: "How so? You've never lived in it."

Mzi: "I tried. It just isn't for me."

Me: "Where did you live?"

Mzi: "In Oceanview."

Me: "You are lying Mzingeli!" He laughed.

Mzi: "I'm not."

Me: "No offense but how?"

Mzi: "I can place myself anywhere. I got an ID, set up a business, then got a place to rent. It doesn't take much for us to be comfortable, you know this."

Me: "What about the environment didn't you like?"

Mzi: "It's loud. The people are loud, their cars, their music. Everyone is always angry. It's just so chaotic. Even the ocean isn't peaceful. There's pubs right there blasting swearing music. I sometimes feel sorry for you people."

Me: "Okay but you're used to the silence so it was a lot for you, I get that. The palace is secluded though."

Mzi: "Both your husband's houses too. I know he hates the noise as well but he grew up in it so he doesn't really mind. I'm sure Sizwe doesn't like his house in the gated estate either. We're just not made to be surrounded by regular people. People often think the Sikhosana's act god-like and above all and non royals. The truth is, apart from that, the abilities we possess make it difficult to connect and understand chaos. Also, we have the potential to accidentally harm a normal human."

Me: "You know quite a lot about our family. That's frightening."

Mzi: "Yes, I've been watching you all for a while. In order to shield him, I have to know what he's doing."

Me: "Do you ever think about what it would be like to have a proper sibling relationship with him?"

Mzi: "Not really. I think I'm fine. Knowing he's safe is enough for me."

Me: "What about your nephew?"

Mzi: "It wouldn't be important. I'd have done my duty by our bloodline."

Me: "It's good to have family Mzingeli. You can't be alone all the time."

Mzi: "I know." I heard footsteps coming in. "Here is my family." The women came in, carrying blankets, others carrying sponges, the children carrying baskets. He got up helping them place their sponges and blankets. They all settled. The storm had begun, crackling above and raining heavily. He pulled out a barrier.

Me: "Where are you going?"

Mzi: "Outside."

Me: "There's a storm outside Mzingeli?" The women mumbled under their breath.

Mzi: "The men are outside, the women must be kept warm and dry."

Me: "In a storm?? Also, my likeability problem?"

Mzi: "I'll be fine. And you'll be fine. I promise." I don't know but I couldn't trust these women. Not that they did anything wrong.

Me: "Okay."

Mzi: "Just shout." I nodded. He closed the barricade, it had an opening at the top to let fresh air in. I looked at my new roommates. All of them stared at me with disgust. Usually, I'd crack a joke to break the ice but I wasn't going to bother here. They didn't like me and no amount of bum kissing would help.

KHAYA'S POV \_

It's been a strange few days. I have a feeling Sboni and Bhut Zwe were hiding something. Apart from the energy supply problem, they both haven't been home. That's very unlike them. Especially Sibonelo. Something was wrong.

Mnqobi: "I need to go to my house. Khaya, please convince Zimmy to not leave the house again. Sibonelo doesn't want her traveling to anywhere even with guards."

Khaya: "Okay."

Mama: "My angel, please bring me the babies when you come back."

Mnqobi: "Ma... Siza hardly spends time with her children anymore."

Mama: "Siza is grieving Mnqobi, don't be rude. She needs a break sometimes."

Mnqobi: "And what happens when the new baby comes? Will you have time for them?"

Mama: "I raised all of you Mnqobi, and I always have time for you."

Mnqobi: "Okay, maybe we should first speak to Siza about how she feels about it."

Mama: "Yes, I've been meaning to go over but Sibonelo has banned me from meeting the mother of my grandbaby until further notice." I chuckled.

Mnqobi: "You'll meet her soon mama. I'll bring the kids. Let's go Khaya."

Khaya: "No Mnqobi, I'm tired."

Mnqobi: "Tired of what? We did the exact same thing."

Khaya: "You're stronger than me." He laughed walking out.

Mama: "Do you want some ice cream sweetie?"

Khaya: "No, thank you mama. I'm okay." King Biyela walked in the lounge.

King: "Phew. What a long day." He sat down. My phone buzzed. I was receiving a message. <I miss you.> From Nkwenkwezi. I typed back. <I miss you too my shining star.> I sent it. She responded.

Nkwe: <Then come see me.>

Khaya: <I can't come to the palace at this time love.>

Nkwe: <I'm not at the palace, I'm at the villa.> I don't know why but that sounded much worse.

Khaya: <I don't know if that's a good idea baby. It's already late.>

Nkwe: <Exactly. Everyone will be going to bed. Please come.>

Khaya: <Babe, I can't just arrive at the villa. Not only is security tight but it's strictly for family. I can't just arrive.>

Nkwe: <You're part of council. Of course you can.> That's not how this works. There is no emergency enough that could justify going there.  
<Come to me, Khaya. I need you.> Attached with a picture of herself. I swallowed hard.

Khaya: "Uhm, Baba, I'm going to Mngqobi. I think we'll be back late tonight." I got up from the couch.

Biyela: "Okay, be safe please. No leaving the estate." I'll have to break that rule unfortunately.

Khaya: "Yes sir." I walked out, driving up to Mngqobi's house. I walked in. He was on the couch with Petu. Nothando was reading her book.

Mngqobi: "Hawu? And then? I thought you were too tired."

Khaya: "Now's not the time, brother. Where's Zimmy?"

Mngqobi: "With Siza upstairs. I spoke to her. She understands."

Khaya: "Good, I need your help." I hid my smile.

Mngqobi: "What."

Khaya: "I need about 3 hours out of the estate."

Mngqobi: "Absolutely not. You want Bhut Zwe to chew me? Look at my face Khaya. I have two wives to impress. No ways."

Khaya: "Please brother. I'll take guards. No matter how many."

Mngqobi: "Fine. 3 guards. 2 hours."

Khaya: "Okay. I'm fine with that. Please cover for me."

Notha: "Where are you going Khaya?"

Khaya: "To the villa."

Mngqobi: "Oh. Sbo is there so you're obviously getting a lash."

Khaya: "I'll find a way to avoid him. Thanks brother." I left with my three guards, sending a message to Nkwenkwezi. <I'm on my way, baby.>

Nkwe: <Can't wait. I've briefed the guards at first entrance.> I was so nervous. I've also never really been to this villa but I've heard from Sboni

how beautiful it was. I hope I don't bump into him. In just half an hour, the car drove into the villa parkway, stopping furthest away from the entrance of the door. I got out, typing a message. <I'm here love.> A few minutes passed without response. A little bit of panic. I heard leaves crunching in the darkest corner. A small flash flickered at me. I walked over to it.

Khaya: "Hey."

Nkwe: "Shhh." She held my hand, slowly walking back into the darkness. I don't know about the tiptoeing because the crunching of the leaves was pretty loud but this was probably fun for her so I wouldn't burst her bubble. She climbed up the stairs, I followed her and landed on a deck. We walked into the sliding door. It was still dark, I could barely see but we were now inside a room. She turned to look at me. Only the moonlight shon, sparkling her gorgeous brown eyes.

Khaya: "Hi."

Nkwe: "Hi baby." Her lips touched mine, tasting sweet as caramel and smelling so mesmerizing. I held her body, sucking her in.

Khaya: "I missed you."

Nkwe: "Don't stop kissing me then."

Khaya: "This is not a good idea baby."

Nkwe: "No one will know. It's not like I get tested for virginity. Even so, I want you." I looked at her.

Khaya: "What do you mean?"

Nkwe: "I like being with you. Alot of crazy things have been happening and I realized I just wanted to be with you. I want you in my life. I want to be in your life."

Khaya: "You want us to be in a serious relationship?"

Nkwe: "Yes." This was new for me. I didn't do serious relationships but I really liked Nkwenkwezi. She can be a little crazy at times but I wanted her too. There was only one problem. Her father. "Do you want to be with me?"

Khaya: "Yes. I do want to be with you. I'm new to this but I'd love to try, with you." She giggled.

Nkwe: "Perfect! I'll speak to my dad, or better yet, my brother. Yes, my brother is better. He can convince my dad to let you marry me. Maybe even give you a discount, he's been wanting to get rid of me for years."

Khaya: "I'm sorry what now?"

Nkwe: "Yep. He'd be happy to see me leave. I can already imagine his excitement. At least you're an eligible bachelor. A Biyela. Are you going to change your surname?" WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Khaya: "I wasn't thinking of changing it."

Nkwe: "Oh. I'm comfortable with anything you choose. Since you're going to be my husband, I have to follow your lead. I just thought you'd hate calling me Mrs Solinga." I haven't even thought that far- what is happening!!

Khaya: "You want to get married?"

Nkwe: "Yes. Obviously it will have to be after Nkosi. Perhaps, we wait three months. Three months is enough, he doesn't need that much fame. Also, I don't want too big a wedding, I just want to be your wife." I was so shocked. I could barely move or blink.

Khaya: "Uhm... My love, you don't want to wait, say a few years?"

Nkwe: "Wait for what? What would be the difference now and a few years?" I was in big trouble. If only I'd listened to dad when he told me not to leave the estate. Now I have to get married.

Khaya: "I would be excited to be your husband but-" a knock on the door disrupted me. I looked at the door. Who could that be? Her twin probably. No one else would know we're here.

King: "Nkwenkwezi." My heart stopped beating. I felt light headed, ready to faint. God, if I get out of this. I swear I'll listen to my elders. All the time. I'll listen to each and every instruction and make sure my brothers do too. "If he dare leaves, I will break his legs before he reaches his car. Open this door." Oh sweet hell, welcome me home.

Nkwe: "Fathe-"

King: "Nkwenkwezi, I'm giving you 3 seconds of courtesy before I appear inside." She walked to the door and opened it.

Nkwe: "Yes daddy?"

King: "Did you really think you can sneak a whole grown man in here without my knowledge? What's wrong with you? We're in a crisis and your mind is dirty with tricks up your sleeve!"

Nkwe: "Father, Khaya and I are talking about getting married."

King: "Are you insane?" He walked in. I looked at the floor.

Khaya: "Good evening my king. I apologize for coming at this time."

King: "Nkwenkwezi. What's wrong with you?"

Nkwe: "We want to be together, father."

King: "Is that why you're sneaking him in at night? Your brother is in hospital for heaven's sake! Your sister in law is missing! Your only thought is bringing a man into their home for a rendezvous?"  
MISSING??

Nkwe: "Now my life has to stand still because of Nkosi and his scandals? No father, I've been living in his shadow for way too long. I want to start my life and that's what I will do." The king looked at me. I couldn't even look back at him, I was shivering to the bone.

King: "Khaya will not marry you because he does not want to."

Nkwe: "Father!!"

King: "Tell her." He dared.

Khaya: "I..." I swallowed the lump in my throat but it popped back up. "I do want to marry her, my king." What else was I supposed to do? Admit to a king I only came here to fuck his daughter? I would rather get married. By midnight if possible. An unsettling cold swirled around me, crawling up my spine.

King: "We'll see." ...

Chapter 145

KHAYA'S POV \_

After the King walked out the room, I still couldn't stop shaking. I was in trouble. I wanted to throw up.

Nkwe: "Are you okay, baby? At least my father has accepted we're to marry. I didn't think I'd have to start with him first but at least he knows now."

Khaya: "Yeah. At least he knows." I sat in the chair feeling light headed.

Nkwe: "Let me speak to him. I'll be right back." She walked out. I tried breathing exercises and they didn't work. I have to call for my brother. I took out my phone, dialing Sibonelo's number.

Sibo: "Yes bug?" He answered.

Khaya: "Bobo, I need help."

Sibo: "What's wrong?"

Khaya: "I'm in trouble."

Sibo: "Where are you?"

Khaya: "I'm at the villa. The prince's villa."

Sibo: "Okay, come to his suite. I'm here."

Khaya: "I don't know where that is Sbo."

Sibo: "Okay, I'll send a guard to come fetch you, where are you here?"

Khaya: "In Nkwenkwezi's room."

Sibo: "Good God, Khaya! Fine, hang in there." He hung up. I waited for a few minutes before I heard a knock. My heart jumped. Oh, that must be the guard. I opened the door.

Guard: "Khaya? Follow me." I followed him to Nkosi's room I guess. Was Sibonelo still working? The king said Nkosi is in hospital. And Thembisa is missing. Missing how!! I entered the room, walking in. The prince looked at me. Oh Dear God. Why is this happening!!

Khaya: "My Prince, good evening. I am so sorry for imposing, especially at this tim-"

Nkosi: "Khaya-"

Khaya: "I know I shouldn't even be here. I should've listened and just stayed at hom-"

Nkosi: "KHAYA!"

Khaya: "And now I have to marry her because I don't want the king to kill me. He dared me to admit I don't want to but I couldn't. I have to get married."

Nkosi: "Bug, it's me!" I stared at him.

Khaya: "Your Highness? Why are you calling me bug?"

Nkosi: "Because I'm not Nkosi. It's me, Sibonelo."

Khaya: "My Prince, are we doing improv? I will participate but I have to fix my problem first."

Nkosi: "Goodness. Khaya, the prince is in hospital-"

Khaya: "I'm looking at you right now."

Nkosi: "Listen to me carefully. Nkosi is in hospital. The king turned me into his clone so that I can attend the board meeting tomorrow. Please don't faint."

Khaya: "That's not possible. You can't clone a human, Your Highness. Where's Sboni? It's okay, you can trust me."

Nkosi: "Khaya."

Khaya: "He's still alive, right? Oh my God. Please tell me he's still alive?"

Nkosi: "I am still alive! I'm right in front of you!" He shouted.

Khaya: "Your Highness don't be angry but you're not Sibonelo and you can't pretend to be him because you don't look like him. We have to tell Zwe. Is Sboni dead? Yoh. He's going to be so mad. Was it a mistake? Wait, why did you call me here? You can't get rid of me, Your Highness. I'm a child!"

Nkosi: "Khaya, sit down. Tell me why you're in trouble." I sat in the chair, looking around the room. Sboni's clothes were on the bed. Did he really kill him? Why would he do that- "KHAYA!"

Khaya: "Right. Nkwenkwezi wants me to marry her. She told her father. He asked me if I want to marry her and I said yes. What was I supposed to say? I couldn't admit I wan-" I shut my mouth quickly.

Nkosi: "Did you sleep with her?"

Khaya: "No!"

Nkosi: "Good. We can at least salvage this. Maybe delay the marriage even."

Khaya: "Yes! I'm with delaying. I'll do anything."

Nkosi: "Do you really want to marry her?"

Khaya: "Not in three months time, no. Maybe in three years, or seven. I'm not in a rush."

Nkosi: "Khaya, you can't be fucking a princess for years. You realize that right?"

Khaya: "So what do I do?"

Nkosi: "We'll think of something. Right now, we have a lot to fix."

Khaya: "The king said Thembisa is missing. Is that true?"

Nkosi: "Fuck. Yes. She's missing."

Khaya: "What happened!?"

Nkosi: "Very long story. The short end of it is that she's safe and being kept in some hidden village. No one can get in or out. You know how the Sikhosana's have abilities?" I was not about to admit my suspicions.

Khaya: "Abilities? Nooo. I don't know anything about that. That's wild."

Nkosi: "Oh stop lying. I know you suspect. It's true. The Sikhosana's have abilities. They're not the only ones. There's a tribe called the treasure bloods. If you remember, Nakhamula had planned to call on the treasure blood witch to help in taking over the throne. Thembisa is in that village currently. The witch has since duplicated her, bringing her into the palace, also bringing a man who has broken in the palace to attack Nkosi."

Khaya: "They attacked you? Is that why you were in hospital?" He sighed, frustrated.

Nkosi: "Yes, that's why I was in hospital. Where is Mnqobi"

Khaya: "With his wives. Speaking of which, I have to go. He only promised me 2 hours."

Nkosi: "You can't leave at this time, it's late and it isn't safe. You can leave in the morning."

Khaya: "Okay. I'll have to let Mngqobi know." I took out my phone. "My Prince, please be honest. I won't tell, I mean I obviously will but I'll help calm the family. Where's Sboni?"

Nkosi: "Must I call the king so you can ask him?"

Khaya: "No, sir." I don't know how I'll break this to Zwe but I had to tell him. His best friend killed his brother. I sent a message: <Bhut Zwe, we have a problem. I think the prince did something to Sboni. You'll have to come and ask him yourself. He's being very secretive about his whereabouts but his clothes are on the bed and he answered his phone pretending to be him.> I pressed Send.

## SASA'S POV\_

The ladies were conversating amongst themselves in low tones, sowing clothes. I've never felt more out of place so I pretended to continue reading while listening in on their conversation. It's not like it was private.

Girl 1: "But that doesn't help, Diwe. Everyday I wake up sore."

Girl 2: "Then you need to make sure he's very tired."

Girl 3: "Or let him take a second wife."

Girl 2: "Let's start with getting him tired."

Girl 1: "You think I haven't tried? He built our first barriers and he still came home for four rounds." Four?? My God. "Maybe a second wife will be good. I'm already pregnant a fifth time. Every year he gets me pregnant."

Girl 4: "Yoh I wish he was my husband. Mine always takes a few minutes."

Girl 2: "Why don't you ask uGogo to help?"

Girl 4: "I don't want this one's problems." They giggled. I decided to bow out this conversation and read my book. The children were playing in the corner, seeming to have wood carved toys. Little cars and dolls, hammers and all. I sighed, turning the page of my book.

"Wenzantoni?" (What are you doing?) I looked next to me. One of the children, was standing beside the bed staring at me. She had the biggest beautiful brown eyes I've ever seen. Her hair braided back.

Me: "I'm readin-"

Woman: "She doesn't speak your language." I looked at the woman.

Me: "Ndifunda incwadi." (I'm reading a book). The girl looked at my book and back at me.

Girl: "Yincwadi yantoni?" (What is the book about?)

Me: "imalunga nomthetho womgaqo-siseko." (it is about the constitutional law.) Everyone was now quiet.

Girl: "Yintoni leyo?" (What is that?)

Woman: "Ndiliswa, izohlala phantsi." (Ndiliswa, come sit down.) That was expected but this girl didn't move.

Ndiliswa: "Inwele zakho zintle." (Your hair is beautiful.)

Me: "Enkosi. Nawe umhle." (Thank you. You are beautiful too.)

Woman: "Ndiliswa!!"

Ndiliswa: "Yintoni Mama?" (What is it mother?)

Woman: "Hayi khawusuke apho! Kunini ndathi yeka uthetha nabantu ongabaziyo?!" (Get away from there. I've always told you to not speak to strangers?!)

Ndiliswa: "Sizomazi njani mama if anithethi naye? Mna ndizothetha naye ke. Uzothini?" (How will we know her if you don't talk to her? Well I'm going to talk to her. What will you do?)

Me: "Ndiliswa, funeke umamele umama wakho xa ethetha. Uyakukhusela." (Ndiliswa, you must listen to your mother when she speaks. She's protecting you.)

Ndiliswa: "Uzondonzakalisa?" (Will you hurt me?)

Me: "Hayi. Andisoze. Kodwa abanye abantu bangakonzakalisa. Ilizwe phandle likhohlakele. Yilento Ndifunda lencwadi, ndizokwazi unceda abantu abonzakeleyo zizigebenga" (No. I would never. But people from the outside will. The world outside is very evil. That's why I'm reading this book So i can help people who are hurt by criminals." She sat down.

Ndiliswa: "Uyakhwazi unceda? Njengengelosi yokhuseleko?" (You can help people? Like the angel of safety?) I giggled.

Me: "Ewe ndiyakhwazi unceda kodwa hayi njengengelosi. Mna ndingumntu onceda abanye abantu. Wena uFuna ubayintoni?" (Yes I can help but not like the angel of safety. I'm only a person that will help other people. What do you want to be?)

Ndiliswa: "Ndifuna Uba ngu Mongikazi." (I want to be a nurse.)

Me: "Ngumsebenzi obaluleke kakhulu. Nguwe abaguli beza kubo, uyabakhathalela ngaphambi, ngexesha nasemva kokuxilongwa kwabo. Uya kuba nguwe oncedisayo ukubaphilisa babuyele ebomini. Ixesha labo lokugula liya kubandakanya ubukhulu becala uncedo lwakho. Kuhle kakhulu oko." (You are the one patients come to, you take care of them before, during and after their diagnosis. You will be the one helping to heal them back to life. Their duration of sickness will consist mostly of your help. That is very noble.) She smiled brightly. A young boy sat next to her. "Wena uFuna ubayintoni?" (What you do want to be?)

Him: "Ndifuna ufana nobhuti Mzingeli." (I want to be like Mzingeli.) All the boys jumped to agree. So he was a fave here? That's nice.

Me: "Wenzantoni uBhuti Mzingeli?" (What does he do?)

Him: "uyazingela and futhi unamandla. Inkunzi yenkomo uyakhwazi uyiwisa yedwa." (He's a hunter and he's strong. He can take down a bull by himself.)

Me: "Yoh unamandla nyani."

Woman: "Awunayo indoda?" (Don't you have a husband?)

Me: "Ndinaye. Yi- Kumkani wesi sizwe uhlala kuso." (I do. He's the king of this nation you live in.) She hissed in her seat.

Ndiliswa: "Ngubani igama lakho?" (What is your name?)

Me: "Ngu Thembisa Nobomi Sikhosana."

Another: "Uthe abantu bangaphandle bakhohlakele. yinyani leyo?" (You said the people of the outside world are evil. is that true?)

Me: "Yinyani. Kwaye funeke umamele koo mama noo tata benu. Ukuba ngenye imini ubona umntu ongamaziyo, baleka uzoxela kumama uyeva?" (It's true. Also listen to your parents. If one day you come across a stranger, run and come tell your mother. Do you hear?) They

nodded, listening carefully. I couldn't even dare glamourize how nice outside was because in reality, it was completely unsafe for children who kind of don't exist in the world I come from. They have no identification, no medical history. They would be the easiest people to steal and unfortunately in my ugly world, children are stolen everyday. They're much safer here.

Ndiliswa: "Ndicela usibalisele nge Kumkani." (Please tell us about the king.) I giggled. I'm not doing that. His description will do just fine and how we met. The children may be innocent but I don't trust those women. If they're here, as the women of the tribe, where is the Gogo?

## ZWELETHU'S POV\_

Nkosi was awake as early as 6 in the morning and got out of bed. I could tell he was still in pain but he held on quite well, barely reacting to it. I called Mngqobi to check on the family.

Mngqobi: "Bhut Zwe. Good morning."

Zwe: "Hi. How's everyone?"

Mngqobi: "We're fine. Will you need me to come up as well?"

Zwe: "As well? What are you on about?"

Mngqobi: "Oh, Khaya is with Sboni at the villa." I'd ignored the message he sent me last night because it wasn't making sense. So one thing is clear, Sibonelo and Khaya were up to no good and one of them fucked up.

Zwe: "Okay. Just stay home. Khaya will be home soon. How is everyone else? The kids?"

Mngqobi: "They're with mama, I took them last night. Siza is coming for breakfast because mama wanted to talk to her. Jimmy is also fine. I'm supposed to keep an extra eye on her because she went to Sibonelo's house yesterday and Sboni freaked out." What on earth was going on?

Zwe: "Okay. I'm sending Khaya home soon. We'll talk."

Mngqobi: "Sho." I hung up, going back to my messages to read the message Khaya sent. Which prince is he talking about because Nkosi

didn't go anywhere and there's no other princes besides us? I discharged Nkosi and we drove up to the villa with Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "How are you feeling?"

Nkosi: "Fine for now. Just a little dizzy."

Mthunzi: "Okay, we'll be right here. Zwe, have you spoken to Sboni?"

Zwe: "This morning, yes."

Nkosi: "What's happening?"

Zwe: "Him and Khaya are up to no good."

Mthunzi: "What happened?"

Zwe: "Khaya is at the villa, not sure how he ended up there but he sent me a message last night about Sbonelo."

Mthunzi: "You think they're fighting?"

Zwe: "My brothers don't fight, they just do dumb shit. One of them did something." We drove into the villa parkway. We got out the car walking into the villa. Nkosi walked out the passage- wait. I looked next to me. Here's Nkosi beside me. Who the hell is that? I pulled Nkosi behind me, Mthunzi drew out his gun aiming at the imposter, he pulled off the safety about to shoot.

"It's me brother, it's Sibonelo!! Please don't shoot." We stared at him.

Zwe: "Shoot hi-"

Him: "Bhut Zwe!! It's me, the king cloned Nkosi using me!!" What in the Jesus Christ is this? The king came out.

King: "Put that gun down."

Nkosi: "You CLONED ME!?"

King: "What else was I supposed to do?"

Nkosi: "Anything but THAT!! I get sick and the first thing you think of is duplicating me!!"

King: "It's for the good of the throne. He's healthy and prepared. You need to rest. Sibonelo is going to attend the meeting and get the job done." I stared at the second Nkosi, my hand covering my mouth.

Nkosi: "Father, WHAT THE HELL!!!"

King: "Sibonelo, are you copying that? Push out the passion in the word father. That's what we're aiming for. Passion. Anger. The original Mehluli."

Nkosi: "You can't teach another human to be ME!!! I AM THE ONLY FUTURE KING!! I SWEAR TO GOD, HE BETTER BE BACK TO HIMSELF BY THE TIME I'M DONE GETTING READY OR I'M TEARING THAT BODY OFF HIM!!!" He stormed to his room.

King: "Perfection. Are you ready for your meeting, my prince." He looked at Sibonelo Nkosi. My second hand joined my first covering my mouth. I was paralyzed by shock. Mthunzi was dissolving to the couch in amusement.

Sibo: "But The Prince said-"

King: "You're the Prince now."

Sibo: "He threatened to tear me out his body?"

King: "I'm hearing alot of excuses. Are you going to let him threaten you? You have a meeting to get to. Let's move." ....

## Chapter 146

### SIBONELO'S POV

I don't know what was going on with the king but he was quite determined. If he said I was Nkosi, then I had to be Nkosi but now Nkosi is mad. Sure, he didn't want to borrow his body around but I'm only trying to help.

King: "It's time for you to go."

Sibo: "My King-"

King: "Sibonelo. You are getting in that car, and directing that meeting, do you understand me? I believe in you. I'll handle Nkosinhle. Right now, make me proud."

Sibo: "Yes my King." He walked out. Zwe looked at me. He was mighty disappointed, I could tell. "Brother, I'm only doing this to help."

Mthunzi: "Go to the meeting Sibonelo, we'll take care of things here. Guards, follow him and make sure he's secure at all points." They nodded, following me out. I got in the car, being driven to the throne court. It wasn't too far from the villa. I sent a message to Zimmy. <Good morning mama Ka Biyela omncane. I hope you're feeling better and sleeping better after the doctors recommendation. I'll see you sometime in the evening. Good luck for your exam today.> I sent it, she read the message and responded: <Thank you.> I needed to do a fantastic job today. Amahle needed to reverse that spell, my chest was burning at the thought of Zimmy being in love with Nkosinhle of all people. I think I'd die of the heart ache that's affecting him right now. Speaking of which. I sent a message to Mthunzi because my brother was way too angry at me. <My Lord, the imposter girl is in my house. Amahle and I had decided I speak to her and get some information yesterday, I did so and she told me of a way to get into the village. We haven't gotten rid of her yet." After sending it, I quickly switched off my phone because I know a phone call from Zwe is coming and he's going to yell. We drove into the throne court. It seems they had already arrived. A lot of cars parked out here. Mine stopped and I waited for the door to be opened because that's who we are now. We don't touch doors. I chuckled then straightened my face. It's game time. My door was opened. I stepped out the car, my guards surrounding me immediately. We fell into a rhythmic step into the building. All the other guards from the building bowed at my presence. This felt so majestic. We finally reached the throne court. The doors opened by my front guards. I stepped in, standing at the door. The whole board froze, looking at me. So, they weren't expecting me. Well, Nkosi I guess.

Sibo: "Do you no longer bow to your king?" All of them bowed immediately. I walked in the court, taking a seat. "You may continue." They looked confused and out of their element.

Phakamisa: "Prince Sikhosana, we weren't expecting you. This meeting is only to conclude a business, a waste of your time." His voice was tight with irritation.

Sibo: "Matters regarding business in my nation will never waste my time. Continue." I stared at him. He quickly looked down at his papers. I know the orange eyes shook him in his soul. Nkosi will have to forgive me.

Phakamisa: "Please give our Prince the available copy of-"

Sibo: "If you don't mind, I can look at yours."

Phakamisa: "My Prince-"

Sibo: "You know your proposal off by heart, no? It would be careless to rely on pieces of paper. I know you to be articulate in your business King-oh, Mr Phakamisa." He held back a hiss from the pits of his heart.

Phakamisa: "Yes, my prince." He handed over the papers and proposal.

Sibo: "Continue." I looked through the papers reading thoroughly. I may not have abilities like Sikhosana but my talent was listening attentively and reading at the same time grasping both information no matter how different the topic at the most accurate rate.

Phakamisa: "Our current energy crisis will benefit greatly with this venture. As it had been said, our power stations are malfunctioning and unfortunately the world is currently moving towards different sources. Battery powered, solar powered and the works. Our company has partnered with Aontaia Energy group to supply solar to larger industries. That being your corporate buildings, schools and malls."

Judge: "And what maintains these solar panels?"

Phakamisa: "Unlike the power stations our solar panels need little maintenance to function. They only need light cleaning periodically to make sure dirt, debris and such don't obstruct the sun rays."

Judge: "How would this benefit the nation?"

Phakamisa: "Well, solar panels are not only environmentally friendly, their installation will ensure that the nation is running at its full potential without any obstruct to production."

Sibo: "It says here, there's a permit to be obtained for every building with more than 50 occupants at once. What does that mean?"

Phakamisa: "The buildings will need to obtain a permit to have the panelling because it is much bigger than the regular panels used for smaller spaces."

Sibo: "And with that, they'll pay levies every month I suppose?"

Phakamisa: "Yes."

Sibo: "So, the building must pay you solar levies Which is no different to just having electricity and paying rates."

Phakamisa: "The solar levies have proved to be less expensive than electricity, as it is explained maintenance for the panels is little, Your Highness."

Sibo: "I see you also listed battery powered energy here that is in testing stage."

Phakamisa: "Yes, Your Highness."

Sibo: "Please explain." He sizzled in his seat silently.

Phakamisa: "Battery powered energy is being tested for its durability and safety. We've placed 20 so far, they operate in ATMs, postnets and my university." I looked up at him. He avoided my eyes. So these people can't look at Sikhosana in the eye? Interesting. I love that.

Sibo: "That's illegal." Silence swept over the room. I stared at him to respond but he didn't so I kept staring.

Phakamisa: "I'm not sure how, Your Highness."

Sibo: "Your company partnered with a different nation for this venture, you placed the testing products without the thrones approval, in our banking system and courier company that also deals with important information of our citizens. You have opened our nation to an attack, Mr Phakamisa."

Phakamisa: "This is not an attack Your Highness. The batteries only serve to power the machines and business. Not gathering any information."

Sibo: "Since the throne means nothing to you, did the banks approve to have their machines toggled with a battery?" He was starting to sweat.

Phakamisa: "Yes." A lie. The boldness to lie to a king. I definitely won't take this one lying down.

Sibo: "You want me to believe the banking industry, approved a battery to be inserted in their ATMs compromising their money?" He swallowed.

Phakamisa: "The testing of these batteries, Your Highness, came from the recent power crisis we had. We had to put something into motion."

Sibo: "You mean the crisis you created? Aren't you the one in charge of the power stations contract throughout the whole country? And now that they no longer serve you, you want to trade in for a better business model which includes infiltrating our most important information. Our

networks, our data, our citizens. Only to make yourself richer. Am I wrong? Once the throne board approves of this project, the banking sector will not have a choice but to accept and from there, every other industry will follow suit." I watched him squirm and sweat in his large suit. "An illegal act against the throne counts as treason. I think we can all agree that judging from the information we received, what has been hidden and what is at stake, revoking the contract for power stations from Phakamisa Corp is the best decision for the throne. In this way, we can protect our energy supply, and of course our nation."

Judge: "That is a good ruling, my prince and it shall be followed through. For now, we adjourn this meeting and will resume at a later date. Your Highness, your presence is well received and appreciated, if you may please avail yourself and the king for the resume."

Sibo: "With pleasure." I got up walking out. I did great, even if I say so myself. Now it's time to celebrate.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

I walked out my suite dressed and ready to go. Zwe stopped me in the passage.

Nkosi: "What are you doing Zwelethu?"

Zwe: "Let's have a cha-"

Nkosi: "He better fucking not have." I stormed down that passage to my father's scent. He was in the restaurant. Another chest ache attacked, I suffered through it, walking in. I stood in front of him. He was having breakfast.

King: "My son, please sit. I can see you're shivering off the pain."

Nobantu: "And which one is he? Do you even know!?"

Nhla: "That's definitely bhuti."

Nkosi: "Where is he!!"

King: "He went to the meeting."

Nkosi: "HOW COULD YOU DO THAT!!!"

King: "Nkosinhle, you're not well-"

Nkosi: "I don't fucking care!! That is MY job!! You can't just replace me!"

King: "I'm not replacing you, I'm simply delegating. Everyone does it."

Nkosi: "NO ONE EVER DOES THAT!!! NO ONE DUPLICATES THEIR CHILDREN!!!" I screamed.

King: "Oh come on Nkosinhle. What was I supposed to do? Go there myself? You know those old hags respect you. It's something about those eyes. Mine don't have the same effect." He ate a forkful of eggs. I was going to fight him.

Nkosi: "Because they're black!!" I spat, walking out.

King: "You can't go outside Nkosinhle, what would people say if they see two of you? You want them to gossip?" I was so close to fucking snapping. I walked out to the garden, fuming I couldn't even see straight.

Zwe: "My friend."

Nkosi: "How could he?"

Zwe: "Well, your father wanted you to rest-"

Nkosi: "I mean Sibonelo! How could just grab the opportunity to be me so quickly!?" Mthunzi chuckled.

Mthunzi: "Just to be clear, I'd grab that opportunity too."

Zwe: "Mthunzi!!"

Nkosi: "I'm even scared to die, the minute I stop breathing you people will peck me apart!"

Mthunzi: "I'd go for the eyes."

Zwe: "Personally, I'd go for his head. Nkosinhle has the best head shape."

Mthunzi: "Shoulders too."

Zwe: "Yep. Perfect posture. Stands like a king. Look at him." Mthunzi laughed. I know my friends were trying to lighten the mood and make me laugh but I was still bothered. Sibonelo is foolish. I trusted him in business but I don't know his headspace if he's out there looking like me. And he talks alot. I don't talk. This is a disaster.

Nkosi: "Where is Amahle?"

Ama: "Hello brother." She walked to me with Nkwenkwezi and Khaya.

Zwe: "What are you doing here Khaya?"

Khaya: "I uhm... I came to see Sboni." Why was he looking at me?

Zwe: "Well?"

Khaya: "Well, I haven't seen him Bhut Zwe. Your Highness, do you know where Sboni is?"

Nkosi: "Apparently he went to my meeting." I folded my arms.

Khaya: "Since yesterday?"

Nkosi: "What?"

Khaya: "Bhut Zwe, I don't know what happened to Sboni but Your Highness has hidden his body." He stood behind Zwe.

Nkosi: "Hidd- I just got here!!"

Khaya: "Yesterday you were pretending to be him." He mumbled. Mthunzi and Amahle laughed out loud. I had to get out of here.

Nkosi: "That was Sibonelo."

Khaya: "Your Highness, with all due respect that was you."

Zwe: "Khaya, that was Sboni."

Khaya: "Bhut Zwe, Bhut Zwe. That was Your Highness. I saw him with my own two eyes. Sboni's clothes were on the bed. I'm not trying to start trouble, I'm just being honest."

Zwe: "I understand. Maybe you should go home. Sibonelo will be back, I'll have him call you."

Khaya: "How Bhut Zwe? Your Highness answered his phone yesterday."

Mthunzi: "Let him stay. Maybe when Sibonelo walks in, he'll understand." He chuckled.

Zwe: "You want comedy. This isn't the time. We still have that problem in Stellars."

Mthunzi: "I've already taken care of it. She's back in detention. I have a free day."

Zwe: "Let's have breakfast. Let's just wait for Sibonelo and everything will be sorted out and back to normal by midday."

Nkosi: "You said Sibonelo spoke to the girl? He has information?"

Mthunzi: "Yes, my prince. In his message he says she told him how to get into the village." My heart pumped at the possibility of finding her. Sibonelo must come back now.

Zwe: "Why would the girl tell Sibonelo or Nkosi, I suppose on how to get into the village and bring back Thembisa, her threat."

Ama: "Uhm, we put a love spell on him."

Nkosi: "WHAT!!!"

Ama: "It was a good idea. It made her speak, and fast."

Nkosi: "Except, she'll be in love!!! With me!!!"

Nkwe: "I said this, I was ignored."

Ama: "It's fine, we can reverse it. I think." I was getting a headache.

Nkosi: "How long is this meeting?"

Mthunzi: "He arrived not too long ago, My Prince." I paced the garden.

Zwe: "Let's eat, Nkosinhle. Come." ...

I'd barely eaten the past few days and today was no different but I forced finished this meal. If I'm to go to a hidden village to get my wife, I needed to be strong and have energy. I drank a liter of water to hydrate my body. Even the pain in my chest was less. I checked the time. An hour had gone by. Where is he? I sat impatiently. I redirected my focus to the echo of my wife's voice when she had prayed for me. I could hear her voice in my head, soothing and calming. "Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders. Let me walk upon the waters. Wherever you would call me." I am doing whatever it takes to get her back. I watched her father walk out of the villa doors, I got up, walking to him.

Xolani: "Looking more like yourself my prince. Stronger."

Nkosi: "I'm feeling better too, Tata. The waiting is killing me."

Xolani: "For your duplicate?" He teased. I breathed. "Please walk with me." We took a walk down the garden. "I know you're angry at your

father and rightfully so but understand where he is coming from. Having to make another you, took alot from him. He doesn't want to replace you and he doesn't want to work you to your death. It's not much of a choice that he had but from the get, he had said it will only be for a day. There is only one Nkosinhle in his life and he needs to rest. Your father cares about you Nkosi. He doesn't show it to you probably but I see it. We all do. He was the first to break down your door and walk in your room engulfed in flames. He held on to you until those fires died down. He carried you out of there in his arms. He didn't ask the guards. He didn't ask your friends. He did it because he is your father. He ignored his own pains, to make sure you're okay. He had chest problems as well, during this. Zwe admitted him in as well to check. I know your relationship with him is difficult. I know you have known your family to be cold but during this time? They've grown closer. Your mothers are beside themselves with worry. Your sisters are working tirelessly to come up with solutions. I trusted you with my daughter and you alone but from what I've observed these few days is that all of your family cares. All of them participated. Please respect your father Nkosinhle. Speak to him as you speak to me. Respect him, as you do me. I ask that of you, my son."

Nkosi: "I will Tata. Thank you. I guess I have to talk to him now. I expect him to gasp in shock." He laughed. We walked back to the others. Amahle and Zwe were on their feet. "What's happening?"

Ama: "Uhm. The meeting was adjourned."

Nkosi: "That's good, so he's on his way."

Ama: "Not entirely sure if he's on his way here-"

Nkosi: "What does that mean?" She held back a laugh, I could tell. "Sibonelo is out there parading in my body, isn't he!? Good God!!!" I hissed. "Bring him back." I said to Mthunzi.

Mthunzi: "I would, but all his guards are ignoring me." Does Sibonelo not understand how dangerous this is!? I'm not just anybody!!

Nkosi: "Where is he?"

Ama: "Nkosi, you can't go-"

Nkosi: "I'll find you in the car." ...

## NKOSI'S POV\_

Before I even passed through the villa foyer to the car, my father walked out the restaurant.

King: "My son."

Nkosi: "Yes father."

King: "I've asked you not to leave. It would be troublesome for us if two of you are captured by the press." Taking Thembisa's father's advice, I had to somehow calm down. I hated this.

Nkosi: "Father, it's not safe for Sibonelo to be running around town."

King: "I've got an eye on him, the army is around, he's safe."

Nkosi: "And what about the love spell?"

King: "It wouldn't hurt to have a few people fall in love with you but I'll fix it." I sighed.

Nkosi: "Fine." My body was trembling in anticipation.

King: "You're fine with it?"

Nkosi: "No I'm not fine with it, father. You know how foolish he is. I don't want to even think about what he's doing right now."

King: "If we're being completely honest, he sucks at being you. I only have faith in his brain. He was smiling like a daisy all night. Doesn't have that element of Mehluli." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "I smile."

King: "Oh please. Your smile's are nothing but menacing. When you smile something is definitely wrong. Why are you being nice to me? Wait, you are Nkosinhle right?"

Nkosi: "I'm done with you." I walked back out to the garden. I was not impressed with Amahle or Mthunzi for that matter. How does he lose me? ME. Well, Sibonelo but still, he's in my body. Does he even realize what is at stake? He has a damn love spell on him. Why didn't they take it off this morning?

Ama: "He's safe Nkosi."

Nkosi: "That's what father says but where did he go?"

Mthunzi: "He's at the mall currently." I closed my eyes, rubbing my temples. When have I EVER?

Nkosi: "This is going to be a very long day. Mthunzi, I'm giving him one hour and you're going to fetch him."

Mthunzi: "Okay." King Biyela walked in the villa with Mngqobi. Oh great, just great.

Zwe: "Baba. What are you doing here?"

Biyela: "Good morning to you too. Good Day My Prince."

Nkosi: "Morning King Biyela."

Biyela: "I can't get hold of Sibonelo, and Khaya was nervous on the phone. I thought I'd come check if everything is okay. Because you know if it isn't, his mother will kill us all."

Khaya: "Your High-"

Zwe: "Shut. Sibonelo is fine Baba. He's attending a meeting for the prince."

Biyela: "Are you sure? Khay-"

King: "Khaya is nervous because he's getting married." He walked to us.

Zwe: "WHAT!!"

Nkosi: "I beg your pardon?"

King: "Isn't that so Khaya? That's why you're here? King Biyela, Khaya and I had a conversation last night and he agreed to marry my daughter. As a friend, I'll take it easy on the lobola but I know you're good for it." What the hell is happening?

Nkosi: "Who will Khaya marry?"

King: "Nkwenkwezi of course, they've been seeing each other for a bit." I looked at Khaya. He was definitely scared. This isn't a person who wants to get married!

Nkosi: "Khaya."

Khaya: "Yes Your Highness."

Nkosi: "Do you want to get married?"

Khaya: "We spoke about this yesterday Your Highness."

Nkosi: "No we didn- okay. What did I say?"

Khaya: "You said you'll fix it."

Nkwe: "Why are you trying to sabotage my wedding bhuti? Khaya said he's serious about me."

Nkosi: "That doesn't mean he wants to marry you!"

Nkwe: "Why, you think I don't have what it takes to be a good wife?"

Nkosi: "No you don't but that's not why. Khaya isn't ready to commit to marriage especially to a princess who is spoiled. He's trying to get his life together. Khaya works half the time, the other half he's studying. He won't have time for you. Next thing you'll start complaining to your father who then will make his life hell. This is not going to happen."

Nkwe: "Why is it okay that you get to marry Thembisa but I don't get who I love?"

Nkosi: "First of all, stop trying to cry. You look crazy. Secondly, I'm not studying. I work but I have a council that I give alot of the work to. Thembisa's only responsibility is her studies and family, therefore our marriage works."

Mthunzi: "No wonder I have more work than usual."

Zwe: "Same. Nkosinhle is slacking off."

Nkosi: "Please, you deserve it. You're the same people that bother my wife when I go to the woods. Nkwenkwezi, Khaya wants to be with you but not for marriage right now. Let him get to the point of being able to take care of you first. Let him finish studying and graduate while making money. In the meantime, find a purpose that will help you be better yourself. Something apart from spending time with him, that you can enjoy. Like studying."

Nkwe: "Eww."

Nkosi: "You're not marrying Khaya. Not yet."

King: "So what will they do because this one snuck in here for sexy time just last night and if it's one thing I'm not allowing, it's THAT. It's not happening! I will not have him cheapen my daughter."

Nkosi: "Then they'll just have to be celibate. I did it and I didn't die."

Nkwe: "You're a ROBOT!"

Nkosi: "I'm fine with that but you're not stressing Khaya out."

Nhla: "I want to be a princess."

Nkosi: "You are a princess, Nhlanhla."

Nhla: "No I want to study for it." What is she saying?

Nkosi: "Nhlanhla, you don't study to be a princess. Especially because you already are one."

Nhla: "Yes I can."

Nkosi: "Listen to me carefully, you can't."

Nkwe: "Father, why does bhuti get to dictate our lives?!"

King: "Nhlanhla can't study to be a princess. There's no studies for that."

Nhla: "There are. Sibonelo will get me the books."

Nkosi: "Amahle?" Amahle was amused.

Ama: "She wants to study history. More specifically, royal history. How she became a princess."

Nkosi: "Ohhh. I guess that can be done. We don't have a module for that in the university but because you are the royal Princess, I'll have one curated for you only."

Nhla: "Really bhuti?" Her eyes glittered with joy.

Nkosi: "Yes. I'm sure Zwe can help. He is the one who is great with history and academics."

Zwe: "I'd love to help." He smiled. Nhlanhla giggled. Whatever that was about.

Nkosi: "Mthunzi, where is Sibonelo now?" He hid his smile.

Mthunzi: "At Greenland's."

Nkosi: "Is he at a club? It's mid morning for heaven's sake!"

Mthunzi: "No, he's at the restaurant."

Mnqobi: "And you're trending Your Highness." He smiled.

Nkosi: "Oh my God."

Mnqobi: "This is good. It's a positive trend. People are happy to see you outside doing normal things. Taking away from the usual talks of you being god-li-"

Zwe: "Mnqobi."

Nkosi: "Talks of me being what?"

Mnqobi: "You know people love to talk Your Highness." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "Not that I care but what do they say?"

Zwe: "MNQOBI."

Nkosi: "So you know too? Tell me what they say Mnqobi?"

Biyela: "It's not important, my prince. Trust me."

Nkosi: "So everyone knows? They gossip about me?"

Ama: "Not just about you. They gossip about the whole family. They call us God imitating beings that are stuck up because of our good looks."

Zwe: "Amahle."

Ama: "I'm reading it off Mnqobi's phone."

Nkosi: "That's mean. Minding your business is now being stuck up?"

Mnqobi: "Well, whatever you and Sboni did Your Highness, it worked."

Nkosi: "I need to know two things. Are there pictures?"

Mnqobi: "Uhm... A few."

Nkosi: "Do they involve a smile?"

Zwe: "Mnqobi Biyela." He warned.

Mnqobi: "All of them, yes."

Nkosi: "I'm going to kill him." ...

SIBONELO'S POV\_

I've had such a lovely day. I had brunch at one of my favourite spots in Greenland's and now it was probably time to go to the villa and face the music. Too late. Mthunzi walked in.

Mthunzi: "Your Highness."

Sibo: "He's mad, isn't he?" He chuckled.

Mthunzi: "Yes. He's livid. There's pictures. I asked you not to smile."

Sibo: "I couldn't help it, they were singing."

Mthunzi: "Let's go." I called the waiter for the bill. She walked up to the table, smiling from ear to ear.

Sibo: "May I please have the bill."

She: "It would be rude to make a king pay, please, Your Highness. It has only been our pleasure to serve you." She bowed.

Sibo: "Oh thank you. I'll leave this tip here then." I got up, walking out with Mthunzi.

She: "We love you, Your Highness!!" Mthunzi laughed.

Mthunzi: "Nkosinhle is going to scream when he hears this." We got in the car, driving to the villa. "At least you had a good day?"

Sibo: "The best. The meeting went really well but I think we may have pissed off Phakamisa."

Mthunzi: "How so?"

Sibo: "I told the throne board to take all power station contracts from him. We adjourned for a later date. I did some thinking and I believe the throne should be in charge of the stations contracts. Having them maintained and renewed but also, introducing new energy so that the system isn't overloaded."

Mthunzi: "That's a great idea. The king will be elated. He had alot of faith in you."

Sibo: "I'm glad I could make him proud. I love being Nkosi, the country thinks I'm the bomb but I have to get back to my life. I miss my girl and I have to hear our baby's heartbeat."

Mthunzi: "For a second I was worried."

Sibo: "Thanks for having my back."

Mthunzi: "I did it for him. He needs rest and to calm down. Nkosi wants to do everything himself often neglecting his health. Right now his focus should be finding Thembisa. The nation is in great hands with you."

Sibo: "We'll find her." We drove into the villa, parking the car. "That's my father's guards. Is he here?"

Mthunzi: "Yes he is. Your family was worried. Khaya called them crying, he says Nkosi hid your body."

Sibo: "That's so him. I'm not even surprised. I don't think they should see me like this. It will traumatize them. Zwe couldn't even speak."

Mthunzi: "Khaya needs this." He chuckled getting out of the car. I followed him out, walking into the villa.

Sibo: "Khaya is fragile. Please call the king, I'll wait."

Mthunzi: "You want me to summon a king? No sir. Come face the music. You were happy all morning, smiling at cameras. Come."

Sibo: "Mthunzi!!"

Mthunzi: "They already know. Come."

Sibo: "I can't."

Mthunzi: "What would Nkosinhle do? You have a few more minutes as him. Make the best of it." He's right. Nkosi is not afraid of anything. I walked out to the garden. Khaya screamed, falling to the grass.

Biyela: "Uhm... The prince has a twin?"

Sibo: "Cha Baba, yimina uSibonelo." (No dad, it's me Sibonelo." He stared at me stunned. "Good morning, family."

Nhla: "He even sounds like bhuti."

Nkosi: "Good morning family is all you have to say Sibonelo? Why were you gallivanting?"

Sibo: "I was promoting your brand."

Nkosi: "My WHAT?"

Sibo: "I needed some time out and a hair cut. So I did just that-"

Nkosi: "Father, please."

King: "Please what?"

Nkosi: "Swap him back."

King: "Now?"

Nkosi: "FATHER."

King: "Okay. Let me be clear, I will swap him back. I will. I want to, in fact. As soon as possible. However, the thing I did, doesn't quite have...uhm, a reverse thing. So I have to figure that out first. But you know what we can do though? The love spell thing. We can take that one out. Right Amahle?" I stared at him in disbelief. He had to be joking. There's no way he can't be.

Ama: "Right. Nhlanhla?"

Nhla: "Hm?" Nkosi was rumbling in anger.

Nkosi: "Okay. What I'm hearing is, there's a love spell, and this one went parading through town, smiling at cameras. Right now there's hundreds if not thousands of women, in love with me."

Mnqobi: "And men apparently."

Nkosi: "And men." He hissed, staring at his father.

King: "I can fix it."

Nkosi: "Now please."

Nhla: "Before that, yesterday Sibonelo went to see the imposter. What did she say Sibonelo?"

Sibo: "Uhm..."

Nkosi: "Don't tell me you forgot."

Sibo: "I didn't. I just need to remember. I got stressed out when I came back." This was a nightmare. This part completely slipped my mind.

Nhla: "We can help that. Nkwenkwezi."

Nkwe: "Not again."

Nkosi: "Not again what?"

Nhla: "She can access memory. Replay it even. She did it for me when she went out on a date with Khaya."

Khaya: "She did and can do what?"

Nkosi: "Okay, please do it." She folded her arms. "Nkwenkwezi, I am not trying to be mean by saying you can't marry Khaya. If you really care about Khaya you'd care about his comfort and his progress in life."

Nkwe: "I do care!"

Nkosi: "Exactly, then you can wait for a bit. Trust me, it will make it much more worthwhile."

Nkwe: "Fine." She held her hands out to me, I placed my hands on hers, her thumbs rubbed my palms. "You had a hand massage?"

Sibo: "Yes of course, and a manicure."

Nkosi: "I hope that's where it ended Sibonelo. The last thing I need right now is my toes out on national TV." Mthunzi and Zwe burst out laughing.

Nkwe: "Okay Focus. Walk me through when you got to her." I thought carefully.

Sibo: "At the detention center, I walked in and opened for her. I told her I was sorry, and that I was taking her home. She hugged me and we left."

Nkwe: "That's when the spell kicked in. Continue."

Sibo: "We were in the living room and I promised to protect her with everything. I asked her to be honest. I told her that I had no interest in bringing Thembisa and that I wanted to get to know her better. I asked who she was and she said she's Nobutsha. She was brought here so she could lure out the king, the witch wants his blood so she can find King Ngidumise in the spiritual realm and avenge herself. She says Thembisa was taken because she would find him. Also, I think Thembisa was to distract the royal palace because if two members of the family have gone missing, the prince will be distracted and not pay attention to Phakamisa taking over the nation. That's just my opinion, however she said I have to king. No reason why but I have to."

Nkosi: "You said she told you how to get in the village?"

Sibo: "Yes. It will need some preparations." ....

Chapter 148

SASA'S POV\_

The morning was so lovely and sunny. The women and children left very early in the morning, after I used the bathroom and washed my teeth. I decided to step outside for a bit. Turns out it was breakfast time. The men were sitting together eating, not one of them paying any attention to me. The women sat together as well but stared daggers. The children were playing a game not too far off. I walked over to them.

Me: "Molweni."

Ndiliswa: "Hello Thembisa." They all greeted, smiling. "Ufuna udlala nathi?" (Do you want to play with us?)

Me: "Andikwazi mna, kuzofuneka undifundise." (I don't know how to, you'll have to teach me.)

Ndiliswa: "Ndijonge ndiyidlala njani ulandele emva kwam." (Watch how I play then copy me.) She hopped and skipped strategically on the blocks.

Me: "Wow! Uyakwazi nyani uyidlala." (You're really good.)

Ndiliswa: "Enkosi, nawe yenza." (Thank you. Now it's your turn.) I tried to copy her rhythm but made a slight mistake. "Kulungile, phinda futhi." (It's okay, try again.) I tried again and she clapped her hands. I knew this game from my childhood but it was a little different here. I also learnt this tactic from my dad long ago. Whenever he played with me, he pretended he didn't know anything and made me teach him. Somehow, I think it contributed to building my confidence. We played a little more. Some of the older children left, I was left with about three, Ndiliswa among them. She seemed to be the leader of the group of all children even the old.

Me: "Ndili, kutheni ungakwazi uthetha ulwimi lwam endilithetha nomama wakho?" (Ndili, why can't you speak my language/English that I speak with your mother?) We sat on the rock.

Ndiliswa: "Andikaqali eskolweni. Abanye sebeqalile bona. Sifundiswa xa sifika kwiminyaka esibhozo ubudala." (I haven't started school yet. Others have started. We only start at 8 years old.)

Me: "Wena unangaphi?" (How old are you?)

Ndiliswa: "Ndineminyaka emithandathu ubudala kodwa utata ufuna ndiye esikolweni neqela elilandelayo. Uthi ndihlakaniphe kakhulu." (I am 6 years old but my dad wants me to start school with the next group. He says I'm too smart.)

Me: "Ndivumelana naye nam. Uhlakaniphile, kwaye unentliziyo entle." (I agree with him. You're smart and you have a good heart.)

Ndiliswa: "Wena uzohlala nathi unaphakade?" (Will you stay with us forever?)

Me: "Andiyazi nam kodwa andiqondo njalo. Kuzofuneka ndibuyele kwelam ilizwe." (I don't know but I don't think so. I'll have to go back to my world.)

Ndiliswa: "Awuthandi uhlala nathi?" (Don't you like being here?) I smiled.

Me: "Ukuba lapha kunye nokwazi wena ibe lelona xesha limnandi nelixabisekileyo ebomini bam. Ndingathanda ukuhlala, kodwa andingowalapha." (Being here and getting to know you has been the best and most precious time in my life. I would love to stay, but i don't belong here.)

Ndiliswa: "Kulungile ke. Ngaba uya kutyelela ubuncinane?" (Okay then. Will you visit at least?)

Me: "Ukuba ndiyakwazi ukufumana indlela, ewe." (If I can find a way, yes.)

Ndiliswa: "Sele unayo indlela. Ungukumkanikazi wobuncwane. Xa uBhuti Mzingeli ebuyisile nesipho sakho, ungeza kum nam ndize kuwe." (You already have a way. You are the treasure queen. Once Mzingeli gives back your gift, you can come to me and i can come to you.) The realization hit me like a ton of bricks. I stared at her. There's a reason. The reason, I was so drawn to her. I was looking at myself.

Me: "Andinakuthanda nto ngaphandle kokukundwendwela." (I'd love nothing more than to visit you.) I hugged her.

Ndiliswa: "Ndiyavuya kengoku." (I am happy now.) The urge to take her with me was almost overwhelming. I had a lump in my throat, my tears threatening to broadcast at any second. What was I to do? I needed to find Mzingeli, he had to explain this. Why was I drawn to her?

Ndiliswa: "Iza ndikubonise into." She pulled my hand, marching into the woods.

Me: "Sweetheart, I don't think that's a good idea." She ran ahead. I ran after her but she was so fast. God, I should've been practicing to run with Nkosi when I had the chance. She stopped finally, looking at a tree. I slowed down and looked at it.

Ndiliswa: "Umthi wobutyebi. Xa ubuyela kwihlabathi lakho, zikhulisele owakho umthi. Sizokwakha isizwe somcebo. Sizobuyela apho sisuka khona. Unyana wakho Yinkosi Yokuthula, uMcebo, Izandla zoothixo bonke zibekwe phezu kwakhe. UnguKumkani." (The tree of treasure. When you go back to your world, grow your own tree. We will rebuild the treasure village. We will go back to where we come from. Your son is the King of Peace, the Treasure. The hands of all the gods have been placed on him. He is King.) How is she only a 6 year old. Her father was right about her being too smart.

Me: "Ndiyabulela Ndiliswa." (Thank you.)

Ndiliswa: "Masibuyele ke sizokulungiselela." (Let's go so we can prepare for you.) She took a root from the tree, putting it in my pocket.

NKOSI'S POV\_

Sibonelo had explained the process. Amahle was currently consulting to check if there would be any obstacle. I'd changed into more suitable clothing, I wasn't planning on transforming to my tiger yet and I hope I wouldn't have to but if this warrior guy has a problem then I'll obviously have to do drastic measures.

Ama: "There will be delay but no obstacle-"

King: "Will he be safe?"

Ama: "Yes father but you can't go this time. Now that we know your blood is in danger."

King: "Nkosinhle is my blood! Won't they take him?"

Ama: "No, they won't take him. The instructions Nobutsha gave are real."

Nkosi: "So I can start?"

Ama: "Where will you find an anima-" Sibonelo came in through the villa doors leading a cow in a rope.

Nkosi: "ARE YOU FUCKING INSANE!!!"

Sibo: "I bought him for you. You can go ahead and kill him right outside-"

Nkosi: "How is this person still alive?" I asked Zwe.

Zwe: "I ask myself that everyday." He sighed. Do you know how big a cow is?

Sibo: "Nhlanhla helped calm it down but, I think it's sensing your anger. So please dial down on that." The animal was starting to huff, restlessly.

Nkosi: "I haven't even gone to the river to cleanse! Nor have we found the herb. How do you bring the last- you know what, never mind. Let's tie it to the tree." The animal bellowed, kicking the ground.

Sibo: "I don't think he likes that suggestion."

Nkosi: "I'm not giving him a choice, hand over the rope." The animal took off running to the garden. Amazing stuff. I swear some things only happen to me.

Zwe: "Okay, we'll take care of the animal, you go for your cleanse."

Ama: "It's not too far, this fountain up on the mountain connects to that river. So you don't have to go all the way to the palace."

Nkosi: "I knew there was something special about that fountain. I've never been in it but it did feel magical."

Mthunzi: "Zwe, when you said We'll, who exactly do you mean?"

Zwe: "Us Mthunzi. It's just an animal."

Mthunzi: "I'm not tackling no bull."

Khaya: "Me too Bhuti Zwe, I have limited luck as a person, I'm not risking it with a bull."

Sibo: "I can help."

Zwe: "You've done a lot. Sit."

Nhlanhla: "Fight me."

Nkosi: "I beg your pardon!?"

Nhla: "Fight me. Take me down to regain your strength."

Nkosi: "That's not going to happen. I don't hit people, least of all women."

Nhla: "Not me! The cow said so. You have to fight him." I'm not sure I wanted to fight a damn cow.

Ama: "Let's start at the fountain. Let's go." We walked together out the back gate, a different path from the Dlozi trail. This one didn't have a path but Amahle was leading the way and seemed to know what she's doing or at least where she's going.

Nkosi: "Do you have any idea what you'll say when we cleanse?"

Ama: "Absolutely not but you'll have to speak from your heart, ask them for protection and cleansing of your energy." I was feeling better and stronger than I had. I was so close to finding her that every step had me jittery with excitement. We reached the beginning of the fountain. The water seemed to pour out from the wall. Into a small pool, down a little stream and into the ground again. It was so fascinating.

Nkosi: "She was here."

Ama: "What do you mean?"

Nkosi: "This water has her energy, her scent." I stepped into the water, almost losing my balance.

Ama: "Careful! I don't think you're supposed to just walk in there." I knelt on the bank of the pool. The water swam up to my knees, rising up my body. A warm presence surrounded me. I closed my eyes.

Nkosi: "I am grateful for the presence that surrounds me. I am grateful for it's protection. I ask that these waters cleanse my energy, making way for light to reach me. Making way for strength to find and stay with me as I go on this journey. I ask that I am safely guided to reunite with my wife and bring her home. As the gods of my ancestors are willing, please take care of her and me." I could feel the water up my waist. I went into the water, submerging myself whole and coming back out. I walked out the river.

Ama: "How do you feel?"

Nkosi: "Free."

Ama: "Good. Now, we find the herb." We walked around the area, inspecting the herbs that grew around it. We had no description of the herb, just a name. This would be difficult. "Got it." Or not.

Nkosi: "How do you know?"

Ama: "I can feel it. The spirit says it's the one."

Nkosi: "What's next?"

Ama: "lintonga."

Nkosi: "I know those, they're in the Dlozi trail." We started walking through the bushes and found them. We made our way back to the villa.

Ama: "It's time." We walked in the gate and the animal was getting wild.

Nkosi: "Move out of the way." I went after it, as if it felt my presence, it charged for me scooping me up with its head and throwing me over. I landed on my back and groaned. "Okay. I'm trying to be nice." He bellowed once more. I stood up, it came charging again. I held it by its horns, it shook me off tossing me aside. I skidded off the grass, bruising myself. I stood up once again but a little too late because it scooped me up again. Instead of letting it throw me across the floor, I grabbed on its horns and held on tight. It tried shaking me off, hopping and bellowing. I held on, letting it tire itself and waited on that one small second. As it took the moment to breath, I rolled it on the ground and cut its neck. It shook, squirming, bellowing to its death. I finally let go, standing up. Phew. It's like Sibonelo got the cheekiest one he could find.

King: "Good job, my son." I looked behind me. He smiled.

Nkosi: "Thank you father." The only thing that was breaking me was the two night wait for washing and strengthening me. If I did this, I had to do it right. I only had this one chance.

## SIBONELO'S POV\_

Nkosi had done great taking down that bull, I was worried there for a second because as fun as it was being him, I didn't have the luxury to be him forever. I went up to Amahle.

Sibo: "Hey Amahle, so since I did my end of the deal, when do you think we can change me back? Also, reverse the spell on Jimmy? I need it to be today please."

Ama: "I'm prioritising it, I promise but if I'm being completely honest with you, I don't know if it will be today."

Sibo: "Why is that?"

Ama: "As much as we have abilities, we don't have reverse abilities. Which is why we have to be careful in using them."

Sibo: "You couldn't have told me this Before?"

Ama: "As if it would stop you. Look, let's give it a bit of time. I'll consult tonight."

Sibo: "Okay. What about Zimmy?"

Ama: "I'll go see her tomorrow. I can reverse the love spell." I nodded. I can wait for tomorrow.

Sibo: "Okay. I guess I'll have to be Nkosi for the rest of the day-"

Ama: "Oh he's not letting you out of here again. You can be him inside the villa."

Sibo: "Do you think he'll mind if i took a selfie?" She laughed.

Ama: "Please do it just for me." I walked out chuckling. I needed to speak to Zwe. He was getting ready to leave.

Sibo: "Brother Zwe." He looked at me and sighed then laughed.

Zwe: "This is weird."

Sibo: "Tell me about it. Sorry I didn't tell you, it was a spur of the moment thing."

Zwe: "I know. It's brave of you to even go through with this and go above and beyond. Thank you brother." He hugged me. "Nkosi never allows me to hug him so I'll hold on for a bit." I laughed.

Sibo: "Where is Khaya?"

Zwe: "Traumatized, he's with Mngqobi and dad. They just left."

Sibo: "Okay, I'll speak to him later I guess. Bhut Zwe, I know this is alot to ask-"

Zwe: "I'm going to her right now. I'm going to make sure she's okay. Don't worry, brother. Our baby moms will be fine." He laughed.

Sibo: "Thank you." I chuckled.

Zwe: "Don't get into any more trouble and dilemmas Sibonelo. The King promised to have you home tomorrow at least. Stay still until then."

Sibo: "I will." He walked out the villa to his car. Mthunzi was driving him home. At least he'll be safe. I went into the restaurant area where the Sikhosana's were sitting, having a drink.

King: "Second son. Come, I need you to go through the meeting with us."

Sibo: "Oh of course, my king." I sat down, Nkosi handed me a drink. "Thank you my prince."

Nkosi: "I'm still a Prince?" He sat down.

King: "Which one are you again?"

Nkosi: "Don't start."

Nhla: "He forgot Sibonelo was you just last night."

Nkosi: "Not sure if I should be offended or hurt. So what was the deal about Sibonelo?" I sighed.

Sibo: "Phakamisa has started testing batteries in a few ATMs and stores. For now, we don't know how much information he has or better yet what his next move is. His partners are likely to be pissed off right now and knowing him, he should have back up."

Nkosi: "We've been preparing for war for months now. Every obstacle we've seem to overcome."

Sibo: "Yes my Prince. But I'm worried about something else. If it happens that the witch took Thembisa because yes she'd be able to find the king but also, to distract you. Wouldn't she now be in danger seeing that their plans have failed? Won't the witch take it out on her?"

Nkosi: "Do you think I should risk going now?"

Sibo: "You're the future king, my prince. You decide." ...

## Chapter 149

### NOTHANDO'S POV\_

My exam wasn't so bad today. I just had a bit on my mind. Mnqobi was busy with his dad and had asked me to keep an eye on Jimmy. I did and

she was okay. After the exam, she was studying with her group, I too had a study session at the library but by myself because I can't focus with other people. Late afternoon, she came to fetch me from the library and we left for home. The guard driving us.

Zimmy: "Nothando, you're in love with Mnqobi right?"

Notha: "Yes."

Zimmy: "But he's also with your best friend."

Notha: "Yes, and I love her too. We've been through this before."

Zimmy: "How did that happen?"

Notha: "We've spoken about this before. What's wrong?"

Zimmy: "Please don't judge me. And please keep this between us. Promise me." I looked at the driver. He was focused on the road but this conversation seemed really private.

Notha: "We can talk about it at home. Just us." She nodded. "Do you want us to get some takeaways?"

Zimmy: "Yes please, I'm dying for a burger." I instructed the driver to go to the drive through of the fast food place, picking up some food for all of us and drove back home. Siza was on her laptop doing something. Petu was studying on the dining room table.

Notha: "Hello." I kissed her lips.

Siza: "Hey babes."

Petu: "Hi my love. How was your test?"

Notha: "It was good."

Zimmy: "What are you guys up to?"

Petu: "I'm doing my last revision for tomorrow. My brain is fried."

Siza: "I'm preparing for an interview."

Notha: "For a job?"

Siza: "No. The Biyela bursary program. It's mandatory for applicants to go through the interview process so I'm just equipping myself with basic interview skills and how to answer questions."

Zimmy: "That's big news Siza. I wish you the best. I'm crossing fingers for you."

Petu: "You'll do great sis."

Siza: "Thanks guys. If I get this, next year I start school. At least I don't have to worry about much, Jackson's policy will have a payout every month for the kids until they're 18 and then their university will pay their tuitions. I on the other hand, am thinking about selling the house. It's just so many bad memories in it. Is it a good idea?"

Notha: "It's your choice Siza. If you don't want to stay there, you shouldn't force yourself to. Maybe a new house will be good for your healing process."

Petu: "Agreed. What will you do after you sell the house?"

Siza: "I was thinking of buying a more affordable one in Oceanview still. The area is very safe and I want the kids to grow up there. Maybe just a smaller house."

Zimmy: "That's good. How are you feeling?"

Siza: "I'm still feeling guilty. I don't know why. Jackson would've properly killed me and gotten rid of my body. I just can't help feeling some guilt for the kids. They're going to grow up without a dad."

Notha: "That's okay. A lot of kids grow up without fathers and they turn out well. You have a strong support system with us and Siza don't ever think you're boring us when you have to talk about Jackson or what you feel. We're not here to judge you."

Siza: "Thank you guys."

Zimmy: "Four aunts and four uncles are much better than a dad. Trust me." We laughed. "Speaking of aunts, have you guys spoken to Thembisa? I cannot seem to get hold of her. Amy is also distant but at least she responds to text. She said she'll come see us tomorrow."

Petu: "I haven't spoken to her either. Maybe she'll come with? She's probably just settling in as a royal wife."

Zimmy: "Yeah." She played with her straw.

Notha: "I'm going to get changed. Zimmy, are you coming?"

Zimmy: "Yes." We walked upstairs to my bedroom. I closed the door.

Notha: "Right, so what's up." I looked through my wardrobe for changing clothes.

Zimmy: "Please don't judge me Notha, this is bad."

Notha: "I will not judge you." Out loud.

Zimmy: "So, I went over to Sibonelo's house right? I was taking him some food for dinner. And uhm, the future king was there. Alone."

Notha: "Oh? That's frightening."

Zimmy: "It was. At first. Then, he spoke. He asked why I'm there, I explained. Eventually he dismissed me, saying my name. When I looked at him, he just looked..." She sighed.

Notha: "He just looked what? Scary?"

Zimmy: "No. Like he wanted me to stay."

Notha: "Zimasa."

Zimmy: "I know, I know. But it just felt like it. It was so strange."

Notha: "And what did you do?"

Zimmy: "I left. I just haven't been able to stop thinking about him."

Notha: "As in, you like him?"

Zimmy: "Yes." She sighed. "I know, it sounds horrible. It actually is horrible. He's married to my friend."

Notha: "And you think maybe, he's eyeing you?"

Zimmy: "I don't know what to think. Then he started trending yesterday, and I thought something happened but he was just out and about. He just looks so... I can't even say it." I was stunned. Not sure what to say. Yes His Highness was an attractive man but he also had this dangerous energy. It takes a bold person to actually face him. "I feel so bad."

Notha: "For having a crush on your best friend's husband?"

Zimmy: "Even worse when you say it like that. And it's also so confusing because I like Sibonelo too. Do you think it's the pregnancy playing tricks on me?"

Notha: "I wouldn't know anything about pregnancy but this is just a passing thing Zimmy. As long as you don't act on it. Everyone has

crushes but don't be disrespectful about it. You know Thembisa loves her husband. No matter what happens, even if he does approach you, think of her feelings and say no."

Zimmy: "You're right. My friendship with her is more valuable than any man regardless of who they are. I was being silly. Thank you Notha, for not judging but being an honest friend."

Notha: "Oh, I did judge you but only internally. You're a good friend, you'll do what's right. I know you love Sasa more than anything and you would never hurt her." She smiled, looking at her belly. "So... What about Sibonelo? You said you like him."

Zimmy: "I do. It's just so complicated. He's being so sweet again. Always checking up on me and the baby. Letting me know what he's doing. All of that. It's just so difficult to believe it this time because when I did, he dismissed me like I was nothing. I don't know if I can handle it again in this situation I'm in. So I'm trying to stay away from over engaging and receiving his attention."

Notha: "Don't you think this is a situation you should sit down with him and talk about."

Zimmy: "Probably. Whenever he comes back to Stellars."

Notha: "I know it may be hard to trust him but maybe this time, he's being genuine."

Zimmy: "I want to believe that so bad. I'll have to have the talk with him." Someone knocked on my door.

Notha: "Come in." The door opened, Mngqobi walked in.

Mngqobi: "My sweet love. Hello Zim."

Zimmy: "Hey Mngqobi. Is Sibonelo back?"

Mngqobi: "Uhm, no. He's still busy with the king and prince. He attended a meeting today that needs to be discussed in detail. He won't be back today." He looked at me. "It was the throne board meeting with your dad, babe."

Notha: "Oh. Did it go well for the throne?"

Mngqobi: "I can't say." I understood. Mngqobi had to protect the council even though my loyalty was to him, therefore the throne but I respected that he did protect it still.

Zimmy: "Okay. Let me leave you two love birds, my baby is hungry."

Mnqobi: "Oh and Zimmy. I just wanted you to know, my family is happy that you're carrying the first grandchild. Sibonelo himself, is happy. You don't have to doubt a single thing."

Zimmy: "That's a very sweet thing to say Mnqobi. Thank you." She walked out. He hugged me, kissing my neck.

Mnqobi: "How was your exam sweetheart."

Notha: "It was good. I studied at the library for a bit before coming home."

Mnqobi: "That's good, so I have some time with you tonight?"

Notha: "No, you don't because you have to study. You've been with the council all day. You're writing tomorrow."

Mnqobi: "I know love but I'm coming to sleep here."

Notha: "I'll quiz you before rewarding you." I kissed his soft lips. He chuckled.

Mnqobi: "That's good motivation." ...

## SASA'S POV\_

This day was different from the others. I'd spent most of the day with Ndiliswa and the other kids. They seemed to enjoy my company. They taught me about their customs. Something I truly appreciated. Even the women weren't looking at me funny anymore. They weren't smiling but at least they weren't disgusted. The kids all had different duties. The younger children were responsible for collecting and washing dishes. The older ones, picking the vegetables from the garden. They seemed to know the exact quantity they needed for the whole tribe. They also collected water from the river. I helped with the water collection, they taught me to carry the bucket on my head and walk. Hardest thing I've ever done and they did it so effortlessly.

Phelo: "Ukuba uyoyika ke ibhakethi liya kushukuma kwaye liwe." (If you're scared then the bucket will shake and fall.) Surely that should be

a life quote. Fear will do nothing but delay you and I don't want to start over.

Me: "Ndiyibambile." (I've got it.)

Phelo: "Hamba ke njengesqhelo." (Walk as usual.) I walked all the way back to camp, carrying the water on my head. We reached when the sun was starting to set. The men had come back from their daily activities. I don't know what they did during the day. Maybe they went hunting with Mzingeli? I don't know. I placed down the water.

Me: "Senza ntoni kengoku?" (What do we do next?)

Phelo: "Kufuneka silungise isiselo sokubuya kootata." (We must fix a beverage for the fathers.) Yeah, I'm not doing that. I'm not serving people who tried to kill me.

Me: "Yintoni enye endinokuyenza?" (What else can I do?)

Phelo: "Ungalungisa umlilo wokupheka. Uyakwazi ubasa?" (You can prepare the fire for cooking. Can you start a fire?) Finally, something I can do.

Me: "Ewe ndiyakwazi." (Yes I can.) I collected the firewood, taking it to the cooking station. Mzingeli was standing close by, watching me. "Hey, do you have a box of matches?"

Mzi: "A what?"

Me: "A box of matches?"

Mzi: "Repeat that?" I realized then.

Me: "You could just say no."

Mzi: "It's fun watching you figure it out." He chuckled.

Me: "How do you light a fire then. You have the ability?"

Mzi: "No. You don't need me to light a fire."

Me: "Mzi, I only know to use matches."

Mzi: "This is going to be a great lesson then. You're going to need a rock that's high in pyrite and a quart. Both of them, fortunately, are available in the cooking station so you won't have to search for them. Here it is." I picked it up with the second rock. "Another thing you'll need is chug, it's softer wood that's sawed to small bits, when it catches the spark, we add

the dry moss. Now, grab both rocks beat them together in slight rub motion. You won't be able to see the sparks but they're there. Keep going." I did as he said.

Me: "I can smell something. Sulphuric."

Mzi: "That's a good sign. Something is happening."

Me: "Doesn't look like it."

Mzi: "It's going to take you a while."

Me: "My arms hurt."

Mzi: "They're going to hurt much more, keep going." I kept beating the rocks to no end but finally, FINALLY, a spark.

Me: "It's lit!! It's sparking!"

Mzi: "Don't stop, keep going." I screamed, jumping up and down "Calm down, you don't want to blow it out." I calmed down and the spark grew. "It's catching. Blow on it very slightly to help it along." I softly blew into the spark, it crackled, lighting up. "Perfect, add the dry moss bit by bit." I added a small bit of moss, the flame grew abit. "Patience." I blew slightly into it, it was warming up, burning and growing. The smoke grew and eventually the flames showed up. "Add the smallest firewood first, the sticks. Then build from there." I added a few small stick, letting the fire catch on.

Me: "That wasn't so hard."

Mzi: "Nothing is ever hard."

Me: "For you, maybe. Have you ever thought of bringing things inside here to make life easier?"

Mzi: "Not at all. Everything we need, we have and everything we want, we make."

Me: "What about entertainment?"

Mzi: "We sit together as a family and tell stories, sing, dance. We don't rely on others to entertain us. It connects us as a family. See over there, Phambili, he's the best story teller. Every night, he tells a story, it usually spans over a few nights. Sambo, over there, is a great vocalist. He sings like an angel along with Diwe. Sometimes they duet, other times sing

alone. Nenezi and Fezeka write the songs. They share a husband and are best friends. They also write the best love stories."

Me: "And then you draw the visuals."

Mzi: "Yes." He smiled. One of the ladies, brought a pot to the fire. It had water. "Come." I followed Mzi out the station. "Do you want to wash?"

Me: "Yes please." We walked into the cave.

Mzi: "You'll be leaving soon, I need to prepare you for being out there until your husband arrives."

Me: "Prepare me? Aren't you taking me home?" Kanti how was Mzi?

Mzi: "I would but I'm not welcome. You'll be safe, don't be afraid."

Me: "I'm going to tell them everything."

Mzi: "And you should. My grandmother will not stop until she gets what she wants. There is no getting through to her and while she's still here, none of you are safe."

Me: "So nobody can get through to her? As in, everyone has tried?"

Mzi: "You could try but you won't get far. She doesn't like you."

Me: "I know." I looked at him. He looked down, possibly upset. "You're going to miss me?"

Mzi: "Not really. You're very difficult and needy."

Me: "Needy?? I am not difficult."

Mzi: "Yes you are. When you're upset, you become difficult for no reason." I watched him light the fire effortlessly. It took him only a few minutes.

Me: "I'm craving some bread with butter on it."

Mzi: "I'll get it for you just now."

Me: "No, I can get it myself, just show me where. I don't want you to think I'm difficult and needy." I got up. He looked at me.

Mzi: "Sit." I sat down with my hands on my lap. "I never said I mind."

Me: "You just seem to have changed in mood so I don't know."

Mzi: "I changed in mood because there are certain things that will happen and I need to prepare for them."

Me: "Like my departure? It's okay to admit." He looked at me and walked out. I don't know about these moods hey. I waited in silence watching the fire. In a few minutes, Mzi walked back in with bread, placing it aside. He placed a pot with water on the fire, taking out a cup and walking back out. When he came back the water was boiling. With just bare hands, grabbing the handle and putting it aside. He made tea with honey, spreading a stick of butter on the bread, placing it on a metal plate and took it to the fire. The butter melted on the bread, tickling my taste buds. He used a different plate to give it to me with the tea.

Me: "Thank you."

Mzi: "The bucket is in that corner, with cold water, you can wash and come find me outside. Today you're having dinner with the tribe." My heart stopped and kick-started again.

Me: "May I ask why?"

Mzi: "No." I nodded, eating my bread. It was delicious. "I want you to have a small experience of who we are. Apart from the tribe that tried to kill you. These are your people Thembisa. When you rebuild that village, you need to know what you're doing and who you're doing it for."

Me: "Do they know? That I'm asked to rebuild."

Mzi: "Yes."

Me: "And Ndiliswa, why do I feel connected to her?"

Mzi: "She's your twin spirit."

Me: "Shouldn't we be the same age then?"

Mzi: "You are, spiritually."

Me: "What about this urge of taking her with me?"

Mzi: "You can't take her with you. She'd never survive the outside." I nodded, my heart aching. He held out his hand. I looked at it then his face. I placed my hand in his, standing up. "You don't use it, until I tell you to. Do you understand?" I nodded.

Me: "Yes." He held both my hands, I felt the electricity surging into me through my hands. I closed my eyes, standing still even though the power threatened to topple me over. Finally, stopping. I opened my eyes, looking at his turned orange.

Mzi: "Now, kill her. You're the only one that can." ....

## Chapter 150

### SASA'S POV\_

I stared at him. Is Mzingeli insane? I looked at him, amused.

Me: "I don't know if I heard you correctly. You said I must do what?"

Mzi: "You heard me."

Me: "I'm not a killer Mzingeli and I won't start now. Hire an assassin. Better yet, why don't you do it?"

Mzi: "I can't, I have Sikhosana blood. It's not murder in the eyes of the ancestors, it's sending her over-"

Me: "I don't care. I'm not a killer and especially not your grandmother who is a witch and can sense me. Not happening."

Mzi: "You'll only be ending her suffering."

Me: "Yes, but then I'll be a murderer. Then I'll need someone to end MY suffering because I'll be suffering from trauma. Imagine killing a human being? No you're not well."

Mzi: "Your husband can wipe your memory." I stared at him.

Me: "No sir. Good luck though."

Mzi: "This is for your family Thembis-"

Me: "NO. I have done enough!! When do I get to live my life? Everyday, everyday, it must be ancestors and family? You know being here has given me time to think. If I truly died, what can I say I did for myself? I just got married. That's all. Everything else I've done, is for everyone else. At some stage, these ancestors are mean. They have power, why can't they send lightning and kill her? Why must I do it? Why must I always be their sacrificial lamb? No."

Mzi: "I understand how you feel. A heavy role has been placed on your shoulders and at such a young age too. I understand."

Me: "But you still want me to do it. So you don't really understand, do you?"

Mzi: "I do." He walked out. I couldn't even finish my food. This was not even a little bit fair. It was just too much. I mixed my water in the bucket and took off my dress to wash my body. I was really looking forward to being inside a bath tub and scrubbing my body. Yes, there was a soap here but it was unscented. I was just clean not smelling pretty, nothing like that. After washing, I wore a clean warm dress. I don't know from whom Mzingeli stole these but they were good quality warm dresses. Maybe even a little stylish. I washed my hair and wrapped it in the previous dress to dry for a few minutes. I threw out my water in the toilet and washed the bucket with the remaining. I went out of the cave, the sun had just set and darkness loomed but lanterns were put up all around. The children were singing happily, sitting together. The men sat around them having their drink. The ladies were fixing dinner. I felt so awkward to just go sit with the men, at the same time do I really want to go to the ladies that don't like me? I just can't wait to be home. My heart ached for my kind friends. Girls who wouldn't dare look at you funny, girls that help anyone that needs it and takes care of everyone. I blinked back my tears walking over to them.

Me: "Ndingancedisa phi?" (Where can I help?) Not one of them responded. Every bone in me was telling me to go back into the cave but I took one of the knives available and started chopping the vegetables. They looked at me for a bit and went back to work. They weren't even talking amongst themselves. I continued quietly as well, thinking about my home. Not Mountain Peak, Mthinomkhulu. I don't know why but I did miss my village suddenly. When there's a ceremony in one of the homes, the women of the village came together to chop vegetables and cook to help the family. It was a nice time to bond and chat about anything, most of the times, even gossip. After chopping the vegetables and seeing none left to be chopped, I started washing the utensils and bowls used. All food was on the fire, cooking. The ladies walked out the cooking station. One remained behind rinsing the dishes I'm washing. She kept checking on the pots and stirring. I was finished with the washing now.

She: "Hamba uyohlala phantsi, sigqibile." (Go sit down, we're done.)

Me: "Akho ngxaki, ndingakuhlalisa." (It's no problem, I can sit with you.) She looked at me, wiping her hands on her apron.

She: "Okay." She walked out, I was about to roll my eyes in frustration but she brought in a chair placing it next to me. "Zingaphi nyanga?" (How many months?)

Me: "Enkosi, andikayazi." (Thank you. I don't know yet.) I sat down. "Uyazi njani?" (How did you know?) Maybe the whole village knows.

She: "Udumbe inyawo." (Your feet are swollen.) I looked at my feet, they were slightly swollen.

Me: "Andikayi kwa gqirha." (I haven't gone to the doctor.)

She: "Ukhona ugqirha apha, kunye no mongikazi abathathu." (We have a doctor here and three nurses.)

Me: "Oh well, it's not like they'll help me. Nobody wants me here."

She: "You're right about that. You don't belong here. I see how you think you're above us all because you're Queen of the nation, because you grew up in the city and have all the fancy things we don't have here. That doesn't mean we won't help you when you need it." Is that how I'm acting? Well, obviously. She wouldn't say it if I wasn't.

Me: "I'm sorry if it seemed that way. I don't think I'm above you or anyone, I grew up in a village not the city. I was mostly upset about how I was taken. I'm sorry." She stirred the pot.

She: "That's fine. I'm also sorry that my husband tried to kill you."

Me: "Oh that was your husband? Interesting."

She: "Yes. Sorry. We don't trust people from the outside. They've never done us good."

Me: "I wouldn't harm you. Or let harm come to you."

She: "Do you want something to drink?"

Me: "No, thank you."

She: "Is the sickness bothering you? It shouldn't, you're carrying a Sikhosana heir."

Me: "Oh it's not the sickness, I lost my appetite over an hour ago." She smiled.

She: "You can tell time here? That's good."

Me: "Am I even accurate?" I laughed.

She: "If over an hour ago is when you came out then yes, you're accurate." Mzingeli walked in, bending next to me.

Mzi: "Smoke isn't good for the the baby. Wrap this around your nose and mouth." He put a scarf around my neck. I wrapped it over my nose and mouth.

Me: "Thank you." He got up and walked out.

She: "You're very lucky. He usually doesn't bother himself with anyone but the children."

Me: "I don't think he can help it."

She: "Because of your blood, yes he can't."

Me: "Do you think there may be other treasure blood women out there?"

She: "No. Only men and their children left now. And of course you."

Me: "Will he marry in the tribe?"

She: "Unlikely. I joined the tribe as a wife. They usually seek outside the tribe, anyone who grew up here is seen as family. Then again, it's Mzingeli. I doubt he'll ever get married."

Me: "Why not?"

She: "He isn't the type to have a woman around him. He prefers just being alone."

Me: "That's why he calls me needy and difficult." She laughed.

She: "Probably." She stirred the pot again. "You're used to your husband taking care of you, aren't you?"

Me: "Yes."

She: "That's good. Take full advantage of it. When the little ones come along, it's going to be hard to get your own moments with him." Knowing Nkosinhle, he'll find a way. He might just be a little bit obsessed.

Me: "How many children do you have?"

She: "I have three. Two boys and one girl."

Me: "Do you want more?"

She: "If the gods allow, yes." She smiled. "The food is almost ready, please bring the plates." I took the plates from the shelf and wiped them with the spoons as well. "I assume you don't want to serve."

Me: "It's not that, I just...don't think they'd like being served by me. I don't think anyone likes me here, like I said."

She: "Okay then, you dish up, I'll serve." She gave me the big spoon. "And Nobomi, don't worry about other people. Only worry about yourself. What anyone else thinks of you is their business and theirs alone. Live." I nodded.

Me: "Thank you." I dished up on the plates, while she stood by. Another lady came in. She took the plates from me, handing to them to give out with her.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

I woke up the next morning hearing a knock on my door. I looked at the time, just after 6. I'd had somewhat better sleep than I'd had in days. Again, I heard Thembisa's voice, her prayer. Her voice had a healing element in it because I was somehow feeling better. The knock on the door persisted. I got out of bed, annoyed and opened. My reflection stared back at me.

Nkosi: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Good morning my prince."

Nkosi: "Good morning. It's 6. My advisor is the only person that sees my face this early."

Sibo: "It's a good thing I'm you then. I need to borrow running clothes." He walked in my room. What the? I definitely would have hated having a twin. HATED with a passion. Especially one that can pass off as me.

Nkosi: "You don't need to run, you're getting out of that body today."

Sibo: "I feel like I have to keep it fit."

Nkosi: "Sibonelo, the body is already fit."

Sibo: "It wouldn't hurt to do a lap."

Nkosi: "Why can't you sit still?"

Sibo: "I've never been able to. Besides, when I get out of this body I need to know the routine so I can get my own body this hard as steel. Six pack looking like it's carved with a hot knife placed in fire." He looked through the wardrobe. "Should I take some out for you too?" I did want to run but I didn't want to go with him. We look like idiots. One of me is perfect, but two? No. That's just doing too much.

Nkosi: "No." He undressed right then, I sighed in exasperation, going to the bathroom.

Sibo: "It's nothing foreign, it's your body."

Nkosi: "Keep reminding me." I brushed my teeth.

Sibo: "Oh fuck."

Nkosi: "Break a nail, Cinderella?"

Sibo: "Worse." He came into the bathroom.

Nkosi: "Sibonelo." He knelt over the toilet and threw up. "What did you eat so early in the morning?"

Sibo: "That's not important. I don't think I can go running anymore." He washed his mouth in the second sink.

Nkosi: "Good. I'll go on your behalf." I rinsed my mouth. We closed the tap at the same time and looked in the mirror.

Sibo: "Hey twin."

Nkosi: "Get out." He chuckled walked out. My father needed to fix this as quick as possible. Sibonelo is already starting to act like my actual sibling and I'm not used to that, I don't want it. He must go. In fact, Zwe can come fetch him. My siblings stay far away from me and I prefer that. I walked into the bedroom, half expecting him to be laying in my bed but he wasn't. I got dressed and walked out to the restaurant. Father was sitting down having a cup of tea. Fully dressed in a suit.

Nkosi: "Good morning father."

King: "Hello my son."

Nkosi: "How would you even know who I am?"

King: "The other one calls me My King." I sat down, ordering some water. "How are you feeling?"

Nkosi: "Better. I heard Thembisa's voice. She was praying for me."

King: "Me too." I looked at him with slight envy.

Nkosi: "I'm feeling a little stronger so that's a good sign. Hopefully you can get Sibonelo back to his body by end of day. He's already driving me insane."

King: "Why? I thought it would be fun having a brother."

Nkosi: "I grew up my entire life without one, I don't need one now. Especially not one that is my clone. Do you know how weird it is to see yourself in the flesh? Walking into a room and there you are, sitting." He chuckled.

King: "I did a bit of reverse spells with Amahle, we're close to figuring it out." He put down his cup. "Are you sure can do this? I don't mind taking your place Nkosinhle."

Nkosi: "No, I can do it. I need you here and safe. She would want to come home and see you." He nodded. "Why are you dressed in a suit so early in the morning? Don't you have lounge wear?"

King: "What the hell is lounge wear? I'm waiting for Mr Ntaka."

Nkosi: "Why are you waiting for him dressed in a navy 3 piece suit?"

King: "That's not any of your business."

Nkosi: "It kind of is. I brought him to my house and this is my house and he's my wife's father. That makes everything my business."

King: "No it doesn't." Mr Ntaka walked in.

Xolani: "Good morning my King and Prince."

Nkosi: "Hello Tata. Where is he taking you? Don't trust him." He chuckled.

Xolani: "We'll only be in the garden my prince. The guards are around." My father stood up.

King: "Well then, see you later, alligator."

Nkosi: "Where did you hear that?"

King: "Nhlanhla said it, why? Is it wrong? You never know with her." I sighed. They walked out together. A part of me wanted to spy on them but I know my father would figure me out so I went on my run.

Narrated \_

The King and Xolani walked into the garden quietly.

Xolani: "Won't he follow us?"

King: "No. He knows I'd know." They strolled into the darker part of the garden. Guarded by trees. "How long are you planning to keep this a secret?"

Xolani: "It's better that way."

King: "Is it? Or you want to be known as the perfect father and husband. Afraid this will ruin your rep."

Xolani: "Do you want to be here or not?"

King: "Fine. I enjoy the villain role anyway." They stopped under the largest tree. "Show me then."

Xolani: "Why did you wear a suit?"

King: "I always dress up for the occasion, they don't call me the stylish king for nothing."

Xolani: "Who is going to see you?"

King: "You never know. That's why I'm always ready. You'll never catch me off guard." Xolani shook his head taking off his shirt.

Xolani: "Have you done this before?"

King: "Plenty of times." He smiled. "No but we're learning."

Xolani: "Fine." He stood in front of him.

King: "What about your pants? We'll need them off unless you want them torn apart." Xolani took off the pants. "Okay." Xolani closed his eyes, focusing, his fists by his sides clenched, finger nails digging into his palm. His back tore open. He howled silently surprising his scream.

The first wing broke out, as tall as he. He stumbled, kneeling on the ground.

King: "Wow. I've seen most if not all of my abilities but I have never seen an angel wing. Why is there only one?"

Xolani: "I've only ever been able to bring out one."

King: " Okay. That's the point of this exercise to conjure out the second one. Then I turn you into something with wings."

Xolani: "Then find a way to reverse me back to human, yes."

King: "Alright then. Let's start." ....

## Chapter 151

### SIBONELO'S POV\_

I woke up again around midday. The nap I took right after breakfast and the dessert snack knocked me out. I can't believe my body was still responding to the morning sickness even when I wasn't in my body. I got out of bed, taking another shower and dressed in the black shirt and black pant signature Nkosi look. He's always either in black or white shirts, pants always black unless he's wearing a navy suit. If I had more time to spare, I would've gone shopping just to see how he looks in jeans. I slipped on his fitted pants and a shirt, tucking it in, with black Christian Louboutin shoes. Ready for the day, I finished off with cologne and walked out. In the restaurant, Zwe and Mthunzi were sitting with Nkosi.

Sibo: "Good afternoon."

Zwe: "Hey."

Mthunzi: "Second Prince of the throne." He chuckled.

Sibo: "What are you up to?"

Zwe: "Checking the strategy for the power stations. Would you like to take a look?"

Sibo: "Hm.. I would but I was wondering if I could eat first."

Zwe: "Are you still feeling sick?"

Sibo: "Yes Zwe and I thought you said this would only be a short while. I'm feeling bloated, my back hurts and do you even know the disgusting things I eat?" I sat down.

Nkosi: "Why are you sick?"

Sibo: "Zimasa is pregnant."

Nkosi: "So? Why would that make you sick?"

Zwe: "He has sympathetic pregnancy symptoms."

Nkosi: "Symptoms of what?"

Zwe: "Okay, I would understand you don't know about pregnancy because you obviously haven't been around the concept. Pregnant women experience sickness such as vomiting, nausea."

Nkosi: "Sibonelo is not a pregnant woman."

Zwe: "No, he's not. That's why it's called sympathetic. He is experiencing the symptoms because his partner is pregnant with his child."

Nkosi: "Oh."

Sibo: "Don't you have symptoms?"

Nkosi: "No. That would be silly."

Sibo: "It's sympathetic Nkosi. Feel something for once." He chuckled.

Nkosi: "Oh Sibonelo, I feel more than you can ever imagine. You want to show you?" A spark of flame came off his finger. My heart jumped and I stepped back.

Sibo: "Okay, you're trying to intimidate me but I'm you Nkosi. Without the abilities, I think you and I both know I can take you."

Mthunzi: "I need a camera crew for this, Zwe you have surgeon hands can you hold a camera steady?"

Zwe: "Come on Nkosi, you're not going to fight my brother."

Sibo: "I can handle it, switch off his powers."

Zwe: "I can't switch of-"

Nkosi: "Don't worry. I'm not going to fight Sibonelo as much as I want to. Believe me. More so that he looks like this."

Sibo: "Chicken." He stood up. I wasn't planning to fight Nkosi, that would be suicide but I was tired of him hating me for something I cannot control.

Nkosi: "Say it again."

Sibo: "I said, Chicken." Zwe pulled him back.

Zwe: "Both of you are being childish."

Sibo: "I am not. He's the one that called me silly."

Zwe: "He is your king and you will respect him. Being in his body gives you no right to speak anyhow. Nkosihle, Sibonelo was only helping. This situation is not comfortable to either one of you but it was fruitful because not only did he save the country's ass from Phakamisa but he got information on how to get your wife back. Now I know you don't like having a person that looks like you but this situation will be sorted out and everything will go back to normal. For now, please try and be less annoyed. Maybe even try to enjoy this time having a twin. Sibonelo is fun. Sometimes. You, apologize to the prince."

Sibo: "Sorry."

Zwe: "Properly." Okay maybe I was acting out.

Sibo: "I'm sorry Prince Sikhosana. I got caught up in the moment. It's something about being you that makes one daring, so confident-"

Zwe: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "Sorry. I apologize for being disrespectful, Your Highness." He stared me down without saying anything. "Truly."

Zwe: "Great, now let's settle down and work." We sat down. The king walked in, with Mr Ntaka.

King: "Ahhh, my people!" He looked a little brighter than usual, happy. I wonder what that is about. The king is never happy. He's supposed to be neutral. Unless of course he found a reversal for my situation, I'd be grateful. I need to go home.

Nkosi: "What did you do?"

King: "I figured out how to reverse Sibonelo back to himself."

Nkosi: "Is it safe?"

King: "Do you want this or not?"

Nkosi: "Not if it will affect him. It must be safe."

King: "It's safe, sheriff. Where's Amahle?" He looked at the guard, he quickly walked in, no doubt going to find Amahle. In just a few minutes, the family walked in. "I didn't ask for an audience."

Nkosi: "How sure are you this will work?"

King: "I'm sure. I checked." He looked at Mr Ntaka. He gave the king something I didn't see. Since when are they friends?

Nkosi: "Well? Do it."

King: "There's too many of you here."

Nkosi: "Father. Don't start."

Ama: "What exactly are we doing?"

Nkosi: "He wants to reverse the spell on Sibonelo."

Ama: "Without checking first? Father."

King: "I did check!"

Nkosi: "How!" The king and Mr Ntaka looked at each other.

Ntaka: "Your father and I looked through the garden and we found a herb."

Ama: "A herb?"

King: "Yes. Mr Ntaka learnt about it in his dream. It is used for reversals."

Nkosi: "Amahle, your father is lying."

King: "I'm not lying."

Nkosi: "Father, this is serious. Sibonelo is a human being. You can't play these games with his life."

Sibo: "Aww, you care about my life?"

Nkosi: "Let me speak. Amahle, will this be safe? Please check thoroughly."

Ama: "Okay. I'll need Sibonelo, Mr Ntaka and father in the room. I'll consult and check. Please follow me."

Nkosi: "I'm coming with you."

King: "Why?"

Nkosi: "Are you hiding something?"

King: "Yes." Wouldn't you say no to that? We'll, of course, it would be a lie.

Nkosi: "Can we stop fighting and put our heads together for one minute?"

King: "We don't need you to come with. Amahle has it handled."

Nkosi: "I need to be sure that you're not hurting uTata." The king laughed long and hard.

King: "Me? Hurt him? You're funny." Nkosi looked at me. "Don't you dare whisper to him." He stood in front of me.

Nkosi: "Fine. Go but Sibonelo doesn't change back to himself without me. He can come find me when he's ready."

King: "Fine." We walked out, following him to his suite. He closed the door and stood against it. "Not one of you open your mouths about what happens in this room. Understood?" I can't lie to my twin. He can't expect that of me. "Sibonelo!"

Sibo: "Yes my king. Sorry."

King: "So, Mr Ntaka enlightened me on something no one else knows. Turns out, treasure blood has abilities but different to our own."

Sibo: "He can turn into a tiger too?"

King: "No. Better." He looked at Mr Ntaka. "Show them." I folded my arms, in anticipation or maybe hiding my actual impending fear. Mr Ntaka closed his eyes and a whoofing sound filled the room, a pair of wings emerged from behind him. I jumped back.

Sibo: "Where do those come from?" I looked behind his back. They came from his back. His has wings on his back! "He's an angel!!? How long has this been happening? My king are you giving people free abilities? You told me humans aren't allowed any!"

King: "I didn't give him any. He already had his own."

Xolani: "Actually-"

King: "Please be quiet? I'm not running a supermarket. I don't give anyone abilities. I am not a God. Now. Can we work?" I folded my arms.

Sibo: "I'm telling Nkosi." Amahle giggled.

King: "No you won't."

Sibo: "I'm telling him you gave his wife's father wings."

King: "Sibonelo I will hurt you. Do you understand?"

Sibo: "Nkosi won't let you." He breathed.

King: "I am not giving you a thing. You are a child! Amahle, stop laughing and work. Xolani here had to be in aerial view to find this herb. On the peak of the mountain, and with that, we managed to change him back to his human self. So, using this herb and the spell, it will reverse Sibonelo."

Ama: "And you're sure because you did this to Mr Ntaka?"

King: "Yes."

Ama: "But Mr Ntaka already had the wings so he could bring them out himself."

King: "Not entirely. He couldn't fly and that's all I'm willing to disclose."

Xolani: "I only had one wing, he helped conjure out the other and turned me into a falcon." The king sighed.

King: "Do you not have secrets?"

Sibo: "So you did give him an ability."

King: "Are you not listen- Okay!! Can we get to work? Amahle!"

Ama: "I'm doing it father." She knelt on the floor, burning her leaves. Her eyes turned white, something I was not used to before but only happened when she was consulting. She blinked and looked at her father. "It is true. We can do it." I sighed in relief.

King: "Great. Let's Begin."

Sibo: "I'm going to call Nkosi, he sai-"

King: "You're not going anywhere, you said you wanted to go back to your life. Let's not waste time."

Sibo: "This seems suspicious. Can't the wings go back in?" The king cleared his throat. "Nooo."

King: "Shut up."

Sibo: "How did you hide th- You disguised him didn't you? You want to experiment on me?!!"

King: "THIS ISN'T YOUR BUSINESS SIBONELO! I reversed Xolani's falcon back to human. His ability has a bit of malfunction right now but, that has nothing to do with you. You don't have an ability! The spell works!"

Sibo: "I don't know my king, that seems like a risk. I can't. I need support."

King: "Sibonelo, stop acting like a baby. You said you're a grown man, you make your own decisions. Let's do this."

Sibo: "My King I respect you and everything but I can't let you swindle me like that." His hands sparked electricity, jump-starting my soul.

King: "I am your King. I made you. You will not waste any more time, you will calm down and let this happen." My heart hammered in my chest at a rapid speed.

Sibo: "No." He growled. My eyes darted to the door.

King: "Try it." Oh my God, I'm in trouble. Why can't Nkosing come in here? I was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Sibo: "Amahle, do something."

Ama: "Fath-" the electricity sparked louder.

Xolani: "Sizwe." First name basis? This friendship is stronger than that electricity. Is that why they're friends? Because they have super powers? This is his only friend.

King: "I can hear you."

Sibo: "Oh for fucks sake." I paced the floor, actually sweaing. The door opened, Nkosi walking in. "Oh thank God!"

Nkosi: "What's happening-"

King: "What the hell!" He hissed.

Nkosi: "Turns out, I can hear Sibonelo's call on my name just like I do my wife. Must be the clone situa-" he stared at Mr Ntaka. "Father."

King: "We're wasting time."

Nkosi: "What is that?"

King: "That's not me. He had them before-"

Xolani: "I had only one. He helped the second on-"

King: "Put it on a newspaper article for the entire country Xolani!! Good God, have things you take to your grave! Before I discovered this about you, you kept it from everyone and now suddenly you want it to be your origin story?!"

Xolani: "Discovered?? I told you because I wanted to help you!!"

King: "Did you really want to help? Or you wanted to BE helped?"

Xolani: "Why would I need YOUR help? You're the one who can't turn back a curse!"

King: "A curse? A CURSE!?"

Xolani: "What else would it be? Without me all you're doing is playing a guessing game!" This is new. How close were they? Mr Ntaka would never speak like this to the king.

King: "Oh you entitled egotistical bag of corn. I helped you!" A giggled escaped my mouth by mistake.

Xolani: "And I helped you!"

Nkosi: "Okay, whatever this is, we'll circle back to it. And I mean that. This, I'm not letting slide. Now, what is going on with Sibonelo?"

King: "I changed Xolani into a falcon and changed him back. Sibonelo does not believe that the reverse spell works."

Nkosi: "Try it on me."

Sibo: "Immediately no!! You're a future king."

Nkosi: "Yes, that way he can't mess up. Do it, father."

Sibo: "I can't let that happen. No. You're way too important to this country. I'm sorry, look, My King. Let's do it."

Nkosi: "Sibonelo."

Sibo: "No. I have brothers. Even after I'm gone, my legacy will continue. There's only one you. I can do this."

King: "Finally. The diapers are off. Put this in your anus, it might burn just a little bit but Xolani did it and he's fine." He gave me a leaf.

Sibo: "Now HOLD ON." Amahle laughed.

King: "I'm joking. Mouth." I put it in my mouth. He stood in front of me. I closed my eyes, feeling the familiar cold and dizzy knocking me a bit then it went away. I opened my eyes, looking at my hands. They looked different. I went to stand in front of the mirror.

Sibo: "Oh thank goodness!! Thank you so much!" I was back to myself!

King: "You're welcome."

Sibo: "I'd love to stay and celebrate but I need to see my family. Have a blessed da- Ow." I felt a pain in my back.

Nkosi: "What was that?"

Sibo: "A back pain."

Nkosi: "Do you want me to check?"

Sibo: "No I'm fine. Amahle, We're leaving." I made my way out to the restaurant. "Zwe, I need you." He looked at me.

Zwe: "What's up?" My vision blurred.

Sibo: "I think something...wrong. Help." He grabbed me, sitting me down.

Zwe: "Breath. Focus on me."

Sibo: "Zwe..." The vision blurred worse until complete darkness and still.

## Chapter 152

### NKOSI'S POV\_

We had to go to the hospital with Sibonelo. He fell unconscious immediately after leaving the room. At this point, I was sure it wasn't medical. The reversal had some effects we didn't counter for. I did feel bad a little bit. Maybe alot. He was only human, I could've taken this

reverse and understood what was wrong with it and help fix it before it was used on him.

Zwe: "He's stable but weak. There's nothing medically wrong. It seems like exhaustion. Could be from the switch over."

Nkosi: "Is he improving?"

Zwe: "No." Amahle walked in.

Ama: "I made a mistake. I am sorry."

Nkosi: "What?"

Ama: "I kind of forgot. Uhm, when we switched him the first time I strengthened him. This time I forgot. That's why he collapsed, the change was too much for his body."

Zwe: "Can you do something now?"

Ama: "Yes. With your permission. I have to light this here in his room." He nodded. She knelt on the ground, pouring some powder on the floor and gave me a coal. I snapped a finger, lighting up my fire and lit the coal. She placed it on the powder, and a leaf on it. "Sikhosana, Msamkhulu. Ngomzamo wokusiza, ngenza iphutha. Saluphuthuma lolu hlelo futhi salimaza isihlobo sethu. Siyacela ukuthi ukwamukele ukuxolisa kwethu, usisize simqinise. Uyingxenye ebalulekile yesihlalo sobukhosi." (In an attempt to help, I made a mistake. We rushed the process and hurt our relative. We ask that you accept our apology, helping us strengthen him. He is an important part of the throne.)

Nkosi: "Your Zulu has improved."

Ama: "Father taught me 5 minutes ago. Shhh." The smoke grew in size, covering the room and Sibonelo. Zwe checked his pulse. Nothing yet. I was hoping this works. What else could be the problem? Amahle is never wrong.

Zwe: "Pulse is picking up. It's working." I breathed a sigh. Thank goodness.

Nkosi: "Good. That's good." Amahle stood up.

Ama: "Again, I'm sorry Zwe."

Zwe: "Mistakes happen. It's okay." She nodded and walked out.

Nkosi: "Are you upset?"

Zwe: "A little bit. Not at you. At him. Sibonelo is a hot head. I know nobody forced him into this. He did it because he's Sibonelo. He can be an asshole, self conceited but he's very helpful, he's loyal. He's a good person. Quickly forgets his own safety to take care of another person."

Nkosi: "Then he really is my twin." He chuckled. I sat down.

Zwe: "How did it feel? Seeing yourself from a different perspective."

Nkosi: "This may sound arrogant, but I look really good."

Zwe: "Really?"

Nkosi: "I've only seen myself in the mirror but meeting myself was great. I'd also like spending time in my presence so I understand you now." He laughed.

Zwe: "Don't be insane, Nkosihle. I only hang out with you for the benefits and work. It has nothing to do with your looks."

Nkosi: "That's what you want me to believe because anything else would be suspicious, I understand." He sat down, laughing.

Zwe: "Thank you my friend. For being here too."

Nkosi: "It's no bother. Just making sure we didn't kill my duplicate, I might need him when I want to go on vacation."

Zwe: "Don't start your nonsense." He laughed. "hey where's Mthunzi?"

Nkosi: "He's watching my father. You won't believe what he did."

Zwe: "I haven't heard it but I believe it."

Nkosi: "So, I walk in the room and Mr Ntaka has wings."

Zwe: "Wings? Like a bird?"

Nkosi: "More like an angel." He gasped.

Zwe: "Your father did that?"

Nkosi: "Nope. There's more. Turns out he's always had them."

Zwe: "What does that mean Nkosi?"

Nkosi: "They argued about it. Apparently he's always known and hid this. Then, in a way of helping, he told my father who agreed that they experiment. My father turned him into a falcon, that's how he found the

herb. Mr Ntaka flew up to the peak of the mountain which I suspect is the only place this herb is found."

Zwe: "Nkosinhle. What are you saying. Thembisa's father has abilities? Does this mean Thembisa ...."

Nkosi: "I don't know Zwe but I'm in shock. Sure, it would be great if my wife had an ability but it's a shock. And I know she wouldn't know about it. Thembisa would've told me."

Zwe: "I don't know Nkosi..."

Nkosi: "Zwelethu, my wife would never hide this big thing from me. Especially because I told her of mine very early into our relationship. Quite literally on our first picnic."

Zwe: "I'm not saying she would hide it. I'm saying she would protect her father. Her family." I then remembered a conversation from a few weeks ago. Something that Thembisa had said then lied about. Could this be it? Surely not. "What? You've got your thinking face on."

Nkosi: "Do you think she would hide it?"

Zwe: "What are you thinking?"

Nkosi: "No, she wouldn't. I'm certain."

Zwe: "Nkosi."

Nkosi: "Thembisa once lied to me. I'd asked her if she would tell me if anyone hurt her. No matter who that person is. She said she would and took off running to a peach tree. Except, that was a lie. I could feel she was lying. Her father having abilities doesn't hurt her so that's not what she was hiding."

Zwe: "What do you think she was hiding?"

Nkosi: "Something for another day. Right now, I'm still shocked at my father in law having wings. Wings he can't fold back into himself. He's stuck with them out." My phone rang. I took it out of my pocket. "Hello."

Mthunzi: "My Prince. We have troubling news."

Nkosi: "What did he do? It's barely two hours. Why can't he sit still!!!"

Mthunzi: "No, the king is still. Everyone is behaving. Thembisa's mother has arrived in town." Oh fuck.

Nkosi: "What the hell! I thought you had eyes on them."

Mthunzi: "She came with her guards and because they're coming here, to the palace as they say, they didn't inform."

Nkosi: "This is bad... Is he still..."

Mthunzi: "Yep, he's playing chess with your dad in the garden, yes wings out and all. We can account for you and Thembisa away on holiday but him?" What is wrong with my father??

Nkosi: "Where is she? Is she there at the villa?" Mthunzi: "On her way to."

Nkosi: "Father must get him out of there. You'll explain by saying Mr Ntaka is attending a royal conference with him. That way, she won't ask questions. Also, get my mothers away from her. They're very mean."

Mthunzi: "I think she can handle it. Thembisa's mother is a strong fierce woman. She's had dinner with the king multiple times, her daughter is married to the future king. That woman is anything but a coward. She belongs in high society. She can handle the queens. I would bring Queen Biyela to neutralize but because Sibonelo is in hospital, I don't want questions. How is he?"

Nkosi: "He's okay, stable and improving."

Mthunzi: "That's very good. Okay, I'll update you, let me sort this mess." He hung up.

Nkosi: "Thembisa's mother has arrived."

Zwe: "Oh hell. And Mr Ntaka is still..."

Nkosi: "Oh yes. Apparently, he and my dad are playing chess in the garden wings in the air. Can you believe it?" He laughed.

Zwe: "Who would've thought? Your father finally has a friend."

Sibo: "One that isn't afraid of him too. They call each other with their first names." We looked at him.

Zwe: "Well good afternoon to you too, second prince of the throne."

Sibo: "No, Didn't I change? No guys, I have important things to do. I can't keep playing anymore!" He panicked.

Nkosi: "At least now I know you're genuine. You're back to being Prince Biyela. Don't worry."

Sibo: "Thank goodness. It was fun, don't get me wrong but I have a lot to get done. Zimmy must be so hurt." He sat up.

Zwe: "I spoke to her yesterday. She's okay but yes, she would like to see you. Let me go over a few vital checks." He checked him.

Nkosi: "Sibonelo, what is going on between my father and father in law?"

Sibo: "They're best friends. Mr Ntaka says he had one wing, all his life. He could bring it out and put it back in. So he told this to the king who said would help him conjure out the second wing. Then turn him into a falcon. He did that successfully, found the herb at the peak of the mountain and came back. The king changed him back. The only problem, the wings aren't going back inside. King said it's a malfunction on Mr Ntaka's ability."

Nkosi: "And instead of fixing it, they're playing chess. Do you see how he gets to me, Zwe?"

Zwe: "That's because you assume the role of responsibility. He gets to you because you're always there to fix it, to reprimand him. Be the child, this time."

Nkosi: "Zwelethu. My father in law has wings. Tomorrow I go on a journey to fetch my wife, his daughter. She will come back home, and her father will have wings. How is this not my responsibility?"

Zwe: "Did you give him wings?"

Nkosi: "That's not the point."

Zwe: "It is. Not your action, not your responsibility. This is how you're exhausting yourself. You have a tricky journey ahead of you, you can't be stressed or distracted. Have tunnel vision. Thembisa is your prize. Anything on the sidelines is not worth paying attention to. Focus on her." He wrote something down in the file. "And you are healthy but still recovering. You may have you back to yourself but do take it easy for the next few days to give your body time to adjust. No gym, no sex, no stress."

Sibo: "What about work? I need to prepare for my interview with the throne board for the archives."

Zwe: "You can prepare for that. As long as you do not stress."

Sibo: "Good. Now, if you could kindly discharge me."

Zwe: "I want to monitor your blood pressure for another two hou-"

Sibo: "Zwelethu, my smart watch is connected to yours. You know my exact heart rate, blood pressure, stress level and steps I take in a day. Let me go, you psychopath!" Zwe laughed.

Zwe: "No. I'm the doctor so I have the final say."

Sibo: "I'm calling mama."

Zwe: "Go ahead. And tell her everything you've been up to. She'll never let you leave the house again."

Sibo: "Zwelethu, I'm a father to be. Have a heart."

Zwe: "I'm a psychopath and I want to monitor yours." He sat down. Sibonelo looked at me.

Sibo: "My Prince, please talk to him?"

Nkosi: "Let my twin go home Zwelethu. He's fine."

Zwe: "Do you think I'm scared of you, Nkosihle?"

Nkosi: "No but I can tell when there's something wrong with Sibonelo. He may be back to his body but I'll still feel his call like I did in the villa. That will wear off in a few days. So I'll know when there's a problem."

Sibo: "So I can call you telepathically?"

Nkosi: "Don't even try it. I'll have Zwelethu put you in a psych ward." Zwe laughed.

Zwe: "Okay. I'll get his discharge form." He got up, walking out.

Sibo: "Thank you twin."

Nkosi: "Stop." He laughed...

SASA'S POV\_

Last night was beautiful. We had dinner around a warm fire that was covered with a zinc drum. It just produced heat without open flame and

smoke. The lanterns all over the area were lit up and looked magical under the Starlights and in their arrangement. After eating, the show started. Sambo was a young looking man probably around mid 30s. He had light skin and soft brown eyes. He started singing his melody softly but gradually his voice filled all around in a beautiful sound. The ladies beat their soft drums to his voice. He sang only one song before Phambili, another man stood up. He was a bit older looking and had dark big eyes of different colours. One eye was brown, the other half blue and half brown. Sindi had explained that he was born like that. There was nothing medically wrong with his eyesight or him. He was healthy and fine. I thought his voice was a bit raspy but he could change it through scenes so fluently, male, female, high pitch, low pitch. He was amazing. The story carried and was so engaging, by the time he finished I wanted to hear more. The cliff hanger was too much. Sambo sang again, joined by Diwe and for a short but they sang together then alone. Eventually, the night came to an end and everyone went to bed. I had a genuine good time. Until I got to bed. I lay awake until Mzi walked in. He lay his sleeping thing on the ground where he usually sleeps.

Mzi: "You okay?"

Me: "I'm fine. Just can't sleep."

Mzi: "You're probably tired, you did a lot today." He got up again taking the bucket.

Me: "What are you doing?"

Mzi: "Boiling water, you have to soak your feet, get the tension and fatigue out of them."

Me: "It's almost midnight, you're going to the river?"

Mzi: "It's no bother-"

Me: "Mzi, I'm fine. I promise. Please. You don't have to do all that." He walked out. I sighed. I would follow him but I was a bit scared. Not sure why. Maybe because it was witch hours. He came back in no time, pouring the water in a pot and lighting a fire. He heated up the water for only a few minutes possibly only taking the cold out of them because when he put my feet in, it was just perfectly warm water. I instantly felt the fatigue at my feet. After a short while, he took my foot out drying with the cloth in his hand.

Me: "Okay, thank you Mzingeli. This is a bit above and beyond. I can take it from here." He dried my second foot.

Mzi: "Don't put them back on the cold floor." What can I do to make him stop? He came back with a small clay bowl, kneeling in front of me.

Me: "Mzingeli, this is uncomfortable. You're my husband's uncle. I can moisturize my own feet. Thank you for helping but I'm fine. I can take it from here." He stared at me quietly, then handed me the bowl. I took some of the ointment and rubbed one foot after the other. "This feels nice. Thank you." I gave back his bowl and he gave the cloth to wipe my hands. I got into bed, almost immediately feeling sleepy. He stood next to the bed staring at me.

Mzi: "You're welcome."

Me: "Goodnight." He went back to his sleeping spot. I closed my eyes, yawning and drifting into sleep.

I woke up in the forest, bare foot, leaves crunching under my feet. It was pitch dark and my eyes started adjusting to it. I was in the middle of nowhere, in a forest. I looked around a bit panicked, walking ahead while listening for any danger. I walked through the emptiness. Nothing but trees.

Me: "Why am I here. Why did I end up here. How." I whispered into the dark. I heard a small voice giggling from afar. A child's voice. Instinctively, I followed it. Walking faster, running. I pushed through an opening of bushes and saw a little boy. He started running playfully.

Me: "Hey!" I whisper yelled, running after him. He disappeared into another bush. I followed in looking for him. Nothing. It was empty. From afar I heard the voice again. I turned another direction and followed it, this time I found him sitting down. "Why are you alone? You're supposed to be in bed." He focused on his toy in his hand. Can he even see me? Understand me? "Sweetie, we have to go back to camp. Where are we?"

Him: "Igazi lakho linamandla. Unokuzifihla, akukho mntu uya kukubona usiza." (Your blood is strong. You can disguise, no one will see you coming.)

Me: "Ndizifihlela ntoni?" (Why am I hiding?)

Him: "Umsebenzi wakho awukagqibi. Ukuqala okutsha, kufuneka ukrazule iingcambu ezindala kwaye utyale ikamva. Ikamva elihle." (Your work is not complete. To start new, you must tear out the old roots and plant the future. The good future.)

Me: "Andikwazi ukumbulala. Andingombulali." (I can't kill her. I'm not a killer.)

Him: "Awubulali. Ukrazula iingcambu. Kufuneka ukhethe. Yinzala yakho okanye nguye." (You are not killing. You are tearing out the root. You must choose. It's either your children or her.) I held my stomach.

Me: "That is not fair." I looked at my stomach that was still flat but held a life inside it. I looked up at him. "I-" he was gone. I looked all around me. "Ndibonise indlela yokukrazula ingcambu. Show me how." ...

Chapter 153

SASA'S POV\_

So naturally, this morning was a bit nerve wrecking. That was a hectic dream. I had a difficult task ahead of me. One thing was clear, I didn't have a choice but to succeed. If my law books had taught me anything about crime, it was that it was important to have an alibi. It was important to continue your life as you have. Don't be nervous. Don't ask too much. Do just as you've been doing while gathering information and waiting for opportunity. So, I went out in the morning after refreshing myself. As usual, everyone was already busy. Ndiliswa came running as soon as she saw me.

Me: "Molo Ndili." (Hello.)

Ndili: "Molo Thembisa. Uzodlala nathi?" (Hello. Will you play with us?)

Me: "Ewe kodwa mandiqale ndibulise abanye." (Yes but let me first greet the others.) I went to the kitchen station. "Molweni." (Hello everyone.)

Sindi: "Hello. We're almost done, you can go take a seat so long." I nodded, going back to Ndiliswa. We played our game from yesterday until it was time for breakfast. The men ate first and left quickly. I wonder what they do all day out there.

Ndili: "Uhambe kakuhle?" (Did you go well?) We were sitting together only without the others.

Me: "Akhange ndiye ndawo." (I didn't go anywhere.)

Ndili: "Ngexa ubu lele, ubuhambile. Ukuze uve imiyalelo yokuqalisa ngokutsha. lingcambu ekufuneka zikhutshwe ukuze ukwazi ukutyala." (When you were asleep, you had left. To hear instructions for starting afresh. The roots that must be taken out so you can plant.) I was shocked that she knew. Did she see me?

Me: "Undibonile?" (Did you see me?)

Ndili: "Hayi, nam bendilele kodwa ndivile." (No I was also sleeping but I heard.)

Me: "Uve ngabani Ndiliswa?"

Ndili: "Andiva ngamntu kodwa ndiyakuva entliziyweni yam. Yiyo loo nto ndiza kukunceda." (I didn't hear it from anyone but I can feel you in my heart. That's why I will help you.)

Me: "Awukwazi undinceda Ndiliswa, ungumntana. Unzima umsebenzi wam, wena awunoyazi. Umncinci kakhulu." (You can't help me, you're a child. My task is difficult and you can't know. You're too young.) She giggled.

Ndili: "Ewe ndingumntana kodwa ndizokunceda." (Yes I'm a child but I will help you.) She held my hand. I don't think she knows what she's really helping with. In her innocent mind she probably thinks I'm preparing to rebuild the village.

Me: "Uyaphuma uGogo ngelinye ixesha?" (Does Gogo ever come outside?)

Ndili: "Shhh. Akuthethwa ngo Gogo." (We don't talk about Gogo.) I nodded unsure what that meant but there's no way she can know the true reality of my task. That would be cruel of the ancestors to burden this very young child with such horrifying information.

After breakfast, I helped the kids with clean up and collecting water at the river. Just as we got to the water, Ndiliswa pulled my hand. I followed her back into the forest. She took a different direction.

Me: "Ndiliswa, hayi."

Ndili: "Shh." I was terrified and this child seemed carefree and knew where she was going. My heart was fully aching now. I know I can't question the ancestors but why burden this baby? I said I was going to do it. I am willing to go through with it, why involve her. She let go of my hand, bending down to the ground. I knelt next to her.

Ndili: "Umlambo uyakuhlambulula. Oku kuya kukufihla. Akukho mfuneko yokuba wenze nantoni na, sebenzisa kuphela isakhono sakho." (The river cleanses you. This will disguise you. You don't have to do anything, only use your ability.) Okay I can't take it anymore.

Me: "Ndiliswa, batheni kuwe? Ngaba bakuxelele into emandiyenze?" (What did they say to you? Did they tell you what I must do?)

Ndili: "Bandixelele ukuba uya kuphinda uyakhe ilali yobuncwane. Kufuneka ndikuncedise ukukufihla" (They told me you will rebuild the treasure village. I must help to disguise you.) Thank goodness.

Me: "Kulungile."

Ndili: "Masihambe ke. Uzakuqala ngokuhlwanje ngokucocwa kwakho." (Let's go then. You will start tonight with your cleanse.)

Me: "Ndiyisebenzisa njani le?" (How do I use this?)

Ndili: "Emva kokuhlanjululwa emlanjeni. Cofa into kwaye usebenzise kwiindawo zakho zokubetha komphefumlo." (After the cleanse in the river. Squeeze out the substance and apply on your pulse points.)

Me: "Izondifihla?" (It will disguise me?)

Ndili: "Ewe kodwa kuya kufuneka uhlale ecaleni komlambo ubusuku bonke." (Yes but you'll have to be next to the river all night.)

Me: "Ngoba?" (Why?)

Ndili: "Izinyanya zakho kufuneka zikukhusele. Isakhono sakho sinamandla kodwa siya kucela umlo xa sivakalelwa." (Your ancestors need to protect you. Your ability is strong but it will ask for a fight when it feels like it.) I picked the leaves off the plant, and walked back. How the hell was I going to do this?

MTHUNZI'S POV\_

After getting off the phone with Nkosi, I walked over to the king.

King: "I'll take that. I win."

Xolani: "No, that's not correct. You don't win. That's my king."

King: "I'm your king."

Xolani: "Put back my king piece Sizwe. The game is still very active. You don't win."

King: "How do I win then?"

Xolani: "I'm not telling you that." He actually did win but Mr Ntaka was tricking him to keep him still.

Mthunzi: "My King, Mr Ntaka. I have some news. Mrs Ntaka is on her way." They stared at me.

King: "Are you clinically insane? She can't come here. Look at him!"

Mthunzi: "I can't turn her back my king. She will be suspicious if not hysterical. I've already got a story for Nkosi and Thembisa's absence. They're on honeymoon. You and Mr Ntaka could go to the palace, I will tell her you're at a conference."

Ntaka: "She'll never believe that. I don't like the king, I'd never go anywhere with him." The king looked at him.

King: "I'm spending my wonderful afternoon playing a game in the sun with you. I could be attending to a country, remember that? My job?"

Xolani: "You and I both know the country bores you. That's Nkosinhle's job now. You're basically on retirement, exploring a normal life that you describe as and I quote "what commoners do on a regular afternoon". He moved a chess piece, take one from the king's side.

King: "Fine then. Let your wife see you with your angel wings. I don't care." He flipped the chess board over, spilling all the pieces on the floor.

Xolani: "You're childish." How did this happen? Why are they friends?  
HOW.

King: "Nolwazi can entertain me, she must have a book for me somewhere. Mthunzi, would you be so kind and call my wife."

Mthunzi: "My King, please. I am pleading on behalf of Mr Ntaka."

Xolani: "I'm not pleading."

Mthunzi: "Sir, are you ready for Mrs Ntaka to see you like this? Wouldn't it be better if we had it under control, then you explain to her and afterwards show her if she wants to see it. This is a bit shocking. You look like you fell from the sky. Two guards fainted."

King: "Fainted?? For a pair of wings? I have electricity! I've never seen them faint!"

Mthunzi: "They have my king. At all situations where they've seen it, they have collapsed."

King: "I know you're lying."

Mthunzi: "Okay I'm lying. They didn't faint but a few of them are currently in routine psychiatric assessment. All of them have therapy care in their benefits and in case of a tragic accident, they have a policy that will pay out if they are to die because of .....you." he smiled.

King: "Psychiatric assessments seem a little cruel but I'll take it. Xolani, do you mind putting on a shirt?"

Xolani: "Explain to me how." The king looked at me.

Mthunzi: "I'll make a plan." I walked into the villa to find a shirt. The throne may pay me millions per annum but they made sure I feel my job in my soul. I found a shirt from the dress room and some scissors, I cut two slits on the back of the shirt, doing the same to a t-shirt. I took it back to the garden. They were putting the chess piece back together. Did they even take me seriously? There was no sense of urgency. As if Mrs Ntaka won't walk through those doors, right this moment. I checked my phone. 13 minutes away.

Mthunzi: "I'm sure this could work Mr Ntaka. The slits will make sure you're not uncomfortable and you'll tuck in the shirt in your pants so that it doesn't flap around."

King: "Soldiers are such resourceful people."

Xolani: "Thank you General Mthunzi." He got dressed. I checked my phone again. 11 minutes.

Mthunzi: "I will be here to receive Mrs Ntaka and get her settled. Nkosi will come straight to you when he's done at the hospital."

King: "Remember to tell everyone else that Nkosi and Thembisa are on honeymoon. Be sure to keep Nhlanhla chewing something so that she doesn't speak."

Mthunzi: "Yes my king."

King: "We might as well go play golf-"

Mthunzi: "Or you could practice putting the wings back in."

King: "Oh Mthunzi. These things aren't rushed." He walked out. Wow.

Mthunzi: "I've assigned 10 guards just for you Mr Ntaka, if the King-"

Xolani: "Don't worry. I'll be fine. Just take care of my wife." I nodded. He followed the king out. I checked my phone again. 6 minutes. The cars drove out. From here to the main road it's about five minutes, so it's a cross your fingers situation. I watched on my phone both entourage's. Mrs Ntaka coming towards, the king driving out. The king reached the exit first, turning right into the main road. I sighed in relief. Mrs Ntaka only turned in a little over a minute later. I went to find the queens. They were in the lounge, reading. Nhlanhla was staring at her phone, Nkwenkwezi texting.

Mthunzi: "My queens and princesses. Mrs Ntaka will be arriving in less than five minutes. She currently doesn't know anything about the situation happening regarding Thembisa and we'd like to keep it that way."

Nobantu: "Sounds like a bad idea."

Mthunzi: "Any other is even worse, my queen. Mr Ntaka and the king just left and they're known to have gone to a conference together."

Nolwazi: "He can't stand my husband, if the wife knows him well enough she'll know that's a lie."

Mthunzi: "Then I ask that we convince her my queen."

Nobantu: "If the king left with him, where must we lie and say Thembisa is?"

Mthunzi: "On her honeymoon."

Nolwazi: "She was kidnapped. Calling it a honeymoon is just cruel."

Mthunzi: "It is. But we don't have time. It's the only believable story right now." The cars parked outside. "She's here."

Nobantu: "Nolwazi, if you would kindly welcome Mrs Ntaka."

Nolwazi: "Why must I do it? You're the first queen."

Nobantu: "You're the host."

Nolwazi: "I've never hosted a thing."

Nobantu: "Well, now is your chance."

Nolwazi: "She's from the village. I have nothing in common with her, how will I host her?"

Nobantu: "That is so unkind. To mother and daughter. You've never really liked Nobomi, have you?"

Nolwazi: "Have you?" She walked out. I followed her to the entrance of the villa. "Mother of our future queen, good day. Did you travel well?"

Mrs Ntaka: "My queen, good afternoon. I traveled well thank you. Where is-"

Nolwazi: "How about General Mthunzi take care of your luggage and suite arrangement. You and I, can have a drink then go to the spa. Follow me." Well I guess she has that handled.

Queen Nolwazi was gracious and patient. Much better than Queen Nobantu. She couldn't be bothered by anything. Fortunately for me, Nhlanhla was attending to Zanele. Since it was exam time, she came with her mother but would go back to Mthinomkhulu a day before her next exam which is next week. Yes, I checked. My phone buzzed in my pocket. I took it out to check my message. It was from Busi: <Hey. When you have a minute, please come see me. It's not urgent but any minute you get, I'd appreciate it.> For the past few days we have communicated mostly about updates about Nkosi and Thembisa. I wasn't sure if this was about us or maybe she had a dream that could help Nkosi. I responded: <I'll be home soon.> Once the family had gone to bed, I could go to her, assigning Dumane as head of security of all the guards for the night. I'd be back here before anyone wakes up. I went to check on Zanele in the lounge room. They were whispering to each other. Not sure where Nkwenkwezi is.

Zanele: "Please tell me."

Nhla: "I don't have anything to tell."

Zanele: "Princess Nhlanhla. I can feel that there is something going on."

Nhla: "Like what?" Zanele sighed.

Zanele: "My sister would never ignore me for this long. My father would be here to greet me when we arrive. My mother probably doesn't notice but I do. I know something has happened to my family."

Nhla: "Your family is safe, Zanele. Thembisa will come back soon and your father too. Maybe we can call him."

Zanele: "Isn't he in a conference?"

Nhla: "Yes but my father always pays attention to me. He'll answer." I walked in right then.

Mthunzi: "My princess, hello Zanele."

Nhla: "She's also a princess."

Mthunzi: "My apologies, my princesses. Are you doing well?"

Zanele: "We're fine thank you bhuti."

Nhla: "We want to call our dads."

Mthunzi: "Okay, no problem. I'm sure they can take a call. Where is Nkwenkwezi?"

Nhla: "With first mother."

Mthunzi: "Alright." I had nothing to worry about here. Nhlanhla has it handled. I went to check on Queen Nobantu and Nkwenkwezi.

Nobantu: "Well, it doesn't really matter Nkwenkwezi, it's not like you'd be working for money. What is important is that you enjoy it. So if fashion is something you want to pursue then go for it."

Nkwe: "But can I go to the university everyday?"

Nobantu: "You want to bother Khaya everyday."

Nkwe: "I would never do that. I just want to go to school. Like Amahle."

Nobantu: "I'll discuss it with your father, here's Mthunzi, he can also advise if it would be safe for you."

Mthunzi: "Good evening my queen and princess."

Nkwe: "If Amahle can go then I can Mthunzi, right? You can't ask bhuti, he'll say no."

Mthunzi: "Don't worry princess, I didn't ask Nkosi for Amahle to attend either. Security measures will be undertaken to be 100 percent sure of your safety." She squealed, texting on her phone. No doubt texting Khaya. That boy will have a problem on his hands.

Mthunzi: "I was only checking if all is well my queen."

Nobantu: "We're fine. I'm going to bed soon. Nkwenkwezi will join Nhlanhla and Zanele."

Mthunzi: "Should I have your dinner brought to your room?"

Nobantu: "Yes please." I nodded, walking out. I know the first queen was very private if not completely anti social. Which is why it was always shocking to see her angry. She barely displayed emotion. I made her order to the kitchen, and checked on the king and Mr Ntaka via the guards. I walked to restaurant, Mrs Ntaka and Queen Nolwazi were having drinks.

Mthunzi: "My queen, Mrs Ntaka. Good evening. I am checking if all is well. Is there anything I can assist with?"

Nolwazi: "No, we're doing great." She was bored, I could tell. The king chose his wives on his character surely. Nobantu was very withdrawn and quiet. She didn't like people at all. Nolwazi was the same but she could at least endure a few of hours of being gracious when it was important. The king only hosts one dinner a week with other people that aren't his family, immediately after that dinner he won't even pretend, he will leave and go to his lounge for time alone.

Mthunzi: "Alright. Queen Nobantu will not be present for dinner unfortunately, the princesses are speaking to their fathers and will be joining you for dinner." She sighed.

Mrs Ntaka: "When will the conference be ending? I would like to see my husband."

Mthunzi: "Unfortunately its over a span of a few days mama, I'm hoping tomorrow the king can pause the agenda and come for a break."

Mrs Ntaka: "Is it an important conference?"

Mthunzi: "Yes ma. It is about the nation." She smiled.

Mrs Ntaka: "Does this mean, he is part of royal council? That would make him a very important person."

Mthunzi: "The outcome of this conference will determine that mama but yes, he has an important role to the throne."

Mrs Ntaka: "Good." She smiled, satisfied. Everyone was well taken care of. I briefed Dumane, guiding him on each individual inside the villa then left. I drove to my house, half hoping that this conversation was about the throne crisis but also hoping it was about us. I didn't want to lose my wife. Everyday I regret what I did to her and I wish I could turn it back. That was definitely my lowest point in life. I parked my car and walked into the house. Busi was on the couch watching TV.

Mthunzi: "Hi bab- Busi. Sorry, habit." I sat down on our couch that wasn't even six months old. How I wish we could go back to the day it arrived.

Busi: "Hey."

Mthunzi: "How are you?"

Busi: "I'm well. And you?"

Mthunzi: "I'm okay. I'm good."

Busi: "Is there any news on Thembisa?"

Mthunzi: "Not really but Nkosi heard her voice again. So we're thinking she may be okay. He will be going on his journey tomorrow."

Busi: "That's good. He's strong enough." She sighed. "I have something to tell you." My heart was racing, mentally crossing my fingers.

Mthunzi: "Okay." She reached over on the table, taking a box. She held on to it, I wasn't sure what it was.

Busi: "What you did to me was horrible. It was evil, Mthunzi. I don't have to explain to you why it was so bad. You know. I do however appreciate that you at least had the decency to confess even though it was a little too late. I'm not sure what triggered your guilt but thank you." She opened the box, taking out what looked like a pregnancy test. She handed it to me. I took it with a shaky hand. I'm never nervous but at this point... I looked at the test.

Busi: "The test came out negative. I also went to a doctor for a blood test and she confirmed, I am not pregnant." Relief swept over me unexpectedly.

Mthunzi: "I'm relieved to hear that."

Busi: "Why?"

Mthunzi: "I don't want you to hurt any more than you have. You didn't need this burden. I can live without a child, I don't want to lose you. You are the only one I can't live without. You're my family. You're enough for me. I am truly sorry Busi."

Busi: "Does this mean you no longer want a child?"

Mthunzi: "Not at the cost of losing you."

Busi: "That would be unfair to you Mthunzi because believe it or not, I am still hopelessly in love with you and I don't ever want you to sacrifice your dreams for me."

Mthunzi: "Busisiwe, you are my dream. You've shown me so much love, support and joy more than anyone in my life." She took the envelope on the table.

Busi: "I don't know if I can ever trust you with my life again. Maybe I was too reliant on you but even so, you are the one person who was supposed to protect me and you hurt me. I don't know if anything you could've ever done would surpass the magnitude of this betrayal. I would've expected cheating before expecting this." I looked down at the test still in my hand. This wasn't worth it. I had not only hurt her but I disgraced my very being.

Mthunzi: "Are those divorce papers?" She gave me the envelope. I didn't even need to look inside. I couldn't look at her. Even if I wanted to, the tears were blurring my vision.

Mthunzi: "Baby please."

Busi: "I am sorry." She wiped her tears. "I am sorry but I don't think I can forgive this. I tried. I wanted to. But then I thought about how I got sick, bleeding non stop on the bathroom floor. I thought about how close I was to death. As the doctor had said, if I didn't make it there on time. I would be dead. I can't look past that. That is so scary Mthunzi. It hurts so much because," she breathed, swallowed the lump in her throat. "because I love you but if you can't protect me then I have to protect myself. I am sorry. I will move out of your house by the end of the week."

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## SIBONELO'S POV\_

Zwe finally discharged me. Amahle would be going with me to Stellars to reverse the spell on Zimmy. I was a bit nervous for seeing her again. We've only communicated on messages and one phone call a day.

Zwe: "Remember what I said Sibonelo. No strenuous activity, no stress."

Sibo: "Okay."

Zwe: "Are you fine? You usually protest."

Sibo: "No I don't."

Zwe: "What's going on with you?" Maybe I needed his advice. The prince looked at me.

Sibo: "I'm nervous."

Zwe: "About the interview? You'll nail it, brother. Don't be nervous. It will go well."

Sibo: "Not the interview. Uhm, I want to talk to Zimmy."

Zwe: "Okay, why does that make you nervous? She understands that you were working."

Sibo: "Not that."

Zwe: "Then what?"

Sibo: "I want to ask her for another chance."

Nkosi: "That's good. Go for it."

Sibo: "What if she says no?"

Nkosi: "Then respect that. Give her some time. Maybe you'd be able to try again after a few months, but if she says no then you'll have to change, find ways to show that you would be a good partner."

Zwe: "Look at you, Mr relationship expert."

Nkosi: "Please. I'm a married man, I know what I'm talking about." We laughed.

Sibo: "Okay, if my twin can do it then so can I."

Nkosi: "We're not twins."

Sibo: "I have selfies to prove it."

Nkosi: "Sibonelo!"

Sibo: "Don't worry, it's our family secret."

Nkosi: "I have enough to worry about, I'm not going to entertain you. Let's go-"

Sibo: "Aht, nope. You're not going anywhere near her. Not until the spell is completely wiped off. I'm not taking any chances. Please and thank you." Zwe was in stitches.

Nkosi: "Fine. I'll wait at Zwe's house, I have to take Amahle home before I go see my father and force him to do something about Mr Ntaka." We walked out of the hospital.

Zwe: "Let us know when you're done, Amahle."

Ama: "Okay." She and I got into a car and drove to Stellars. "Don't be nervous."

Sibo: "Easy for you to say."

Ama: "Sibonelo, you've already won. She's carrying your baby. Even if she says no, you have something with her that no other person has. You can improve yourself and be the man she deserves. The fact of the matter is, it's going to be okay."

Sibo: "You seem to be positive."

Ama: "Yeah well, they say if you keep a positive mindset you manifest positive results."

Sibo: "Nervous about Nkosi's journey?"

Ama: "Yes. I hate that I haven't been able to see Thembisa in my dreams or my visions. Even with Nkosi saying he heard her voice, I'm happy about that but I'm still worried about her."

Sibo: "Positive mindset. She's a strong young lady." She nodded.

Ama: "True."

Sibo: "It's been good getting to know your family. For years I thought negatively about you. Not you personally, just your family. It seemed so detached from everything. I was wrong. You're all wonderful."

Ama: "I wish that was true. We weren't wonderful Sibonelo. We were detached. Isolated, cold. Thembisa's presence in Nkosi's life changed all our lives. She helped me when she didn't have to, took care of me and connected me to who I was supposed to be. I would've lived a life of pain if it wasn't for that."

Sibo: "That's incredible." We drove into Stellars. I let out an exhale as we parked out in front of Mnqobi's house. We got out the car and walked in. Miles came running.

Miles: "Uncle Bobo!!"

Sibo: "Hello my baby boy." I picked him up, kissing his cheek. "I missed you."

Miles: "I missed you too."

Sibo: "Have you been behaving?"

Miles: "A little bit, yes." I chuckled, walking to the lounge.

Sibo: "Good evening."

Siza: "Hello Prince Sibonelo."

Petu: "Hi Prince Sibonelo."

Mnqobi: "You're back brother."

Sibo: "And you're supposed to be studying."

Mnqobi: "I'm taking a little bit of a break."

Sibo: "Where is Jimmy?"

Siza: "She's putting Maya to sleep. She's upstairs." I went up the stairs, finding Amahle with her. Jimmy placed the baby in her little cot.

Jimmy: "Hey, you're back!"

Sibo: "I am. Hello."

Ama: "Okay, I want to be quick. Uhm, Jimmy. I want to clear you off any stress and bad energy, it will help with the baby and any feelings you've been experiencing as well."

Jimmy: "You can do that?"

Ama: "Yes. It's perfectly safe."

Jimmy: "Did Nothando tell you?"

Ama: "Don't worry, I understand and I just want to help."

Zimmy: "Okay." Amahle lit up her herb, it started burning.

Ama: "When the fire and smoke die down, it will take away everything from it. Its only going to take a few minutes."

Sibo: "I'll come back in a few minutes." I walked out, going back downstairs. I checked my phone, I thought I felt it buzz a few minutes ago. It was a message from Zwe.

Zwe: <You can do this brother. I am proud of you. You surprise and inspire me everyday. I wish you the best of luck. I love you.> Damn it now I can't back out. A few minutes went by until Amahle came downstairs.

Sibo: "My little prince, do you want to wait for me right here? I'm going upstairs to talk to Auntie Zimmy after that, you and I can hang out."

Miles: "Okay. I'll wait for you." I placed him on the couch with Siza, then went upstairs. Zimmy was sitting on the bed, staring at baby Maya.

Sibo: "Manifesting a daughter?" She giggled.

Zimmy: "Yes."

Sibo: "Can we talk?"

Zimmy: "Sure." I sat next to her.

Sibo: "I want to apologize for the way I treated you. I was an asshole. I knew I liked you but I didn't want to get comfortable. I wasn't sure and it wasn't anything you did wrong. I was dealing with my own insecurities and unhealed relationship baggage. You didn't deserve that. I also want to apologize for making your life difficult when you stood your ground. You were right, I am used to girls giving in to me. When I didn't get my way, I reacted in a really disgusting way. I am so sorry. And Zimmy, I am not saying all of this because you're pregnant with my child. I realized I liked you back then and didn't want anyone to have you. That's why I wanted to fight Melokuhle. I kept praying, okay maybe not actual praying, hoping that you don't give him a chance. It was killing me that I fucked up mine. He's a great guy but I couldn't accept it. A few times I'd come close to begging for your love back but pride hit me each and every time. I didn't want to submit to begging. A good friend told me to let myself be loved and also love. To leave the CEO title in the office. And just let myself experience uthando. For some time, before learning

you're pregnant, I knew I wanted to experience it with you. I know I'm rambling in circles because I am terrified of asking." I let out an exhale, kneeling in front of her. "Please give me another chance, Zimasa. I'm not promising perfection. I am promising an open, respectful, honest, caring and supportive me. I will make mistakes, but I will learn and rectify them. Please be patient with me. I've been in relationships before but this will be different for me because you will be my first priority. Your feelings, your dreams, your well-being will be my priority. I know that I love you. I want to learn to love you more for the rest of my life. I want to make you happy. Please give me a chance to show you that I deserve you." She looked at our hands held together. I was holding my breath, thinking positive thoughts.

Zimmy: "I would love nothing more. I want to give you another chance Sibonelo." I let out a sigh of relief, chuckling the nervous tear in my eye.

Sibo: "I was about to pass out." She laughed.

Zimmy: "Une drama." She held my face. "Do you know how hard you have to work?"

Sibo: "Yes mama."

Zimmy: "Good, but a prince shouldn't be on his knees. What will people say Sibonelo? You're a very important." I chuckled getting up, I held her hand to stand up with me.

Sibo: "So we're doing this? Fully, with no hold backs, no reservations."

Zimmy: "Fully committed." What I've been craving to do for weeks, I finally had the chance. I kissed her lips, holding her close to my body.

## ZWELETHU'S POV\_

I was having a drink with Nkosi in my house. We've opted for alcohol free, so that he remains pure for his journey.

Zwe: "Are you nervous?"

Nkosi: "For tomorrow? No, I'm feeling strong for some reason. The pains don't hurt anymore."

Zwe: "Having a twin was good for you."

Nkosi: "It really was. I had to fight for my life." We laughed. My phone beeped a message. Sibonelo: <A baby daddy and a boyfriend.> I smiled, responding: <Proud of you.>

Zwe: "Sibonelo is in. She took him back."

Nkosi: "I know. So what about you?"

Zwe: "What about me?"

Nkosi: "When are you going on a date with the librarian lady?"

Zwe: "Who told you about that- it was Sibonelo, wasn't it?"

Nkosi: "Obviously but you're trying to avoid the question."

Zwe: "It's been a busy few days."

Nkosi: "Yes, and now you have some time. Tonight would be perfect."

Zwe: "I need to be available for you."

Nkosi: "I am going to the palace to sort my father's mess then I'm going to cleanse one more time and sleep. I leave for my journey in the morning. I'm not an excuse."

Zwe: "I just need to be available."

Nkosi: "No, you don't. You always want to take care of people. Now, take care of yourself."

Zwe: "Okay. You're right."

Nkosi: "Call her." I dialed her number on my phone. After a few rings she picked up.

Zamo: "Hello?"

Zwe: "Hello Nomzamo."

Zamo: "Prince Biyela?" So she remembers my voice? That's somewhat comforting.

Zwe: "Good memory. How are you?" I could feel her blushing over the phone.

Zamo: "I'm well, how are you my prince?"

Zwe: "I'm good. I was wondering if you're free tonight?"

Zamo: "Uhm, you want to discuss the articles for the interview? Yes I'm free."

Zwe: "No. I don't want to discuss the articles. I want to have dinner with you."

Zamo: "Oh." She cleared her throat. "Yes I'm available for dinner."

Zwe: "May I pick you up in an hour?"

Zamo: "Two hours rather." I wanted to know what she'd be doing for two hours but the mystery is better.

Zwe: "Alright, I'm looking forward to seeing you Nomzamo."

Zamo: "Me too. I'll send my address shortly."

Zwe: "Thank you." I hung up. "I have a date."

Nkosi: "Perfect. It's about time you got married. Let me go fetch this one and take her home."

Zwe: "Let's go, I need to distract myself from nerves."

Nkosi: "You already like her, you'll be fine." We walked out, driving to Mngqobi's house.

Zwe: "I do, I really do like Nomzamo." From the glimpse of her personality when we were in the library, she intrigued me. I liked that she wasn't as innocent as she looked.

I'd spent my time at Mngqobi's house. When my brothers went to the palace, I went to my house to shower and get dressed for dinner. Only Nkosi knew I had a date, I didn't want to excite Sibonelo and those two mini hims would definitely tell him. I just want tonight to go smoothly without their cheerleading. I let the guard drive to her house, following the directions she had given. I sat in the back, watching our beautiful city. We parked out her home in eMoyeni. The guard stood out by the back door. I called her, she picked up in a few rings.

Zwe: "I'm outside."

Zamo: "Okay, I'm ready, I'm coming." I hung up, swallowing the lump in my throat. My phone beeped a message. <Best of luck with your date! I'll hold off on contacting the tailor for my best man suit but I'm keeping him in mind.> Who told Sibonelo? Obviously Nkosinhle. I chuckled.

Nomzamo walked out her gate wearing a classy red body hugging dress, accentuating her curves and with a teasing slit on her thigh. Desire sparked in my soul. She got in the car, smelling like heaven. Hints of jasmine and a bit of sandalwood wafted in the air. I couldn't pin the rest of it but it smelt so seductive. We drove off to the restaurant.

Zwe: "Good evening Nomzamo."

Zamo: "Good evening Prince Biyela."

Zwe: "Please call me Zwe."

Zamo: "Please call me Zamo." I smiled.

Zwe: "How are you?"

Zamo: "I'm great. How are you?"

Zwe: "I'm good." I couldn't keep my eyes off her. I knew Nomzamo was gorgeous from the moment I first saw but now was different. Is it possible that the love spell rubbed off on me too? Surely not.

Zamo: "Is something wrong?"

Zwe: "Why do you ask?"

Zamo: "You're staring."

Zwe: "You're gorgeous." She smiled, trying not to blush.

Zamo: "Thank you. I'm sure you've heard plenty of times already that you look handsome, we can't risk your head getting any bigger." I laughed.

Zwe: "You have jokes."

Zamo: "I do. So where are you taking me?"

Zwe: "I reserved a table at Greenland's. They have a private lounge where we can enjoy a lovely dinner and get to know each other better. Is that okay?"

Zamo: "Yes it is. Thank you." I wasn't usually nervous, but suddenly tonight, I was. I don't know if it was maybe the pressure from Nkosi and now Sibonelo's message. They really must be twins because why are they affecting me like this? "Everything okay?"

Zwe: "Uhm, yes."

Zamo: "You look nervous." I chuckled.

Zwe: "Maybe I am, just a little bit. Did I tell you how gorgeous you look?"

Zamo: "Yes you did." She giggled. "But thank you again." We arrived at the restaurant, the guard opening our doors. I led her inside. "When you said reserved a table, I thought you meant a table not the whole restaurant."

Zwe: "I promise I only asked for a table. They might've gotten too excited. I'm surprised there isn't a brass band waiting." She giggled.

Zamo: "You really feel yourself ne?"

Zwe: "Yes." I laughed. We sat at our table. "What will you drink my lady?"

Zamo: "I'll have the Mvane, 2003. If it's possible, in the plain range."

Zwe: "That's very specific."

Zamo: "I read alot of history and current events. I took the opportunity to go on a wine tour at your family vineyard about a year ago. This wine was my absolute favorite." I stared at her.

Zwe: "Do you have a second favorite?"

Zamo: "The 2007, Pressing Bloods."

Zwe: "That's an amazing wine."

Zamo: "Hard to find too."

Zwe: "Yes, it's a limited edition. Exclusive to the farm." Now that I know it was her favorite, I'll be able to send her a case as a gift. "what do you like doing besides visiting my family vineyard?" She laughed.

Zamo: "I wish I could say I like visiting it but it was only once and a very mediocre experience." I gasped.

Zwe: "Mediocre?"

Zamo: "Yes. The place is beautiful but I didn't learn much about wine. The workers were focused on doing their work. We were told about the wines by professionals not the people who made it. It felt curated, perfect, and very boring. I feel like if you're giving someone an experience, let them live it. Shouldn't the workers, who spend the hours

making the wines and bottling them be the ones talking about the wines?"

Zwe: "I never thought of that. I'm not involved with the vineyard."

Zamo: "The farm is beautiful. That I can't deny. However, for the steep price I would've been more appreciative if the workers were included in talking about it."

Zwe: "I absolutely get that. They would know more. Also the experience of bottling wine is much more exciting than hearing some guy talk about people's great grandfather's." She giggled.

Zamo: "Your great grandfather's made great wine, I wouldn't mind hearing about them." The waiter brought our bottle, opening and pouring it. She swirled, sniffed and tasted. "Perfect." The waiter poured the rest of the beverage in our glasses and walked away. "I feel awkward when you stare at me. You have really daring eyes."

Zwe: "What do you think I'm daring you to do Nomzamo?" She put down her glass of wine,licking her lips.

Zamo: "I can only tell at the end of the night." My gaze briefly landed on her breasts held comfortably by her red dress. "I read you are doctor."

Zwe: "I'm a neurosurgeon."

Zamo: "Impressive." She sipped her wine. Her eyes were saying something else.

Zwe: "Since I've visited your workplace, I know you're a librarian. Is that a profession you enjoy?"

Zamo: "Yes. I enjoy being at the library but what I enjoy the most is teaching. I tutor high school students, exploring history with them and teaching them of where we come from is something close to my heart."

Zwe: "That's amazing. You only tutor history?"

Zamo: "That and Maths."

Zwe: "Why high school? Why not the University?"

Zamo: "I feel that our high schools need a proper base of history. A lot of the times, the subject is passed over as a last resort. Some of the time, the students don't even further their tertiary in a history profession. I love working with high school students because it is there where you get to

make more of an impact and help young teenagers make better or even informed career choices."

Zwe: "How would you feel about compiling a study course dedicated to history?"

Zamo: "I think I would enjoy that very much."

Zwe: "A friend of mine has asked to do this and I'd like your help. I have a passion for history but of course it's not my specialty or academic field. Your input will be appreciated."

Zamo: "I'd love to help." She sipped her wine. I'm glad she had gotten over her shyness. The two encounters at the library, she was quite shy and sweet. Now, her gaze was just as challenging as mine. She didn't look away when my eyes locked with hers, she didn't blush either. We stared at each other, sure. This was new for me and I wasn't sure how to approach the matter. She smiled knowingly and sipped her wine. "This is amazing."

Zwe: "Do you want to order something to eat?"

Zamo: "Do you?" I stared at her, not sure.

Zwe: "No. I already know what I want to eat."

Zamo: "Me too." She finished her glass, placing it neatly on the table. I called the waiter.

Zwe: "Bill." She went to fetch it and I paid, getting up from the table, I held out my hand. Zamo held my hand, I walked out the restaurant to the car. This is a first. The guard drove to my house swiftly. I kissed her hand, my finger under her chin to bring her face to mine. I kissed her lips, tasting like the berries she just drank, soft, sweet. I pulled her closer, her fragrance wafting around me. Her thigh a smooth soft silky feel, I lost my breath touching it.

Zamo: "Slow down." She murmured. I wanted her now. In this back seat. But I slowed, pecking her lips and neck.

Zwe: "You smell amazing." I whispered. She giggled.

Zamo: "Uhm..."

Zwe: "No, don't go shy on me now."

Zamo: "I'm not." She giggled. The car drove into Stellars, parking out in my yard. I got out the car holding her hand. We entered my house, I held her against the door.

Zwe: "Are you comfortable with this?"

Zamo: "Yes." I kissed her lips, zipping down her dress.

Zwe: "This dress looks amazing on you but I just couldn't wait to take it off." I dropped it to the floor. She was only in a red lace thong.

Zamo: "Well, I wasn't interested in your suit." She took off my blazer, unbuttoning my shirt. "From the first moment, I saw you, I wondered..."

Zwe: "Wondered what..." She slid the shirt off my body. Her hands running over my chest and stomach.

Zamo: "I wondered what you looked like under that fitting shirt. You're perfect." I pulled up her chin, kissing her lips.

Zwe: "What else did you wonder about me..."

Zamo: "Everything." I kissed her jawline, her neck.

Zwe: "What's everything."

Zamo: "Tasting you, making me scream." I picked her up off the ground, kissing her nipples. My arms slipped under each thigh, lifting her higher up against the door. "Zwe!"

Zwe: "Shhh..." I kissed her inner thigh up to her clit. The flat of my tongue licked on it, up and down then sucked it in.

Zamo: "ohhh." I licked down to her hole, circling it with the tip of my tongue, fitting it inside, pushing it in and licking out. She held on my head, when I went faster. I could taste her juices pouring on my chin. I licked on her clitoris once again, flicking my tip of tongue in circular motion, up and down, that seemed to affect her more than anything else. Her thighs were shaking on my arms, her moans inaudible. I kept a steady pace, her grip on me getting tighter. "Zwe..." I couldn't wait for her to reach her climax so I could enjoy her taste to my satisfaction. She tastes amazing. Finally, I felt her trembling, screaming, fresh liquid down my chin and throat. She finally stilled, trying to get me off her sensitive nub. I placed her safely on the ground. I held her face, about to kiss her but she quickly looked away.

Zwe: "Hey, don't be shy." I kissed her cheek. "Look at me." I pulled her chin up to look at me but she closed her eyes. I froze. "Nomzamo."

Zamo: "I'm sorr-"

Zwe: "Look at me. Right now." She shivered. I waited. I couldn't have seen what I thought I saw. She looked up at me. Her eyes swirling a bright orange fading into a brown.

Chapter 155

ZWELETHU'S POV\_

I stared at her. She couldn't even look at me. The brief moment I managed to see her eyes. They were orange, quickly turning back to brown. If I didn't notice, she wouldn't have hidden.

Zamo: "Sorry." She picked her dress up from the floor, putting it on.

Zwe: "Where do you think you're going."

Zamo: "Home, Zwelethu. if you don't mind."

Zwe: "Before or after I call the prince?"

Zamo: "Oh do whatever the fuck you want."

Zwe: "Excuse me?"

Zamo: "I don't care who you call Zwe Biyela."

Zwe: "You don't care because you're one of them. You're a Sikhosana."

Zamo: "I am NOT a Sikhosana. I am nothing like or even near them!!"  
She spat, getting dressed.

Zwe: "You're not going anywhere. You can't just have orange eyes even for a minute.. Nomzamo, I'm not letting that pass."

Zamo: "Do whatever you want." I held her arms, she fought me off but failed.

Zwe: "Talk to me-"

Zamo: "And say what!!! I don't even know what I'd be talking about!!"

Zwe: "Is that why you're so helpful with getting the archives? You want to know why you're a Sikhos-"

Zamo: "I am NOT a Sikhosana. I am nothing near a royal."

Zwe: "Your eyes glowed orange. I beg to differ."

Zamo: "Get off me."

Zwe: "No." I held both her wrists. "Talk." She tried wiggling her way out of it but I held on tight. "Nomzamo...talk to me." She breathed, running out of energy.

Zamo: "Let go of my wrists."

Zwe: "Not until you tell me the truth about who you are." She tried getting loose again but I held on. "Nomzamo, I'm asking you kindly, one last time." She stared into my eyes. Hers were back to brown.

Zamo: "I'm not a Sikhosana. I don't know anything about them. I just know that my eyes sometimes change colours. I know that in my ancestral line, there was some relation to Sikhosana but I don't know anything else."

Zwe: "So that's why you're helping with the archives. You want to know if you're truly a relative of the throne."

Zamo: "Yes."

Zwe: "Who else knows about this?"

Zamo: "No one. Not even my mother."

Zwe: "I'm going to save you time. If your eyes do that, you're definitely a Sikhosana. We just need to figure out how. It's not possible to be King Ngidumise's child, he died before you were born. King Sizwe doesn't have any other children apart from his wife." I let go of her. She looked at her wrists, trying to rub them. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you."

Zamo: "It's fine. Can I please go home?"

Zwe: "No, I don't want you to go-"

Zamo: "I don't want problems Zwe. I didn't step on anyone's toes, I didn't do anything wrong. If the throne discovers this about me, they'll kill me. They don't want outsiders especially a commoner to have their blood."

Zwe: "That's not true. Maybe in the past, but not anymore. I promise they will not hurt you."

Zamo: "I'm scared."

Zwe: "You have nothing to be scared of. Just tell the truth." She nodded. "Why do your eyes change color?"

Zamo: "It only happens when I'm feeling a high emotion. Like anger or extreme happiness. I can't control it."

Zwe: "So what were you feeling this time?"

Zamo: "Pleasure." I held her hands, kissing her fingers. As much as I still wanted her. I couldn't wrap my head around who she might be. One thing I was sure of though, I'm not letting her out of my sight. It could be that she was either the witch or probably just a relative that went unnoticed. One way or the other, I'm not letting her out that door until I figure it out. Nothing will disturb Nkosinhle's journey tomorrow. Come hell.

## SASA'S POV\_

My whole body was trembling with fear. I had to swallow it and focus on the task ahead. Mzingeli had brought me to the river just after dinner. As instructed by Ndiliswa, I had to stay at this cold, dark river overnight.

Mzi: "You'll be safe, nothing will harm you. That, I promise." He had said. I nodded bravely. "This is the last time I'm seeing you. In the morning, at dawn, you'll have to go. Follow the river bank, 3 kilometers down, you'll find a white rock half your size, enter the forest then and run west. There will be animals, and you will have to be brave. Here." He gave me a sharp knife. "Stick this into a neck of an animal that attacks you. Block with your arm, protect your pretty face and stab with this. If there's more than one animal, don't be afraid. Start with the one in front that attacks first."

Me: "Then what? After running for so long, do I get somewhere?"

Mzi: "No. Your husband will find you in the forest. It will be safe for you inside the forest. Make sure, no one sees you." I nodded.

Me: "How do I.... You know."

Mzi: "You'll do as the ancestors tell you. Don't worry, the knife is only for the animals. You won't have to touch her." I was so relieved, thank goodness.

Me: "Thank you Mzi. For everything."

Mzi: "Go well." He turned to walk away.

Me: "Mzingeli." He looked at me. "Avail yourself. You're family. One day they'll come. Maybe get to know you."

Mzi: "We don't live in a fairytale Nobomi."

Me: "I know. Seeing King Sizwe participate in taking the lost princes home, I know a part of him will be interested in knowing about you. You're his nephew." He walked away, back into the woods. I sat next to the river, not feeling a crisp of cold. We were in winter but it didn't feel like it. I was warm and comfortable as well. I started singing drawing on the sand on the ground, waiting for any sign. "You Made a way, Don't know how but You did it. You Made a way. Standing here not knowing how we'll get through this test, But holding unto faith You know that, Nothing can catch You by surprise. You got this figured out and You're watching us now, But when it looks as if we can't win. You wrap us in Your arm and step in, And everything we need You supply. You got this in control, And now we know that... You made a way. When our backs were against the wall, And it looked as if it was over. Lord, you made a way." I sat in the ground, watching the waters, singing for what felt like hours. The wind whistled all around me, whispering softly until it was audible. I got up and followed the voice to the edge of the waterfall. Right the bank, where the water started and blended with the grass. "Krazula iingcambu emhlabeni." (Pull out the root from the earth.) I knelt on the ground, digging into the soil my hands filled with mud. If I had to pull out the root, I'd have to do it properly and carefully. A sparkling of thunder flashed across the sky.

"Wenzani?" (What are you doing?) I heard a voice speak behind me in a distance. I knew it belonged to the grandma witch. I carried on digging.

"Ntombazana yiyeke lento uyenzayo ndingekakophuki umqolo.

Mngcatshi ongenambulelo! Ukhetha utshaba olubulele igazi lakho kwaye ubanceda bakugqibe." (Little girl, stop what you are doing before I break your back. You ungrateful traitor! You chose the enemy that killed your bloodline and you're helping them finish you.) I held the root, firmly. The thunder in the sky rocketed violently, causing the grounds to shake. She

started chanting, my womb started aching. I pulled on the root but it stuck to the ground. "Ndizokubulala." (I will kill you.) I pulled harder on the root, tears running down my face, my lower belly aching and cramping. My hands wrapped around the roots.

Me: "To the earth I dig through, as my tears fall into this soil, please protect my child and my life. May your healing, seep through me and allow me to escape with my task complete. I cry to the heavens seeking their help, pleading for their guidance. As I pull this root, tear the evil out of this earth to give way to the new and good future." I pulled with all my strength and it tore off the depths of the earth, I pulled it all the way out. The roots danced around like tiny snakes. I threw it in the water, washing it away. I looked back to see the grandma, on her knees, chanting. I started digging the second, her screams got louder as I pulled it out and threw it in the river. (Run.) A voice in my head said. I stood up with wobbly legs and started running. Something grabbed my ankle, I kicked it off and kept running although it kept pulling me back, I fought while running. It took a very long while to realize now I wasn't being chased. I couldn't see properly, the river had brought heavy mist. I couldn't see more than two steps ahead so I sat down. Hoping it soon fades away. It didn't. Hours later, as I'd sat still, I started hearing bird sounds signaling dawn. The mist was slowly fading. I got up and started my journey, this time walking steadily to preserve my energy. As the sun rose I finally started to see the white rock. I was to turn into in the forest. I stared at the river one more time kneeling on the bank, I cupped my hands to get some to drink and keep me hydrated until I can find Nkosi. I got up and went into the forest as instructed. How do I know which way is west? I looked at the sun. It was rising on the east, so I had to run away from it since west is opposite. I walked carefully, the forest was still dark at this point but light was seeping through. I'm glad I drank the water, this could take a long while because I didn't know what I was doing or where I was going. This part of the forest was cold and eerie. I kept walking, looking around me. It felt as if I was being watched. Was I even going the right direction. The sun was fully risen and I was so tired. I sat down to rest for a bit. My feet were swollen and my back ached terribly.

Me: "We'll rest just an hour baby, then we keep going so that your daddy can find us." I rubbed my belly. Leaves crackled in a short distance, I stood up looking around. A fierce hyena inched closer, eyes angry and mouth drooling with hunger. I stepped back, holding my bladder. My

body shook uncontrollably with fear. I took the knife out with shaky hands and held on to it tight on my belly. My other arm in front of me ready to block the attack. "Please don't make me do this." I pleaded, as if the animal could hear me or even understand. Just then I could feel a hum all around me. I was five to wetting myself and close to being devoured by animals in the wild. Mzingeli obviously tricked me. How could I fight off a whole clan of hyenas? I quickly looked around. One of them leaped off a tree, landing and skidding right in front of me giving me the fright of my life. It jumped at me trying to attack and I blocked with my arm, its teeth sinking into my forearm. I plunged the knife in its neck, flinching Almost gagging at the nausea I was experiencing. I was expecting the rest of them to attack. My spirit was defeated and my arm in severe pain. The animal fell limp and I quickly let loose my arm. A collective roar vibrated off the forest. The tigers circling around me, not a single alive hyena around. If I wasn't scared of the hyenas, I was beyond terrified of the tigers. My blood dripped on the ground, heart beat hammering in my chest like it was about to explode. They sat down, their heads looking at the ground. One older bigger looking tiger walked towards me but only grabbed the dead hyena with its teeth, dragging it away. The others stood but didn't move. Wait... Weren't these.... Nkosi's friends? They didn't look like they were angry or about to attack. I followed the bigger tiger, they all walked around me until we reached a cave opening. I could hear water, so there was a stream nearby. I sat in the opening of the cave, watching the tigers tear apart their breakfast hyena. With my dress, I wiped the blood from my fresh wound. It hurt so bad I thought my arm would fall off. At least I was safe.

## NKOSI'S POV\_

I was up earlier than my usual time. I couldn't sleep a second longer and the first thing I did was go on a run, I came back to the palace and went to my father in the garden. As the new normal now, he was fully dressed in a three piece royal blue suit and a long black coat on his shoulders.

Nkosi: "Where are you going?"

King: "So we don't greet anymore? Just start talking like we woke up in the same womb?"

Nkosi: "Morning father."

King: "Good morning Nkosinhle, how are you?" I didn't care for the banter but I know he wouldn't let it go.

Nkosi: "I'm well father, how are you?"

King: "I'm great. It's going to be a good day."

Nkosi: "Where is uTata? Is he still sleeping?"

King: "No."

Nkosi: "What did you do?"

King: "Nothing! I only do what is asked. You people act like I'm a terrorist that's always starting trouble."

Nkosi: "Maybe because you are? Where is he?" He looked up in the sky. I sighed. "Why is he not back to normal?"

King: "He wanted one more morning in the sky before returning to normal."

Nkosi: "Okay but you know how to call him back right?"

King: "Of course I do." I looked at him. "I don't. I really don't." I shook my head trying to let this go. Zwe had told me this wasn't my business, I am not the parent. How is it not my business when my father is playing on a very crucial day?

Nkosi: "Find a way to get him down and change him back to his normal self. By the time I leave this morning, he must be fine. No wings. No flying. Please." I walked away but stopped. "I mean it, father. NOW!"

King: "Oh please, your baby bear voice doesn't scare me."

Nkosi: "Okay." I walked into the palace up to my room. I changed into clean running clothes. I couldn't shower because of the cleanse that was protecting me. I was ready to leave but was advised to go mid morning. I made it down to breakfast, Mthunzi walked in.

Nkosi: "What are you doing here?"

Mthunzi: "To protect you obviously. I want to go over the plan for the journey."

Nkosi: "Where do you think you're going Mthunzi?"

Mthunzi: "Do you really think I'm going to let you run wild by yourself in the woods? When has that ever happened?"

Nkosi: "I'm not running wild, I'm going on a journey that is so dangerous I had to cleanse for two days as a means of protection. I'm not letting you go anywhere."

Mthunzi: "I've been in war Nkosi. I can protect myself."

Nkosi: "When did you go to war?"

Mthunzi: "What do you think I was doing when you were in Cali?"

Nkosi: "You're not going anywhere. I can handle everything."

Mthunzi: "Fine, I'll wait for you at the safe zone then so I can receive you when you come back."

Nkosi: "What's going on?"

Mthunzi: "Nothing." I stared at his eyes, red, slightly swollen.

Nkosi: "Were you drinking? Your eyes are red."

Mthunzi: "Last night, yes."

Nkosi: "You're lying."

Mthunzi: "Nkosihle, can we focus please?"

Nkosi: "I am focused. On your eyes, right now. Why are they like that?"

Mthunzi: "It doesn't matt-"

Nkosi: "You don't cry. Were you crying?" He looked away, swallowing the air in his throat. "What's going on?"

Mthunzi: "Right now isn't a good time."

Nkosi: "It is. I don't have anything to do for a few hours."

Mthunzi: "No Nkosi. This is ....I fucked up, okay? I don't even know how to tell you without changing how you look at me. I really fucked up. Right now, we should be focused on Thembisa. I just want to make sure she's found safely and back in your arms."

Nkosi: "Is this about Busi?"

Mthunzi: "Yes."

Nkosi: "And your quest of getting her pregnant behind her back?"

Mthunzi: "Did Zwe tell you?"

Nkosi: "No. Do you really think I don't know what you get up to?"

Mthunzi: "And you kept quiet?"

Nkosi: "Yes. You had to learn a lesson."

Mthunzi: "I wish you'd stopped me."

Nkosi: "Then you wouldn't have learnt. What works for humans is experiencing and working through their mistakes to find themselves. It hurts as hell but it grows you as a person."

Mthunzi: "I don't want to lose my wife Nkosi."

Nkosi: "You'd already lost her but you'll be okay Mthunzi. It will hurt, it will break you but you'll be fine." He nodded, holding back his emotions. Just like me, he needs to keep busy to cope with his hurt.

After a few arguments and chasing with my father, I had finally gotten him to change Mr Ntaka back. He found a way to not just conceal but put back in the angel wings. I left the palace with strict instructions but they'd be going to the villa soon so I wasn't too worried. Mthunzi drove me to the woods I was supposed to go through, he parked the car.

Mthunzi: "I'll be right here. You can do this." I nodded, not really sure. I couldn't feel her scent. I wasn't sure if I was even at the right place. What if I failed again? What if I can't get into the village? What if I don't make it out? "Nkosi. Hey... You've got this. Okay? I know you've got this. Here." He gave me a pair of running shorts I put in my mouth. I nodded, running off into the woods, I transformed into my tiger jumping into the air and landing back on the ground. I ran through that forest, feeling the swift change in environment. I turned back to human form, putting on the shorts, and climbed up a tree. I looked over the grounds, expanding my senses. I looked in a direction, climbing down that tree and made another run toward that path. I reached a heavy atmosphere. This is probably where the veil is. I made the bird call, or an attempt, to open the veil. Nothing happened. I stepped closer in, continuing with the call. I sniffed around, feeling nothing. A sudden fear crept into my heart. I can't be too late. They can't do that to me. I continued the call, it became clearer. The energy pulled me in, I walked faster but steady and carefully. The woods were silent with not even an animal movement. I could feel life just a few meters ahead. I kept walking carefully, not alerting anyone. When I moved even closer, almost at the opening. A

figure walked through it. A small little girl with big brown eyes looked up at me. I could feel the instant panic in her aura.

Nkosi: "I'm not here to hurt you." I blurted. She stared at me confused. "I'm looking for Thembisa. I just want Thembisa."

Girl: "Thembisa."

Nkosi: "Yes. That's who I'm here for."

Girl: "Akekho uThembisa. Uhambile." My hearing temporarily shut down.

Nkosi: "W-what does that mean?" She continued to stare.

Girl: "Kumkani." She pointed at me. "Nguwe iKumkani yesizwe sethu?" (King. You are the King of our nation.)

Nkosi: "Yebo, yimina iNkosi. Kumkani." (Yes I am the King.) She smiled. "Uye kuphi uThembisa?" (Where did she go?)

Girl: "Ugodukile. Nawe funeka ugoduke." (She went home. You also have to go home.) That can't be right.

Nkosi: "Akekho ekhaya." (She's not home.)

Girl: "Uze umkhangele." (Then Look for her.) She walked to me and held my hand. "Iza." (Come.) I know I shouldn't be trusting little girls in the forest but she seemed harmless. She wasn't going to harm me. I followed her back into the bushes.

"What are you doing?" A deep voice said behind me. I turned around, immediately in defense. The intruder.

Nkosi: "Looking for my wife." I shielded the girl behind me.

Man: "Is that why you're stealing my child?"

Nkosi: "She's the only honest person around that can show me where my wife is-"

Man: "Ndiliswa, Buyela ekhaya." (Go home.)

Ndili: "Bhuti-"

Man: "Ngoku." (NOW)

Ndili: "Andifuni bhuti." (I don't want to.) I looked down at her. What the hell was happening here.

Man: "Ndiliswa." He warned.

Nkosi: "I beg you to try it." I stepped closer to him.

Man: "Do you know what we do to people that steal children Nkosinhle?"

Nkosi: "Don't waste your time telling me. Show me." He walked closer to me. I kept all thoughts to none. Only watching his movement towards me. Any ability I used, he would imitate but if I showed nothing he would do nothing.

Man: "Your wife has left. Her task is complete here."

Nkosi: "What task."

Man: "That is not any of your business. Walk west."

I had no reason to trust him either.

Nkosi: "Not without answers."

Man: "The tribe knows you're here. The silence you feel is them watching you cross over this final threshold before arrows strike your back. I don't wish to fight and neither do you. You only came here to fetch her, now I'm telling you where to go. Go."

Nkosi: "Who are you?" He stared at me.

Man: "Are you not listening to what I'm saying?"

Nkosi: "I don't care. Who are you? My father says you have our blood, but you also have Thembisa's and you've been protecting her. Ungubani?"

Man: "That is not relevant."

Nkosi: "Okay." I picked up the little girl, walking towards him.

Man: "Mzingeli. That's my name. My father is your uncle, your father's third born brother. My mother was treasure blood, she died giving birth. Now leave." I put the child down, looking at her.

Nkosi: "Enkosi."

Ndili: "Uhambe kakuhle." (Go well.) She ran off to her brother. I looked at him one last time. A blink of orange crossed his eyes.

Nkosi: "Your father's name is Prince Kgabu Sikhosana. That's what he was renamed as when we brought his spirit home. They were brought

back to the palace gardens and helped cross to the correct spiritual realm. The Royal Sikhosana realm. You know your way in." I walked away, running west before turning into my tiger for ultimate speed. I tuned out my thoughts and heightened my senses once more. Blood. I roared, running toward her. I reached the spot, noticing the blood stain on the ground. The drops of blood stained further away. I heard a roaring call from the cave. I pounced, running toward it. Faster, jumping higher than I ever have. Her scent getting stronger. My heart slamming in my torso. I finally reached the cave. There she was. The world disappeared all around me. She sat up, looking at me.

Sasa: "Nkosi..." My heart gleamed in pure joy. She recognized me in any form. I ran to her, collapsing in her arms. She giggled. "You are so heavy!" I sniffed her belly, tugging at her dress with my teeth, my nose rubbing on it. She rubbed my ears. "We're safe baby. We're here." I noticed her bleeding arm. My anger flashed in a second. I turned to the tribe, roaring loudly. She held my neck. "They saved me. It was a hyena. They helped me." I looked at the animal remains on the ground and chuffed. They bowed their heads. I turned back into human form.

Nkosi: "I missed you so much."

Sasa: "I missed you too but please apologize to your friends, you can't scream at them like that."

Nkosi: "I did." I kissed her lips, so pleased to have my life back. "My baby." I held her belly, feeling his heart beating strong. "Let's get you home. I am never letting you out of my sight ever again, my love. I will never let this happen again." She curled in my chest, warming my heart. I walked out holding her in my arms, following the path back to the car waiting with Mthunzi.

Sasa: "I prayed every night for you."

Nkosi: "I heard every word. Every prayer made me stronger. Having you away from me almost killed me Thembisa."

Sasa: "I'm sorry."

Nkosi: "I'm sorry I didn't come sooner." I kissed her head. She got heavier in my arms, falling asleep.

It's been a few days since Thembisa was back. Everyone was ecstatic. I've never seen my family ask someone how they are so sincerely and so many times a day. She insisted on being at the villa and so did the whole family. Her arm healed incredibly fast but I was just glad she was no longer in pain. I watched her stirring in her sleep every morning before she woke up fully. I could barely sleep. I know he wouldn't come in to steal her again especially after everything Thembisa told us about him but I didn't trust him yet. Or I just didn't want to. I touched her skin, feeling the smooth texture that warmed my heart. She was not only beautiful, she felt beautiful to the touch too. Her scent wafted in my nostrils borderline making me dizzy.

Nkosi: "You are my soul. The whole reason I live. I will never let you go Thembisa. I will fight until my dying breath and come back to haunt the living for you. Nothing will ever separate us again my love. I am so in love with you. I love you Thembisa. Every particle, cell, drop of blood and spirit aura of me loves you. There's not even a miniscule fiber that doesn't want you near me. I am fully yours, in love, spirit and body. I love you my wife." She slowly opened her eyes, yawning.

Sasa: "I preferred it when you painted on my belly. Sthandwa sam, why are you doing your love spell things to wake me up?" I kissed her lips.

Nkosi: "I missed you." She smiled.

Sasa: "I'm right here." She snuggled in my chest. Her heart beating slow. Her spirit was very low, sad.

Nkosi: "Are you okay?"

Sasa: "Yeah. I'm just thinking of Ndiliswa. I was getting used to spending my mornings with her. I miss her so much."

Nkosi: "I met her. She's sweet."

Sasa: "She is but she's stubborn. I told her to run away when she saw a stranger." I chuckled.

Nkosi: "She almost did but somehow realized who I was. Are you okay with having everyone here? They're not overwhelming you?"

Sasa: "Not at all. I am happy everyone is here and being kind. Believe it or not, I thought of each and every one of you when I was there. It's good to see both families grew closer." She got up, stretching. "I want to take a walk. Breath some fresh air."

Nkosi: "Okay, let's get dressed."

Sasa: "I was kind of hoping I'd go alone, love." My nerves went through the roof. "I'll be fine, I'm only in the garden." She changed into a black dress.

Nkosi: "No." I hissed.

Sasa: "Baby. There's no reason for the tribe to abduct me again. The witch is dead." I watched her wear her shoes, shocked as hell. I stood up from bed, trying to process what she just said.

Nkosi: "Dead? How would- You didn't tell me this." Clearly there's a lot she hasn't told me because she didn't even disclose what her task was. She stood to look at me.

Sasa: "She's gone."

Nkosi: "I don't want you out there alone Thembisa."

Sasa: "I won't be alone. I'm safe here. Nothing will harm me. Do you trust me?" Every part of me wanted to scream. I trusted her, I just didn't trust anyone else.

Nkosi: "I trust you."

Sasa: "I'll be back in your arms in less than an hour." She walked to me, kissing my chin. "I love you."

Nkosi: "I love you." She walked out the door. It felt like my heart was tearing out of my chest, falling on the ground and covered in thorns. I walked to Amahle's room, knocking a few before walking in.

Ama: "Good morning I guess." She sat up rubbing her eyes.

Nkosi: "Sasa is taking a walk in the garden and I'm panicking."

Ama: "Why did you let her?"

Nkosi: "She asked me to trust her. She's not a prisoner. We did tests and consulted, that is truly Thembisa. So why am I worried?" She stared at nothing. "Amahle, I'm asking? Why am I worried?"

Ama: "I... I don't know. She's different."

Nkosi: "Don't do this to me again. This has to be my wife, Amahle. I can feel her, I can feel my child, we went up the dlozi trail just yesterday and the ancestors were welcoming."

Ama: "It's definitely her but... Bhuti, I can't... I can't see her future like I used to. It's like, I'm blocked." I was about to pull a nerve and go permanently insane. "I'm trying right now to see her next few days and it's blank."

Nkosi: "What does that mean?"

Ama: "She might have discovered her ability. She might not need me anymore." ....

## SASA'S POV\_

I walked out the garden gate, down the steps taking the path to the river. I sang quietly all the way to the water. I reached the waters, staring at the beautiful waterfall. I uncovered my head and stopped singing.

Me: "Good morning, my king." I felt his presence on my right.

Ngidumise: "Good Morning, Nobomi." I looked toward his energy, lowering my head.

Me: "I found her."

Ngidumise: "I suspect that's why you called me, you don't seem like you'd be here to waste my non existent time."

Me: "I have a request first."

Ngidumise: "I kept you safe in the most dangerous time of your life. I think we're even."

Me: "The tribe of tigers kept me safe."

Ngidumise: "Who do you think called on them?"

Me: "I am sorry, my king."

Ngidumise: "What request do you have?"

Me: "I need my life back. I can't live in two worlds."

Ngidumise: "That's not something you can choose."

Me: "That is why I am asking, I'm pleading, my king." An overwhelming silence surrounded me. "I have done everything that was asked of me. I

have mended, I have reconciled and I have pulled out the bad roots to rebuild. All I ask for, is my life."

Ngidumise: "You are right that you have done everything that was asked. You are a true Sikhosana. You not only carry our future but you are our lifeline. However your request is quite heavy. How else will you connect? Unless you want to choose?"

Me: "I don't have to choose. I know how the other life ends. I want to be in this one, where my soulmate resides. Where he loves me and his nation. Where he helps me rebuild and nurture."

Ngidumise: "The warrior taught you alot of confidence."

Me: "He didn't teach me, he ignited it."

Ngidumise: "And you believe you can fight for yourself now?"

Me: "I can and I will."

Ngidumise: "Very well. You may have your life back when I find my soulmate in that realm."

Me: "Thank you."

Ngidumise: "You do know the consequences, right?"

Me: "I can handle it." I held my hands out to the waters. The thunder rolled in the sky above the waterfall. "There."

Ngidumise: "That's her. I can feel her."

Me: "Yes, you can now reach and find Queen Nobomi Nonkosi. We will be doing a ceremony for you to cross over to the Royal realm, both of you can now rest in the proper realm as King and Queen."

Ngidumise: "If I was your servant, I would now say 'Thank you, my King.'"

Me: "But you're not my servant, my king."

Ngidumise: "Remember that. You are the treasure queen but You are Sikhosana. You belong to us now." ...

