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Prologue

Every time a child is born a ceremony is performed in every culture. Nonetheless, it is rejoiced and the child is welcomed and beautiful praises are being sung and said unto the child. But what happens when very few people actually wish the child well and want the child to live? So many children in this world have fallen prey to their family's hatred, family feuds and toxicity. God would never give a person a child knowing very well that they cannot take care of the child or are none deserving of the child.

My mother was in a rather unfortunate relationship. She fell in love with a very rich Prince, who of course later became the king. She, being from the Pedi tribe was already unloved, mistrusted and generally disliked by his Zulu family. She had to become the first wife but by the law of the tribe, she was demoted to being second wife because she was not even

royal. Nonetheless, my father loved her so much, that she was labeled the favourite. Problems arose when the “first wife” struggled to conceive and she conceived first. The “first wife” then ordered my mother to give her the child to raise as her own as soon as she gave birth, but my father had none of that. Of course, my mother gave birth to a female child, instead of a prince – much to the dismay of the rest of the tribe. I was named Umphazamisi which means Troublemaker in Zulu. Imagine that? A whole innocent child being given such an ugly name.

It was then known to my mother that I was not loved by the tribe. She refused the name and also refused to give the first wife me to raise, which of course added fuel to the fire. The “first wife” got so angry that she made it her job to make my mother’s life a living hell whenever my father was gone. It was also known that my father even spent more time with my mother, than the “first wife”. Things got too much for my mother when her sister wife nearly killed me. She then decided to run away and never look back. She came to start a new life where no one would find her – a life in Pretoria, Mamelodi.

I grew up a township girl, but a very happy child. My mother was a qualified Nurse, so I never lacked anything - especially

being the only child. Samuel Johnson once said; “Whoever envies another confesses his superiority.”

My name is Precious Vilakazi and this is my story.

1

“Don’t hang out with people who are: Ungrateful; Unhelpful’ Unruly’ Unkindly; Unloving; Unambitious; Unmotivated or make you feel... uncomfortable” – Germany Kent

25 years ago

[Narrated]

Neriah

Born and bred in Lephalale, Lehumo had a very happy and rather interesting childhood. She never felt the need to compete against anyone at home – being the only child. She received all the attention and was rather oblivious to a lot that had happened to her mother, Nthati. She grew up in a very loving home, and her parents seemed happy – from the moment she got out of bed to the moment she herself goes to bed. It is rather amazing how some mothers manage to hide all the abuse they suffer at the hands of the partners they love. Nthati did everything for her daughter, really. Her father also loved Neriah so much, but he was not a very good husband.

Neriah started noticing odd behaviour between her parents at the tender age of 15. Her father would at times shout at her mother and keep quiet instantly whenever Neriah would appear. Nthathi would occasionally try and wipe her tears away very quickly so that her daughter would not notice the damage being done to her, but little did she know that she was actually doing more damage than good without her realizing it. One day, she was doing her chores as usual and her husband, Pieter, walked in drunk as usual and started scolding her out of nowhere, but ke (well) “what’s new?” she thought. It was her normal way of life.

Unfortunately no one knew – not even her friends since Neriah was an orphan. Pieter probably took advantage thereof and of course, her undying love for him. Pieter, much like most men in South Africa, in the world actually, was raised in a broken home. He had witnessed his father beat his mother to a pulp every night and whenever he tried to intervene – he told him to watch and witness how a woman is supposed to be punished for disrespecting a real man. All that because the mother told him that she was tired as a result of cleaning and doing laundry all day and she was unable to cook for him.

All this was a painful lesson for Neriah when Pieter started to change after they got married. She vowed not to give him any more children and had prayed to God endlessly that he give her a girl child instead of a son. She didn't want the son to inherit all Pieter's characteristics. Of course, Lehumo's birth softened him a bit and Neriah was able to rest for a good few months without beatings. That only lasted for a short while until Pieter went back to his old ways.

Pieter: (drunk) "O be o thomile, Nthathi (You have started). Ga o kgone go dira selo bjale ka mosadi wa nnete (You can't do anything like a good wife should)."

Nthathi as usual decided to bite her lip, but that seemed to aggravate Pieter a lot more.

Pieter: "Ke bolela le wena (I'm talking to you)! Ga o nkwe na (Can't you hear me)?"

Pieter: "O nagana gore o betere wena. Neh (You think you're better than everyone else, don't you)?"

Still, as usual, Neriah decided to ignore Pieter's antagonizing efforts.

Pieter: "Jah, aketsebe gobaneng ke nyetse mosadi wa go swana le wena, wa tseba (I have no idea why I decided to marry a woman like you, you know). O no ba selo fela (You are just useless)."

Hurt, bruised as usual, Neriah decided to switch off the iron and walk away from Pieter. She had always done that, but it seemed as if Pieter enjoyed it when Neriah tried to fight back or talk back to him. She instead, decided to walk away, but the moment she turned her back on him, Pieter decided to do something even worse than he had ever done to her. He got so enraged that he threw his half empty beer bottle at Neriah. It hit her so hard, that it broke into pieces and cut her at the back of her head. The shock paralyzed Neriah for a second as she held the back of her head and felt some warmth.

She looked at her hand and trembled instantly when she realized that she was bleeding. She looked at Pieter and instantly became even more petrified as she saw his bloodshot eyes consumed with rage. Her worst nightmare had come to

life; it was either do or die – either she would die or he would. She couldn't leave her daughter behind knowing very well that she knew the real Pieter Mashaba. He got so angry and charged at her, she managed to duck him this time out of fear of her life being taken away from her against her own will.

She managed to scrape the little courage she had left in her and got hold of the iron. Luckily for her, it was still hot, and she didn't even think twice as she torched his alcohol-stained face. He was once a handsome man, but alcohol had eaten the good bits of his face. It is amazing what years of alcohol abuse can do to a person's skin. He literally reeked of alcohol, but Lehumo was too innocent to even notice the bad side of him. All that changed when Lehumo walked in and saw her mother holding a hot iron as it landed on her father's face. He was too drunk to even get up, but she knew very well they had to leave.

Lehumo: (Shocked) “Mama! Go diragalang mo (What's happening here)?”

Neriah: "I can't stand it anymore, Lehumo! Look at what this bastard did to me! He was trying to kill me! I had to fight back, ngwanaka (my child)

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I just had to!"

She was crying hysterically as she ripped her blouse open and exposed her scarred body that had been hidden for years. Lehumo shocked her mother that day and she was never able to forget it even until her last days.

Lehumo: (crying) "I know, Mama. I have known all along."

Neriah: (heartbroken) "Why didn't you say anything?"

Lehumo: "What good would that do? I had prayed every night that God gave you the strength to leave this marriage."

Lehumo shocked her mother with her bravery that day, and that is why they were just so inseperable.

Lehumo: “There is not much time, Mama. He will regain his consciousness and even try and kill you in your sleep. I have been saving some of my lunch money he has been giving me. We can leave right now and go where he will never find us. Let us start a new life and become a family of our own. We don’t need such toxicity in our lives. Please, mama. If not for you then do this for me.”

She looked at Lehumo begging her to leave her marriage. How on earth could she say no to her daughter? She just had to do it.

Neriah: “Okay.”

They quickly went to their respective bedrooms and packed whatever they could. Lehumo scrambled all her money from her piggy bank and a few of her photo albums. All in all she had saved about R1000, which wasn’t much, but it was a start back in the day. It was enough to get them bus fare and some accommodation and food for a few days. She got out of her bedroom and stared at her half-conscious father and all her hatred came back up. She then decided to search through all

his pockets and found some money, while her mother scraped through some food which was left in the fridge.

Neriah: “Lehumo, aowa (no)!”

Lehumo: “Wa re kolota mothakga yo (This man owes us).”

That was the day she had lost all respect she had left of her father. She took one last good look at him and said her goodbyes in the oddest way possible.

Lehumo: “O sale gabotse, mpya towe (Keep well, you dog).”

She spit in his face and grabbed her mother’s hand and they both ran out and never looked back. She didn’t even give herself the chance to take one last look at her father’s five roomed house. It was one of the most beautiful houses in her neighbourhood and also one of the first “big houses” there, but for her it brought nothing but pain and misery due to what her mother had to endure at the hands of the man she called her father for the first 15 years of her life.

Everyone stared at them as they noticed Neriah's torn blouse and her bleeding head, but they both didn't care about that. Their goal was to get out of there. Lehumo was still in her school uniform, but that didn't matter – freedom was near and they could taste it briefly on the tip of their tongues. They managed to walk far enough to reach the bus stop which was also just across the nearby church, and people were looking at them with shock, but most of them with pity.

Neriah clung onto her daughter, and then Raesibe, Neriah's old friend spotted them at the bus stop. Raesibe spotted the bags, the blood dripping on Neriah's back and the anxiety written on both their faces. Neriah seemed to think that no one knew about her troubles, but Raesibe sensed it and had hoped for this day to come, much like Lehumo.

Raesibe: (calling out) "Neriah! Neriah!"

Neriah looked back and saw Raesibe. For once in her life she didn't have a care in the world of what people seemed to think of her. She had one goal and that was to get Lehumo to a place of safety.

Neriah: “Hello, Raesibe. I can’t talk now. I am rushing off somewhere.

Raesibe: (teary) “Look, I know. I have always known.”

Neriah: (puzzled) “What?”

Raesibe: “I have always known. Ke kgale ke tseba, ngwanesho, empa ke sa go botse (I have always known, but I have never told you).”

Neriah responded with a brief smile.

Raesibe: “Look, take this.”

Raesibe reached out in her bra and handed Neriah a piece of paper.

Raesibe: “This is a number of a friend of mine who stays in Zululand. That is far enough. Don’t worry, I will make sure he never finds you. I have been preparing for this day and sadly, it has come earlier than expected. Go and reach your dreams, Neriah. One day we shall meet again, hopefully, my dear friend. I love you so much and I am happy you finally took this step.”

Neriah understood that very well and gave Raesibe a very long hug. The bus came and they parted ways without Neriah even saying anything in return, due to shock and amazement. “I guess I didn’t hide it as well as I thought”, she thought to herself as she chuckled amazed.

Lehumo: “Where are we going, Mama?”

Neriah: “Anywhere else, but near Lephalale. To happiness....”

God has once promised better days to us in 1 Peter 5:10 – “Be patient, God has an eternity of better days. Do his will on earth with joy and await your reward.” Indeed this was a new beginning for Neriah and her child, a beginning filled with promise and good hope. They had no idea what the future promised, but little did Lehumo know that she would marry a Prince who would later be the most powerful and richest king in the Zululand.

2

“You just can’t let life happen to you, you have to make life happen.”

Neriah and Lehumo had travelled so many kilometers far away from the only place they had ever known. The bus driver felt so bad for Neriah and her daughter, that he took them to the nearest hospital. Imagine that, he left all his loads just to make sure that they were both going to be okay. He even waited for them while Neriah was being treated. The nurses recall her as a miracle; her head had apparently been split open and a few glass particles caused by the beer bottle had been taken out from her head.

She got five stiches, but amazingly, she didn’t even get a seizure. The amazing bus driver was found by Neriah and Lerumo, who was still dressed in her uniform at around 10pm at night. Imagine the hunger they had to endure, but when you are in times of distress and trouble – hunger is the last thing on your mind. They found the amazing bus driver waiting for them in the cold benches of the public hospital halfway to Zululand, with some sphaltlo’s (bunny chows) and cold drinks in his hands. He stood up as a sign of respect when he saw Neriah

and Lehumo walk back out casualty. Very few men had the sense of dignity and respect for women like that back in the day.

Bus Driver: "I thought you two might be hungry."

Neriah: (puzzled) "Have you been waiting for us all evening?"

Bus Driver: (shyly) "Yes, I took your bags back to the bus to avoid them being stolen. I hope you don't mind."

Lehumo's mouth salivated as she stared at those bunny chows. Her mother was used to sleeping without eating one bit of food. Trauma and depression does that to you.

Neriah: (looking at Lehumo) "You can eat, ngwanaka (my baby)."

Lehumo smiled at her mother and thanked the bus driver for the food before taking it from his hands. She was indeed raised

well. The bus driver just nodded at her and smiled at her as she gobbled the bunny chow.

Bus Driver: (puzzled) "Aren't you going to eat?"

Neriah: "It's okay, I'll eat later."

The bus driver seemed a bit disappointed and thankfully Neriah saw the utmost care this man had for a stranger like her and her daughter.

Neriah: "I am Neriah. Neriah Mashaba. This is my daughter, Lehumo."

Bus Driver: (pleasantly smiling) "My name is Noah, Noah Mkhabela."

Neriah: (faint smile) "Well, Noah Mkhabela, I am eternally indebted to you for the care you have shown my daughter and I today. I would have most probably died from that deep cut had it not been for you. I am very grateful. Thank you."

Noah: "Please, you do not owe me anything. God put us all here to help one another. We are all indebted to Jesus for He sacrificed himself for us."

She smiled immensely as she heard those words from this strange man. She didn't even believe that there were men who actually still believed in God and the Bible., as Pieter was a sheep in wolve's clothing. How odd was it that Pieter seems like one odd man, just like the one who betrayed Jesus in the Bible. He also betrayed her throughout her marriage.

Neriah: "I am so sorry for taking you out of your route. You have probably lost out on so much money today because of us."

Noah: (smiling) "Money is not everything – happiness is. Please, tell me where you are going."

Neriah: "I am on my way to Zululand."

Noah: (smiling) “That is where I am from and where I am actually headed. Indeed, God works in mysterious ways.”

Neriah smiled at him without a response. They walked back to the bus with Noah carefully aiding Neriah as she was still a bit weak. She sat at the seat right behind Noah, along with Lehumo. As she spoke to Noah, she was amazed to find that he was indeed a man who had incredible knowledge of the Bible. He surprisingly had never been married before and didn't have any children of his own. As she spoke to him, Lehumo fell asleep in her mother's lap as the silent bus ride became a beautiful lullaby to her and her mother managed to get an appetite for food.

She devoured that bunny chow while Noah occasionally peeped through his rearview mirror, staring at her. It is indeed amazing that he managed to see the beauty behind all those scars and that incredibly battered body of hers. That night was the start of a beautiful relationship between Noah and Neriah, and a very beautiful foundation laid for Lehumo and her siblings. In that beautiful evening, Neriah saw Noah from the Bible who build that ark, in the Noah right in front of her. Noah, who became her husband

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built a home for her and her children and that became their ark. He ensured that his beautiful wife and children would be protected against all storms thrown at them.

Neriah made it to Noah's house in Zululand after countless hours on the road. She was quite surprised how he was so used to driving such long distances and still managed to get home and be so energetic. She was very amused, impressed rather. His house was rather basic and simple, but the beauty of the artwork he had in his house was amazing. What even surprised her the most was that it was a two bedroomed house and even the guest house had a Bible on the bedside.

Neriah: (impressed) "O motho wa Bebele, akere (You are a man of the Bible)?"

Noah: (smiling) "Yes, uMa ungifundisile ukuthi iBible (My mother taught me that the Bible) is the strongest weapon against all mankind and most importantly – spiritual warfare. I hope you meet her someday."

Neriah smiled and nodded at Noah. Noah went back to the kitchen and warmed some water for Neriah and Lehumo using his small urn. It was not much, but she was most definitely not used to such kind gestures. It took a lot of convincing for Neriah to agree to sleep at Noah's house – of which he gladly understood and reassured her that he even knew the friend that Raesibe referred Neriah to in Zululand. She and Lehumo took a bath in their small “moving bathroom”, and they didn't mind. They were used to having a big bathroom back in Lephhalale, but anything was really better than an unhappy home.

Noah even had the energy and decency to clean her stiches and cook for them. Lehumo was too tired, so Neriah let her be. Of course, she prayed with her daughter as they had always done before bed time and she met Noah back in the kitchen. She smelled the beautiful aroma of pap, gravy and wors. A meal that her mother used to make for them on a very good old Sunday. Her parents passed on few years after she got married. She was pretty distant from her maternal and paternal families, but such is life. She learnt to be strong on her own. She didn't have anyone to guide her on love and when she met Pieter, she didn't know who to ask so she just went with it.

Neriah: “This smells so nice, Noah. You are a man of many talents. You can cook?”

Pieter didn't know how to cook and he would abuse Neriah so much just so she would cook for him. Her hands which were once filled with beauty were now filled with sorrow, cracks and wrinkles all due to her being overworked.

Noah: (smiling) “Yes, my mother is a wonderful woman. She has taught me a lot.”

Neriah smiled and nodded as usual. Noah asked her to sit as he pulled her chair and dished up for her.

Noah: (smiling) “May we pray?”

He needn't even ask. They prayed for the food and started digging in. Noah was so captivated by this beauty sitting before him, that he didn't even realize that he was staring.

Neriah: (shyly) “Is there something on my face? You have been staring.”

Noah: “Oh, ngiyaxolisa, Nkosazana (forgive me, my lady). Azange ngibone umfazi omuhle kanje empilweni yami (I have never seen such a beautiful woman like you this in my entire life).”

Neriah blushed with caution. She was not even used to a mere compliment.

Neriah: (blushing) “O no bolela fela, Noah (You are just saying that, Noah).”

Noah: “Cha, Nkosazana (No, my lady). I mean every word. Soon we will be sitting right here on this table, eating a beautiful meal prepared by me and I will be calling you Mrs. Mkhabela.”

She smiled and looked down, unbeknownst to her, he was manifesting his dream, which later became reality. And just like that, a foundation had been laid for Lehumo, future Queen of Zululand.

3

“It is our wounds that create in us a desire to reach for miracles. The fulfillment of such miracles depends on whether we let our wounds pull us down or lift us up towards our dreams.” – Jocelyn Soriano

The following day...

Noah was up way before Neriah and Lehumo could wake up. He probably assumed that the medication had taken its toll on Neriah’s fragile, tiny body while Lehumo was exhausted from the long trip they took yesterday. He was really serious about what he said to Neriah the previous night – about him making her his wife. He did notice that Neriah was very battered and bruised – in more ways than one. He made it his mission to mend Neriah’s broken heart.

His mother once told him that when he finds the right woman, his heart will send him a message by giving him a tingling sensation in his gut; his heart will pump a million beats per minute and he will find himself smiling nonstop. Indeed, that finally happened to him – after 37 years of life. He needed to take it slow, because as his mother taught him that a woman is

very delicate much like a flower; you need to make sure you first find the right place where you will plant the seed and make sure that the flower will grow.

You have to be patient and nurture the flower each and every day with water and tender care. When that flower blossoms, you will be so proud that you would want to let the whole world know about your achievement – no matter if it is even one flower that grew. That is love. He has always listened to his mother's advice, a woman who herself never remarried after Noah's father died when he was only 3 years old. She raised him alone ever since. Noah made both Neriah and Lehumo some porridge and switched off the stove before he left. His heart was so elated with joy, that he didn't even feel hungry. He immediately went towards the Royal Palace to speak to Beatrice, the head servant of the Royal Palace. She has been serving the Vilakazi's ever since she was fresh out of high school. She, has however always been a good friend of Bonggi, Noah's mother. They go to church together and have tea every now and then. Beatrice, much like Neriah, is from Lephalale, where she was childhood friends with Raesibe, up until she got married and moved to Zululand. They kept in touch every now and then.

The Royal guards knew Noah and Bonggi very well, hence they never gave him much trouble whenever he appeared. They greeted him with a smile and opened the gate for him as usual. He headed anxiously straight to Beatrice's room, just outside of the Royal palace – in the maids quarters. Noah knocked swiftly and Beatrice didn't take too long to respond as she was always up early – even on Thursdays, which are one of her off days.

Beatrice: “Ubani (Who is it)?”

Noah: “Sawubona, Mama. Yimi, uNoah (It's me, Nooah).”

Beatrice: “Ngena, mntwana wami (Come in, my child).”

He walked in and found Beatrice smiling as always. She was one of those beautiful, caramel-skinned women with deep dimples, very clear skin and quite beautiful curves. She lived with her husband in the royal quarters, but her children were at University already. She married young, much like most women back then.

Beatrice: (smiling) “Sawubona, Noah (Hello). Mausemuhle kanjena (Why do you look so handsome)? Uya eSontweni (Are you going to church)?”

Noah: (chuckling) “Cha, Mama (No, Mama). Ngizelana (I came here) specially to see you.”

Beatrice: (chuckling) “You shouldn’t dress up so well just to see an old woman like me. You’ll make my husband jealous.”

Noah: (laughing excitedly) “Oh, no, Mama. I could never offend uNomzane kanjena (Sir like that).”

Beatrice: (smiling) “I see you. You’re glowing. Out with it.”

Noah rubbed his forehead and looked down slightly. He did that whenever he was nervous.

Noah: “Eish, Mama, indaba ukuthi (the thing is)... Sengimtholile uMa Mkhabela (I have finally found Mrs. Mkhabela).”

Beatrice gave Noah one stern look and the moment he looked back up, she knew he was in love. She ululated and started dancing around Noah almost as if she was chanting and blessing him on his wedding day.

Beatrice: (excited) “Ngazile (I knew it)! Who is she, mfana wami (my boy)?”

Noah: (nervous) “Isona isizathu ngengoba ngi la (that is the reason why I am here). The thing is I met her yesterday on duty driving my bus along with her daughter, so I was hoping you could give a good word in for her and help her get a job. Her friend back home in Lephalale gave her your number and told her you could help her with a job.”

Beatrice put two and two together and immediately knew he was talking about Neriah.

Beatrice: (excited) “Ukhuluma ngo Neriah (You’re talking about Neriah)?!”

Noah: “Uyamazi (Do you know her)?”

Beatrice: “Not personally. Raesibe used to tell me a lot about her. She sounds like a really nice lady, more especially since she became Raesibe’s best friend. I don’t mind putting in a good word for her, really. More especially after the lot she has been through.”

Noah had no idea what Neriah had been through but he could see that she had run away from something. He thought that she would be able to tell him when the time was right.

Noah: (puzzled) “What has she been through, Mama?”

Beatrice: “Eish, mfana wami (My boy). I think it I best she tells you.”

Noah felt even more anxious after Beatrice said that to him.

Noah: “Ma, you know me. Please, tell me what you mean.”

Beatrice: (sigh) “Her husband, Pieter, is a drunkard. He would apparently beat her to a pulp every chance he got. Poor Neriah, she hid all of that from her daughter and everyone in the neighbourhood. Raesibe knew, she saw all the signs, but chose not to say anything about it. She was just hoping that she would eventually leave and now that she has – we can only thank God.”

Noah sat down with tears threatening his eyes and his heart beating too fast out of rage. It suddenly made sense to him; the torn blouse, her frantically scared daughter in uniform and Neriah’s bloody cut on the back of her head. He noticed how frail she looked, but didn’t think that it would have actually been at the hands of a man she loved.

Beatrice: “Mfana wami (my boy). Are you okay? I didn’t mean to upset you.”

Noah: “Cha (No), Ma. It’s alright. It’s just that it only hit me now that she was running away from him. I picked her up and she was in a bad state. I even took her to hospital to get treated for the open cut on her head.”

Beatrice felt a lot of pity for Neriah without even knowing her.

Beatrice: “I am sorry, my boy. Some men just don’t know when to appreciate a good thing when they have it.”

Noah: (puzzled) “So you’re fine with all this? With the fact that I want to marry a married woman?”

Beatrice: “Noah, some of us are meant to restore; while others are just meant to build someone for the next person. In your case you are meant to restore what is broken in Neriah’s heart and soul. I can see it in your eyes, my son. You are really in love and believe me, no one has the right to judge you. Your mother will be very happy – knowing how supportive she is towards you. You will see when she meets her.”

Noah suddenly had a lot of hope. He wasn’t sure how he was going to tackle the issue of stealing Neriah’s heart, but he was set on doing it.

Beatrice: “Don’t worry, I am going to speak to the Queen today and will let you know about the outcome before the end of the day.”

Noah: (smiling) “Ngiyabonga, Mama (thank you).”

Beatrice: “Uhambe kahle (Go well).”

He hugged her briefly and walked back out. He had a new swift swing in his step. He was looking forward to brighter days and he just couldn’t wait to tell Neriah the good news. He got home and found Neriah and Lehumo packing, much to his disappointment.

Noah: (saddened) “Neriah, Lehumo. What are you doing? Where are you going?”

Neriah: (faint smile) “Hi, Noah. We are leaving. Apologies for bombarding you with my problems like that yesterday. It really was not my intention. Men like you are so hard to find and I

can't thank you enough for opening your house to my daughter and I."

That sounded like a goodbye – one thing Noah was not prepared to hear.

Noah: "Neriah, I spoke to Beartrice – Raesibe's friend. She will organize a job for you at the royal palace."

He saw Neriah trying really hard to hide her excitement.

Neriah: "You really didn't have to, Noah. Thank you."

Noah: "There is no reason for you two to go. I mean, I have enough room for the three of us. I mean, you hardly know anyone here in Zululand, and as rural as it may seem here, it wouldn't be rocket science for one of the random "tsotsi's" (criminals) here to take advantage of a beautiful woman and her daughter."

Neriah blushed as she looked down.

Neriah: “Noah, I really hate imposing.”

Noah: “You are not imposing at all, believe me. Besides I will be gone most of the time, so you will basically have the house to yourselves. Only if that is okay with the both of you.”

Neriah noticed just how thoughtful Noah was when he didn't sideline Lehumo.

Lehumo: “Mama, I actually don't think it is a bad idea. I mean, Uncle Noah is a very nice man.”

Neriah noticed just how quickly Lehumo took a liking to him and deep down she had felt the same about him.

Neriah: “Okay.”

That one word was enough to send Noah to cloud 9.

Noah: (excited) "Okay. Let me prepare us some food."

Lehumo: (chuckling) "Uncle Noah, re fetja goja motogo aowa (we just ate some porridge)."

Noah: (chuckling) "Okay. Well, how about we go to town and get some groceries and snacks for the rest of the week?"

Neriah: "Oh, please. I cannot simply stay here for free. You shouldn't be spending your hard-earned money on a strange woman and her daughter."

Noah: "I don't consider you a stranger."

Lehumo and Neriah both smiled as they went to put their bags back into their bedroom and came back out. Noah decided to start his Camry, one he hardly used as he was alone most of the time. He would only go visit his mother and then return back to his house. He would go to church and read books most of the time and only have one drink or two, watch soccer and tv

every now and then. He was pretty much of a loner and most people thought that he was gay. He didn't care much about the rumours, since he knew he had been waiting for the right one to come along.

He was so excited, more excited than Lehumo and Neriah combined. He took them around Zululand and showed them the most frequented and most popular places, he even showed Lehumo a very good school – a private school that is. Of course he was hinting that she could start attending there as they were just in the middle of October month. She needed to finish her Grade 10 school year. Neriah looked down in disappointment; as she knew that she couldn't even afford any of that. She didn't even have any experience nor any savings in her name.

How on earth would she be able to afford such a posh school? Little did she know that Noah was a man of action; a man with a plan – always. He derived from that as he already saw what he wanted to achieve – Lehumo's interest in the school. She kept asking about the subjects and teachers as she really took an interest in Nursing. He took them to the nearest mall, and shocked them both. He took them shopping for a few items of clothes. Of course, Neriah was very

uncomfortable, but after Lehumo reassured her that it was just a few clothes, she decided to go with the flow. A few hours later, they all had gone clothing and grocery shopping. Noah was so used to shopping for one person, but now that he had two more mouths to feed, he was more than happy to buy more groceries. He included a few of Lehumo's favourite snacks, and when Neriah was not comfortable with taking a few of her favourite items, Lehumo, knowing her mother off by heart decided to take a few of her favourite ingredients. She knew just how much her mother loved cooking and she was very good at it – even baking. She would try and make some money by baking and selling cookies at church and in the community, but Pieter being Pieter, decided that she was a whore and he would beat the money out of her. Noah was just too happy to finally have some company. As soon as they got home, Lehumo went to try out her new clothes after she thanked Noah a million times, but Neriah did the unexpected. She took out the money that Lehumo had given her the previous day and attempted to hand it over to Noah.

Noah: (puzzled) "What is this?"

Neriah: "It's for today. Please, take it. I know that nothing comes for free in this world."

That statement alone hurt and offended Noah so much, but the fact that she actually believed that hurt him even more. He couldn't get angry. She was used to such a life. He firmly closed her hands and pushed them back to her chest gently.

Noah: "Please, that is your money. Enjoy this moment, Neriah, please. I see you forgot what I said to you last night. I was adamant and really serious that one day you will be my wife. I am willing to wait for you. I am in no rush, but all I know is that I have never cohabited in my life. I'm a patient, Neriah. I decided to see a beautiful flower and I am willing to let you blossom with your permission."

Neriah was stunned by that. I mean, she was still married to that godforsaken drunk Pieter.

Noah: "I expect no answer as of yet. All I ask is that you give me a chance to show you the beautiful side of life. Both you and Lehumo."

Neriah smiled and Noah didn't feel the need to pressurize her. He let her be and they unpacked the groceries together. He decided to make lunch for them and they all ate. Lehumo, of course wanted to sit in front of the tv, while he and Neriah sat outside chatting away and laughing. It had been forever since Neriah had enjoyed a man's company like that. While they sat there, Beatrice walked through the gate.

Beatrice: (smiling) "Greetings, Neriah. Hello again, Noah."

Neriah was a bit puzzled that she called her by name, but then she remembered that she was Raesibe's friend and most probably told her about her.

Noah: (smiling) "Hello, Mama."

Neriah: "Dumela, Mme (Hello, Ma)."

Noah: "Please tell me you come bearing good news."

Beatrice: (smiling) “Of course. I am a woman of my word. The King and Queen agreed to let Neriah come work at the palace. She is to report for duty tomorrow morning at 6am.”

Neriah was so happy, she didn't even know what to say. She had never even had a job ever since she matriculated. Pieter never wanted her to work and told her he would take good care of her. It is a decision she regretted very much and had hoped and prayed that Lehumo would never fall for such a trap one day.

Noah: (excited) “Ngiyabonga, Mama (Thank you). I owe you.”

Beatrice: “Nonsense. Neriah, I look forward to getting to know you. Please, don't be late. The queen hates it when workers aren't punctual.”

Neriah was a very punctual lady, so that was not going to be a problem at all.

Neriah: (nodded) “I shall be ready, Ma.”

Noah: "Would you like some tea and biscuits?"

Beatrice: "Some other time. I have to go shopping for tomorrow's food. Keep well."

Neriah and Noah greeted her goodbye and Neriah was too excited, but nervous at the same time.

Neriah: "Noah, gona bjale ke tiya ke letshogo (right now I am overwhelmed with nervousness). Ga ke so bereke mo bophelong bjaka (I haven't had a job in all my life). Gosasa swanetje ke berekele Kgosigadi le Kgosi (Now tomorrow I have to work for the King and Queen)?"

Noah: (chuckling) "Relax. They are really not so bad. The queen is a bit of a perfectionist, but other than that, it won't be a problem."

Neriah was starting to think about the possible outcomes of tomorrow. She couldn't really speak any Zulu, but she was very

good in English. Eish, she just put all her faith in God. She enjoyed the rest of her day with Noah and Lehumo, and for once it seemed like they were a happy family. She managed to sleep throughout the night without getting beaten and Lehumo managed to sleep peacefully as well. Neriah was always up early.

She didn't need to set an alarm, as her body automatically woke up at 5am every morning. As she got up and was about to warm some water for herself, she found Noah already up. He had already put in water in the urn for her. She was so puzzled. She only thought such men existed in movies and on tv.

Neriah: (smiling) "Good morning. I wanted to be early, but you beat me to it."

Noah: (chuckling) "I am used to getting up at 3am in the morning. I work long distances, remember?"

Of course, he was used to driving for long hours on a daily basis. Luckily, he was on a two week off period. Neriah was

trying to understand whether it was fate or just a mere coincidence. Noah helped her put the water in a plastic bath. He suggested that she use his room to get ready as so not to wake Lehumo. Such a thoughtful gentleman he was.

She reluctantly agreed and couldn't help but find herself snooping around his pictures. He had pictures of himself and a woman who seemed like his mother. There was one rather old photo on his side table of a young woman. She was very beautiful with a very rich afro. It must have been his old girlfriend or something, she thought to herself. As she was about to get dressed – Noah knocked on the bedroom door.

Noah: "May I come in?"

She quickly tied a robe around her.

Neriah: "Yes."

He opened the door carrying a beautiful floral maxi dress in his hands.

Noah: (shyly) “Bengicela ukukunika lokhu (I would like permission to give you this).”

Neriah slowly took the dress from him and noticed that it had a tag on it.

Neriah: (teary) “Oh, Noah, aowa (no). I can’t take this.”

Noah: “Please, I’d be really offended if you don’t. My mother always taught me that a lady has to look good on her first day on the job.”

He smiled at her and walked out. Neriah realized from that day on, that God indeed had answered her prayers. She would constantly ask for change in her marriage. She laughed at herself thinking of how powerful the tongue is. Change in your marriage can mean a lot of things; it does not necessarily mean that He will change your partner, but He will most definitely change your marriage. Indeed, her marriage was over. Was it even a marriage to begin with?

4

"All discarded lovers should be given a second chance, but with somebody else." - Mae West

Neriah was finished getting dressed. The maxi dress fit her so well, even though she had lost over 50kg in the past year. She used to have a great body, a petite, but curvy body at that. She looked at herself in Noah's mirror and shed one last tear for the old Neriah. For that woman was gone forever.

She looked forward to a new chapter – a chapter that would ensure that her daughter would be proud of her. As she walked out of Noah's bedroom, she found Lehumo and Noah waiting for her in the kitchen. They both smiled at her with Lehumo carrying a cellphone in her hands, waiting to take a picture.

Noah: "You look so beautiful."

Neriah smiled back as always.

Lehumo: “Yoh (wow), Mama. Bona o botse bjang (Look how beautiful you look). Aowi, ke kgopela go tjeya senepe hle (May I please take a picture of you)?”

Neriah had always been camera shy, but she agreed to it. It was a special day after all. Lehumo took a picture of her and then looked at Noah.

Lehumo: “Malome (Uncle) Noah, ke kgopela o emelele kgauswi le Mama ke le tjeye senepe le le ba ba bedi (Please stand next to Mama so that I can take a picture of the both of you).”

Noah did that with excitement and placed his arm around her shoulder. They both smiled for the camera, and then Noah offered to take a picture of Lehumo next to her mom.

Lehumo: “Malome (Uncle) bathong (my goodness). E tla re tjeye selfie re le ba ba raro (Come, let us take a selfie of the three of us).”

Noah didn't say no at all as Lehumo took a picture of the three of them.

Neriah: "Aowa, Lehumo (No). Go lekane bjale (It's enough pictures now)."

Lehumo: "Okay. Le tsamayeng gabotse akere (Go well, hey)."

Neriah looked at Lehumo puzzled.

Noah: "You didn't think I would let a beautiful woman like you walk around in a brand new dress, on these dusty streets to her new job, did you?"

Neriah smiled as Noah walked out of the house with her. He had even washed the car for her and opened the door for her. He got in and asked her that they should pray before they went to the royal palace.

Noah: "Ngicela sithandaze (Can we please pray)?"

Neriah: "Of course."

Noah: "Dear God, we thank you for this day. But most importantly we thank you for allowing our paths to cross, for I believe that you don't do any mistakes and nothing as our encounter is an accident. Please ensure that Neriah has a good day today and please protect her. Ease her nerves and bless her abundantly. I hope and pray that a few weeks from now I will be thanking you for giving me her as a wife. We thank you Lord for everything. Amen."

Neriah was smiling throughout without even realizing it. Noah started the car and was dramatic enough to drop her right in the yard of the royal palace. Neriah didn't want them to think that she was being extra, but Noah was so proud to drop her off. Beatrice was already waiting for her outside the main door. Noah quickly got out of the car and rushed to Neriah's side to open the door for her. Beatrice laughed all by herself as she saw Noah opening the door for his new love. He hugged her briefly, leaving Neriah feeling a bit weird. She didn't even know intimacy, other than that between mother and child.

Noah: "I'll be here when you knock off."

She smiled and nodded. He stood outside his car and looked at her as she walked towards Beatrice. Beatrice waved at him to reassure him that she would be fine, and only when they both got into the house, that is when he drove out and headed back home. Neriah was very astonished to be in such a big house. She had never seen such beauty in real life.

Beatrice: "You like it?"

Neriah: "Yoh, aowa (Wow)! Mme (Mom), I absolutely love it! Ntlo ye e botse kudu (this house is so beautiful)."

Beatrice: "It sure is."

Neriah: "One day is one day."

Beatrice: "When you know as much as I do, you won't be saying that. Being rich does sound nice, until you actually notice what money can do to a person."

She really sounded like she knew what she meant. I guess Neriah had a lot to learn. Beatrice showed her around and showed her to the changing room where she would change into her uniform. She showed her how to do her chores, and by 8am, they were done preparing breakfast for the royal family. Apparently the King and Queen and two sons and a daughter. They all lived in the palace, but the first son was a bit of a trouble maker. The mother was very soft on her children, while the father was rather firm and apprehensive. Other than that, they all seemed nice, but Beatrice kept hinting that the Queen had a bit of a bad side, so Neriah always had to make sure that she didn't cross paths with her as much. Neriah was really shocked at the way they did things. She had never been in the presence of royalty, but this was rather shocking.

Neriah: "Aowa, Mma (No, Ma). Ba dio ja dijo tjela kamoka (Are they going to eat all that food)? Di bacon and eggs le di Russian le di yoghurt (Bacon, eggs and Russians and yoghurts)? Ka nako e tee fela (All at once)?"

Beatrice: (chuckling) "Yes, for them it is a basic need, but for people like you and I it remains a luxury. Don't be fooled by all

the nice food and clothes, Neriah. Deeper things go about behind closed doors of the rich.”

It sounded like a second warning to Neriah coming from Beatrice. She had been working there for years, so she was pretty sure that Beatrice was adamant about her words. As they were in the kitchen, Neriah heard the words she had been dreading.

Queen Kuli: “Beatrice, kha ubize uNeriah lapho (call Neriah).”

Beatrice: “Yebo, Ndhlovukazi (Yes, my queen).”

Neriah didn’t speak much Zulu, but she understood it and already she didn’t like the way this queen addressed Beatrice.

Beatrice: “She is calling you. Come.”

Neriah nervously nodded. As they approached the table, she couldn’t help but notice the way the Queen looked at her from head to toe, almost as if she was analyzing her. The daughter

on the other hand was not bothered as she was on her phone the whole time. The King was really nice and smiled at Neriah genuinely, he really seemed like he and the younger son were much alike. The first son seemed to have inherited the mother's arrogance.

Beatrice: "Ndhlovukazi (Queen), here she is."

Neriah took it as her cue to greet.

Neriah: "Good morning, my Queen, My king and the Royal children."

The rest didn't mind, but the queen had a problem that she didn't speak Zulu, which seemed a bit too outrageous for Neriah.

Queen Kuli: (frowning) "Beatrice, azange ungitshela ukuthi lomuntu akakhulumi iSizulu (You never told me that she does not speak Zulu)."

That alone was disrespect for Neriah. She might have bruised and abused by Pieter, but she had firm values and beliefs. She hated being disrespected above all things. Beatrice was about to answer

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but Neriah beat her to it.

Neriah: "Permission to speak, my Queen?"

Queen Kuli already frowned upon that, but nodded, while the King was rather amused. Beatrice chuckled internally because the queen was never silent. She never just nodded in reaction. She always had something to say.

Neriah: "I know you might be royal, but please, if you may, please do not speak about me as if I am not here. I am right in your presence, and I would appreciate it if you spoke directly to me if you need a question answered. I am from Lephale, and yes, I don't speak iSizulu, but I can hear it very well. I am under the impression that you all can speak English, so language barriers should not be a problem. I am indeed of a job, my

queen, but out of respect, may we treat each other equally out of respect.”

They were all shocked, while the first prince was not very impressed. Beatrice on the other hand had a sweaty forehead, while the younger prince and the King were smiling at Neriah. She had a firm, straight look on her face while the princess finally decided to show her true colours at the new employee. She had left the queen rather gobsmacked. She asked herself who on earth this woman was. She obviously had some guts in her. Queen Kuli reacted in a very shocking way.

Princess Lindiwe: “Ma, are you honestly going to let this maid speak to you like that?”

Queen Kuli: “Hey, wena (you), Lindiwe. Khauthule man (Shut up). Neriah, my apologies if I came across as offensive. I didn’t mean to come across as rude towards you. Yes, I am quite impressed that you know English so well.”

That was rather condescending, but Neriah knew just how to answer people like her.

Neriah: “Oh, I finished my matric years ago and I did English Home Language instead of Sepedi. I obtained 6 distinctions by the way. Maths, Physical Sciences, English Home Language, Life Orientation, Life Sciences, Geography and I didn’t obtain one for Sepedi. I was close, you know – 70% was really not bad.”

That alone sent Queen Kuli into a frantic internal phase. She asked herself who this confident bitch was in front of her.

King Lwazi: “I am impressed, Neriah. You should really teach Lindiwe a thing or two about books because she seems allergic to that.”

They all laughed except for Lindiwe and the Queen.

Queen Kuli: “It was lovely to meet you. You may leave.”

Neriah nodded as she left the dining area with the nervous Beatrice.

Beatrice: (worried) “What was that?! Do you want to get fired?”

Neriah: “Did she fire me?”

Beatrice kept quiet.

Neriah: “My mother taught me that you should never surrender to your superiors just like that. First impressions count.”

Beatrice took a good look at Neriah and laughed.

Beatrice: “Where have you been all my life? When I first saw you I never knew you had so much fire in you.”

Neriah: “I used to have a lot of fire in me. Perhaps such situations trigger that fire.”

They both laughed as they carried on with their day. They had quite some fun and it was a lot easier for Beatrice to finish up

with her chores with Neriah around. They hadn't spoken of her payment and didn't even have a contract, but Neriah made a mental note to tackle that the following day. Beatrice kept her company while they waited for 5pm, which was knock off time. Noah was early – exactly 15 minutes early. That man knew how to keep time.

Beatrice: "I don't know what you did to him, but keep doing it. I have never seen Noah this happy."

She just smiled as she didn't even know how to react to that. She didn't even know what she and Noah were doing to begin with. Noah walked out of the car and embraced Neriah.

Noah: "Hello, how was your first day?"

Neriah: "I'll tell you all about it when we get home."

Hearing her call his house a home meant that Neriah was warming up to the idea of living with him and he enjoyed that. He nodded and opened the door for her as usual. The

queen emerged behind Beatrice, and spoke as Beatrice waved goodbye at them.

Queen Kuli: “Awungitshele (tell me), Beatrice. What is that woman to Noah?”

Beatrice felt annoyed by Queen Kuli’s sudden interest in Neriah.

Queen Kuli: “She is his girlfriend, the mother of his daughter.”

Queen Kuli was so shocked – she wanted to fish for more, but Beatrice always kept her distance.

Queen Kuli: (shocked) “Tell me more. Isn’t Noah gay , kanti (though)?”

Beatrice: “Oh, look. I have to start cooking. My husband will be home any minute now. Bye.”

She left the queen standing there in shock, but one thing for sure, she was going to do whatever it took for her to know the truth about the mysterious Neriah, but luckily for Neriah, Noah was one step ahead of her.

Noah couldn't wait to get home to hear of Neriah's first day at the palace – instead he begged her to tell him how her day was in the car ride home. She spoke of how shocked she was to see the amount of food they ate and what transpired between her and the Queen.

Neriah: “Wa tseba keng (You know what), Noah? Mosadi yole o bosula (is arrogant). Ka sekgoa ba re o arrogant (In English they call her arrogant). Mpotje fela (Imagine), ne a nagana gore be ke tlo no homola fela a bolela ka nna ka mokgwa nole (she actually thought I would keep quiet while she spoke about me in that manner)?”

Noah was actually in stiches. He didn't know this side of Neriah and my goodness, he was actually happy to have witness this chatterbox side of Neriah this early in their “relationship”. As soon as they got home, Lehumo had even better news to share with Neriah, after making her a scrumptious dinner, with the help of Noah of course.

Lehumo: “Mama, ken ale taba tse botse (I have some really good news to shaer).”

Neriah: “E tla ka tsona (Out with it).”

Lehumo: “Uncle Noah managed to get me into that school we were looking at yesterday.”

Neriah: (shocked) “Heh (What)?”

Lehumo: “I know, isn’t it amazing?”

Neriah: “Noah, you know I can’t afford that school.”

Noah: “When will you learn that I am in this for the long haul? I can afford it. I can afford to take care of the both of you.”

Nerriah was so unsure of herself. She had so much baggage. Pieter started like that and he ended up treating her like a punching bag. She couldn't help but start crying silently.

Noah: "Nkosazana (My lady), I didn't mean to upset you."

Nerriah: "It's just that... Pieter was also this good. He started being all nice and then turned out to be a monster. I can't go through that again, Noah."

Lehumo found herself in tears as she witnessed her mother crying.

Noah: "Nkosazana (My lady), I can reassure you that I am an honest man. I want to take things very slow – even if it means at a turtle's pace then so be it. I just want to show you and Lehumo what it means to be loved and taken care of properly. Allow me and I will do it without hesitation."

Nerriah took the risk that day of being Noah's other half and my goodness, what an amazing choice she had made. She never looked back.

5

“The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide you’re not going to stay where you are.” – J.P. Morgan

A few days later...

It had been such a wonderful few days in Zululand. Lehumo had finally settled in at her new school and had even made some new friends. Her mother Neriah, had been having such a great time, more especially enjoying her new job. Of course, ever since her first day, the Queen had been on her toes trying to figure out who this mystery woman was, but Neriah didn’t budge. She and Beatrice had gotten along like a house on fire, though. This particular Saturday, was a very special day for Neriah.

Noah had wanted her to meet his mother first, and then he had been planning on taking out lobola the following week. That is a man of action. He didn’t want to waste any more time, as he truly felt that he had found his missing rib. Neriah had woken up very early as usual, but she couldn’t sleep as she was very nervous.

Lehumo was very excited to meet Noah's mother, as she had already bonded with her new stepfather. Neriah had made them all food for a change and Noah had gotten up and made the bed right after her. He took a bath right after Lehumo and found Neriah anxiously tapping her food in the kitchen.

Noha: (smiling) "Neriah, kanti yini inking (what is the problem)? Bengicabanga ukuthi ujabulile (I thought you were happy)."

Neriah: "Ke thabile (I'm happy), Noah, fela anxiety e nketsang (but anxiety is killing me)."

Noah: (chuckling) "Waze wangichaza ma ukhuluma isilungu (I like it so much when you speak English). Ngaze ngafuza ubaba wami ngazitholela umafundane wami name (I took after my father and chose an educated lady for myself)."

Neriah had started learning to speak iSizulu. She enjoyed it so much hearing Noah bribe her with his Zulu tactics.

Neriah: (smiling) "You're trying to make me feel more at ease."

Noah: "Is it working?"

Neriah: "A little bit. What if she does not like me?"

Noah: "She liked you even before I met you."

Neriah: (puzzled) "What do you mean?"

Noah: "My mother is a seer. She sees things through dreams, so she saw our encounter long before we had it."

Oh great – she thought. Neriah was deep in thought thinking that Noah's mother would see her as a wrong match for her son. Little did Neriah know that his mother actually did love her before they even met.

Noah: “Take it from me, you’ll do great.”

Neriah nodded as Lehumo came and they prayed and ate their breakfast. Life was even more peaceful without Pieter. They went out of the house and Noah opened the door for his wife first and then for his new daughter. Noah was so proud of being seen with Lehumo and Neriah. People were starting to gossip, but he had already planned a trap for them the following day. He had a very nice surprise for all of the community members at the coming church service – one that would make them mind their own business from thereon.

The drive to Bonggi, Noah’s mother, was not very long and drives with Noah were always pleasant – with Noah playing his favourite music – Jazz. He would play a lot of songs from Sipho Hotstixx Mabuza, Don Laka, Hugh Masikela and the likes. Whenever he felt like he wanted to entertain Lehumo, he would play a lot of Michael Jackson songs. She didn’t mind, really. She was a bit of an old soul and never cared much for things most teenagers were interested in. She hadn’t even started dating yet – so her mother taught her well to preserve herself for the man who would marry her. As they made their way to Bonggi’s house, Neriah felt her heart pumping even more blood than needed.

The house was so beautifully painted in dark grey – it reminded her so much of her “big house” back in Lephallale. The paving was so neat and the gates were very gorgeous. That reminded her of Noah’s house. Even though he hadn’t even done any renovations to it – it was such a cosy and beautiful home. Noah was a man full of surprises. Little did Neriah know that after their wedding, things would get a whole lot better. She of course, didn’t mind the small house, she just wanted to be loved and appreciated. Bongani saw them coming and she hurried to open the gate for them. They had to park their car in the yard, and Neriah spotted a very nice set up under the shelter for them. Bongani was like that – she treated guests with special care.

The apple truly does not fall far from the tree. Noah rushed to Neriah’s side and opened her door for her and then opened Lehumo’s door too. He always insisted that they stay in the car and wait for him to open the door for them. He always used to tell them that it is a sign of respect for a woman and he instilled that in Lehumo that she too sought for a man who was just like him. Noah proudly walked towards his mother hand in hand with Neriah on his left and Lehumo on his right. He was just too happy.

Neriah spotted Bongi and couldn't help but be in absolute awe of the beautiful creature standing before her. She was a fairly light woman, quite the opposite of Noah since he was a bit darker. She had gorgeous skin and quite long hair and a petite body, much like Neriah. She had nice curves and small buttocks. She was quite short as well, but she could tell that she was quite feisty. She immediately hugged Lehumo first.

Bongi: (smiling) "Lehumo, my baby! Welcome home."

Lehumo: "Thank you, Ma."

Bongi: "You look so beautiful, just like your mother."

Neriah smiled and blushed. Then Bongi went to her and gave her a long, loving hug.

Noah: "hayibo (No), Ma. Uzothusa umfazi wami (You'll scare my wife away). Kwanele (That's enough)."

Bongi let go of Neriah and laughed at her son.

Bongi: (laughing) “Yoh, waze wangikhumbuza ubaba wakho (You just reminded me of your father). The way he would always cling to me whenever we were together. He had such a hard time separating from me – even trips to the toilet were a problem.”

They all burst into laughter as she eventually hugged her son and greeted him hello. They proceeded to sit under the veranda, and although it was scorching hot, the wind blew nicely there. They could look at the garden and the people who walked past them. She didn’t even close the gate.

Noha: “Kodwa (But), Ma. Why didn’t you close the gate?”

Bongi: “You know I never close the gate whenever you come visit, my son. Ngifuna abathakathi laba ba bone ukuthi uyaphila (I want these witches to see that you are alive and well, and you are doing well for yourself).”

Noah: (chuckling) “You’ll invite trouble into my life.”

Lehumo decided to make Bongi smile unintentionally.

Lehumo: “The Lord will fight for you, and you only have to be silent – Exodus 14:14. Don’t worry, Uncle Noah, God has got your back.”

Neriah smiled proudly at Lehumo, and Bongi smiled and stared at her in awe.

Bongi: “You were raised well, my child. Neriah, how is Lephallale at this time of the year? I bet it is hotter than what it is here.”

Neriah: (smiling shyly) “It’s too hot, Ma. We are used to the heat wave. Even winter is not as cold as you know it.”

Bongi chuckled as she continued to converse in a very good way. She could not recall having such a beautiful conversation with a mother-figure in a very long time. They finally had

dessert and by then Neriah had let her guard down and was a bit more relaxed.

Bongi: “Noah, ngicela ungilethele iwine yami lapha efridge (please bring my wine from the fridge). Also bring us two glasses.”

Noah: (frowning) “Hawu (Wow), Ma, umfazi wami akaphuzi (my wife does not drink). Noah, was already calling Neriah his wife. Talk about manifestation.

Bongi: (chuckling) “Ungazohlanya

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wena (Don't be crazy), Noah. Mina name bengingaphuzi ngalezo isikhathi ngihlangana noBaba wakho (I also didn't drink when I met your father), but he slowly introduced me to wine. Real wine, mfana wami, hayi lezo zokushipa (my boy, not these cheap ones).”

Neriah just had to laugh at that. It was the first that Noah heard Neriah's infectious laugh mixed with a slight snort. She

would cover her nose whenever she snorted right after laughing. It was a pleasant sight for him – and most importantly for Lehumo. She hadn't seen her mother laugh in such a manner in years. It felt good to finally see her starting to glow and go back to the beautiful woman she was.

Noah stood up and went to fetch his mother's bottle of wine along with the two wine glasses as per her request. He also took it upon himself to take Lehumo for a walk around the neighbourhood to go buy some ice cream. He knew that his mother wanted to have a girl talk with Neriah, so he didn't even need to be told. As soon as he left, Bongi didn't hesitate to show her crazy side to Neriah.

Bongi: "Oh, thank goodness he is gone. Yazi labafana bathanda ukugatana nathi (These boys like keeping an eye on us mothers)."

Neriah just laughed out loud again, while Bongi poured them both a glass of wine.

Neriah: "Oh, Ma. Ga ke nwe bojwala (I don't drink alcohol)."

Bongi: (frowning) “Have you ever even tasted alcohol in your life?”

Neriah: (shaking head) “No.”

Bongi looked at her frowning.

Neriah: “Pieter never wanted me to drink. I met him in high school and have been with him ever since.”

Bongi: “That’s all the more reason why you need this glass, ke (then). Don’t worry, you won’t sin – unless you want to.”

Neriah laughed slightly and took the glass from Bongi’s hands nervously.

Bongi: (holding glass) “To bigger and better beginnings.”

Neriah: “Cheers.”

Neriah had her very first sip of alcohol that day. It went really well down her throat as it was nice and cold and very refreshing – very much unlike drinks she had ever had before. After a few sips, she felt her knees feel a bit weak; and her laughter was more prominent - which made Bongi smile and laugh a lot.

Bongi: “You know, you are literally the second woman Noah has ever brought home to meet me.”

Neriah: (frowning) “Wa bobedi (Second)? What happened to the first one?”

Bongi: (sigh) “Well – she died.”

Neriah stared at Bongi wide-eyed with shock.

Bongi: “They met when they were fresh out of high school. Noah has always been a bit of a late bloomer – he took after his father. Shame, he really loved Noluthando. She was

his first love, but sadly she had cancer and passed on before they could even get married. My poor Noah was devastated – but he took comfort in the Lord and he is who he is today because of God.”

Wow, Neriah thought to herself. It all made sense to her now. How he had stayed years being single and the picture of the beautiful woman in an Afro in his bedroom. It actually pained Neriah a bit more than usual, and she felt tears threatening her eyes. She was not one to be over emotional whenever she heard sad news – not even when Pieter would occasionally shout at her and degrade her. She never cried – not one bit.

Bongi: “Oh, ungakhali nawe (don’t cry). It’s the wine – it evokes a lot of emotions. You see why I like alcohol? It shows you a person’s true colours at times. A person can swear the shit out of you whenever drunk or they can cry and pour their heart out. You just never know, but when sober they are the complete opposite. Now I can see shame, that you are a hardcore badass – just like me. You see, Noah is a hopeless romantic; very soft and humble man, but also very firm and he stays true to his word – much like his father. He does not take nonsense and takes the ones he loves very seriously.

When he says he will do something – best believe him. I know, you have been through quite a lot in your marriage. Noah told me all about it and he actually even cried. Imagine a whole grown man like him crying over a woman. The first time he told me about you was the day after he had brought you to Zululand. I mean, I saw your encounter in my dreams long before, but when he told me about you his first words when I answered the phone was “Mama, sengimtholile uMa Mkhabela” (Mama, I have found Mrs. Mkhabela). I knew then that my son had found the love of his life. Ever since then he has had a change in his step, he has been smiling non-stop and has even been telling people around here that his long lost daughter and wife had finally come back to him.”

Oh, the wine must have been doing the things to Neriah because tears were streaming down her face. She couldn't believe that God had actually saw it fit to bless her with a man like Noah. He had accepted her and Lehumo long before they even got married. He hadn't even proposed yet – well, not officially.

Bongi: "I know, a lot is happening quite too soon, but when it feels right, why wait? My question is are you ready to take the next greatest step in your life, Neriah? Are you ready to be happy?"

Neriah didn't even think twice about it.

Neriah: (nodding) "Yes. Yes, Ma, I am."

Bongi: "Good. I was hoping you would say that because it will happen sooner than you think. My son loves you very much, Neriah. I thank you for finally giving him a chance to be happy."

Neriah couldn't stop smiling as she finally managed to dry the tears. The conversation drifted to a more candid route.

Bongi: "On a lighter note, have you and my son, you know."

Neriah: (embarrassed) "Hah! Mme (Ma)! Aowa (No)! I could never."

Bongi: (laughing) “What? You don’t have to be so stiff, you know. Noah’s father and I did it after a week of knowing each other. He was my first and I was his. He was so soft and I was afraid that one of the girls at school would finally get to him before me, so I went ahead and did what I had to do.”

Neriah was in pure shock. Half way down the bottle, Bongi had told her all about her sexcapades with her late husband. It was quite refreshing to be able to talk to someone so openly about intimacy and sex. Something she hardly knew anything about. Pieter never took the time to enjoy Neriah’s body, instead, he just rushed sex like it was a marathon. He never indulged in any foreplay or any sensual kissing, so Neriah always assumed that sex was always about laying there or pleasing the man.

Bongi: “Ai, wena shame. I can tell that you have never had an orgasm or even been muffed.”

Neriah: (embarrassed) “Am I supposed to know those things, Ma?”

Bongi: “If a woman as old as I am knows them – then so should you. Do yourself a favour and ask Beatrice what an orgasm is and what being muffed means, neh (okay)? You will be very surprised.”

Neriah felt her nerves coming back a little bit. Did she actually have to do all those things to Noah once they consummated their marriage? She felt herself becoming a little bit anxious. Noah and Lehumo finally came back and the day went really well. Just before leaving, Bongi surprised Neriah with a wrapped gift inside a gift bag.

Bongi: (whispering) “Open it when you are alone sometime.”

She gave her a mischievous smile. She wondered what naughty Bongi meant by that gift. Little did she know it was tips that would change her life. Bongi hugged Lehumo right after hugging Neriah and Noah.

Bongi: (smiling) “Hehe, wena (you), you are about to turn heads. Noah must be very careful because you are going to be royalty very soon.”

Everyone including Lerumo took Bongi’s statement very lightly that day, but it actually turned out a reality.

“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.” – Albert Einstein

Noah, Neriah and Lehumo arrived home that evening in a very pleasant mood. Noah was smiling and laughing at Neriah all the way as she was talking nonstop. He actually liked the side of her, but figured that his mother must have pumped her up with her favourite “juice”. They got home and he gave her a painkiller and some water to drink before bed time. He knew that being a nondrinker, she was most definitely going to wake up with a massive headache had she not taken the pill. Before leaving her in the kitchen upon bed time, Neriah had finally professed her love for Noah.

Neriah: “Noah, thank you so much for finding me worthy of your love. I promise to love you in the best way possible. About what you had asked me a few days ago, yes, I agree to being Mrs. Mkhabela.”

That was enough to let Noah's heart jump as if it was on steroids. She kissed him on the cheek briefly and said goodnight. She proceeded to her bedroom and Noah was elated beyond. The following morning, she woke up feeling a bit dehydrated, but much better than before. She found Noah and Lehumo making breakfast for her, which was rather unusual. She checked the time and it was 7am. Neriah never overslept – not even when she was pregnant. They both smiled at her.

Noah: "Good morning, Ma Mkhabela (Mrs. Mkhabela)."

Lehumo: "Good morning, Mama. How is the Babalaas (hangover)?"

She and Noah both chuckled.

Neriah: (warning) "Hey, ke mmago (I'm your mom)."

Lehumo: (chuckling) "Askies (Sorry)."

They all sat and had their Sunday breakfast. It was a pleasant day and afterwards they prepared their Sunday lunch and left it for later as they went to prepare themselves for church. It was going to be an interesting church service, but of course Lehumo and Neriah had no idea. Noah arrived at the church and opened the doors for both his new woman and his new daughter. Everyone stared at them, much to Neriah's annoyance. If it was one thing she hated – it was unwanted attention. They really looked like they were gossiping and while Noah was smiling and waving at them all, Neriah gave them all stern looks, while Lehumo was very much uncomfortable.

Lehumo: (clinging onto Neriah) “Mama, ba re seba batho ba (they are gossiping about us).”

Neriah: (annoyed) “Ba tlogele, wena, ngwanaka (Leave them, my child). Ke tla ba botja tje ba di jeleng maobane (I'll tell them where to get off).”

Noah: (chuckling) “My wife will do no such.”

Neriah: (irritable) “Ga o bone batho ba (Don’t you see these people), Noah?”

Noah: “We, the Mkhabela family, do not argue with fools, my wife. Just you wait and see.”

Neriah tried to let their stares out of her head and focus, but gosh, she got even more annoyed. She hated two faced people. As she and her new man and daughter sat down on their chairs, one of the women who stared and whispered when they walked in, walked up to them. Men never notice anything, really, but Neriah could see just how she was flirting with Noah. Neriah saw her from a mile away, applying her cheap lipgloss and adjusting her disturbing cleavage before approaching them. She even tried to blatantly disregard Neriah and Lehumo’s presence.

Woman: (smiling) “Hi, Noah. Long time no see.”

Noah: “Hi, Redi. Long time njani (how) when I was here just last week? You saw me sitting right here.”

She was about to become tongue-tied and Neriah saw right through her.

Redi: (nervous) “Oh, yes, of course. I must have forgotten. Are we perhaps going to have some lunch or drinks today?”

Noah: “I don’t know what you mean because you and I have never been friends. And also, I am here with my wife and daughter. Inviting a married man over for lunch and drinks seems a bit inappropriate, don’t you think?”

Neriah was smiling, she couldn’t even hide it, while Redi was rather disappointed.

Redi: (Disappointed) “Oh, I didn’t know you were married or had any kids. When did you even get that done?”

Neriah couldn’t stand any more of the nonsensical conversing with this dumb blonde.

Neriah: (annoyed) “Not that it is any of your business, Redi. Seems to me that you just never seemed to notice Noah all this while and now that you see a major change in him – a wife and a daughter, you want to come running. I really hate opportunists and I am not very polite and patient like him. So, beat it.”

Redi was a bit shocked while Noah looked at Neriah smiling, completely disregarding Redi’s feelings. She looked at them both, and then at Lehumo, who was smiling at her as well. She clicked her tongue and walked away.

Noah: (chuckling) “Hawu (Goodness), Mfazi wami (my wife). Did you have to do that?”

Neriah: “Don’t you start with me.”

Noah: (chuckling) “You are just like my mother. I never knew you had so much fire in you.”

Neriah: (clicking tongue) “Mxm.”

Noah was very much intrigued by that side of Neriah, also he was very impressed and happy that she was starting to show some jealousy. The priest came and started the sermon. It was an interesting topic, which also was very much in line with what Noah wanted to address. The priest spoke about gossiping and speaking ill of thy neighbour. What Neriah didn't know was that Noah was one of the occasional speakers at church.

Noah: (raised hand) "Mfundisi (Pastor), may I say something, please."

They were all not worried or surprised because he would do that very often. They really liked Noah – a lot. He was one of the most respected people in the community. The Priest nodded and stepped down from the podium – giving leeway to Noah to speak his mind.

Noah: "I greet you all in the name of Jesus Christ, bazalwane (congregation)."

Congregation: "Amen."

Noah: “Today is a very special day for me. I for one, have never thought that I would be standing here saying that I am finally happy. But before I speak the abundant joy filling my heart, I would like to address a few issues. It seems as if people in here don’t seem to adhere to God’s words. You see, Pastor here, was talking about speaking ill of thy neighbour. I heard you all shouting and chanting your Amens, but you seem to have forgotten that once you walk out that door, you go back to your ill ways.

You, the very same bazalwane sitting in here, have been speaking ill about me – your neighbour whom you claim to love. You have been gossiping, saying things such as “I am gay” or asking questions about why I had been single. You forget so easily to mind your own business. I am here today to tell you that my wife and daughter have returned.”

They were so shocked that he actually knew what they were saying about him and were too ashamed to whisper and gasp in shock. Instead, they were quiet and stared at him in shock. Neriah and Lehumo on the other hand, were staring at him with pride.

Noah: “Yes, I know it all. I know everything being said about me. I would have loved to invite you all to my wedding, but seeing the way you behave and treat people you claim to love and respect, has made me think otherwise. I, Noah Mkhabela, stand before you all, ashamed to call you all my brethren. You have shamed me and shown me that you do not care about other people’s feelings.

You make it your mission to speak ill about others and for that I can never be one of you. I will be getting married officially in Lephalale, on Saturday next week, and all of you shall hopefully see it on tv or wherever. I shall see you soon when my own heart has become at ease – for God has always said that forgiveness sets us all free. Thank you for your time, Mfundisi (Pastor).”

With that said, he left the whole congregation in pure shock. They didn’t utter a word as he held out both of his hands and held Neriah and Lehumo as they walked out of that silent church together. Wow, that was a man of action indeed. From that day on, people of Zululand learnt not to ever gossip about Noah nor his family ever again. The wedding

finally came and yes, it was indeed in Lephhalale. Noah never showed it to Neriah, but hearing how people of Zululand were actually gossiping about him really cut him deep.

He really felt it was necessary to have the wedding where Neriah was born. He also wanted them not to judge her whenever she felt the need to go back and visit. He really wanted to do right by her, so he took an extra week off work and made it his mission to find his long lost relatives. They were ofcourse pleased to hear that Neriah was getting married again, and since it was revealed that Pieter never even finished his lobola nor married her legally, it made it easier for Noah.

They were such opportunists, and Neriah didn't want to involve them in the wedding, but Noah asked her to do it so that their hearts would not be sour and hold any grudges or curse her new marriage. Of course Pieter went rampant when he heard his wife was getting married again. He had sobered up for a mere two days, cleaned up and even shaved. He tried to cause a scene and beg for forgiveness from Neriah, but well, he met Bonggi's feisty fists and he stayed away ever since. Neriah didn't see it fit to do all the aspects of the wedding like staying over, she wanted to go back to Zululand that evening.

Once they arrived, Bongi took Lehumo with her, so that Neriah could have a moment with her new husband. Yes, she opened the gift that Bongi bought her and it was a book – “The Art of the Karma Sutra: 300 Sex positions to spice up your marriage”. Of course it left Neriah traumatized – too traumatized that she had been dreading her wedding night with Noah all week. She even tried asking Beatrice what an orgasm and getting muffed is. And well, Beatrice shocked her much like Bongi and went all into detail. Neriah had been so horrified, that she didn’t even know how to ask about it.

She also tried searching on google and the images were even more horrific than the words and imagining it. Little did she know that Noah was a man of action. He had asked her to get changed and went to boil her some bath water. He poured her water in the plastic bath and let her bathe alone without him. As soon as she was done, he went to throw out the water. It was his turn to bathe and he asked her the question she had been dreading – well, one of the questions.

Noah: “May I bathe here before you, my wife?”

Neriah nodded slowly with a huge knot in her stomach. Noah sensed her discomfort.

Noah: “I can use Lehumo’s bedroom if you are really uncomfortable.”

She thought about it and it just didn’t make sense. She was 35 years old and the only time she had seen a man naked was Pieter, and that was only brief. She hadn’t even actually seen a penis – a whole image of a man’s penis right before her.

Neriah: (nervously) “Really, it’s okay.”

Noah nodded as he prepared the bath and he slowly took his clothes off before her. She was beyond shocked to actually see a real-life penis before her. It really looks like the sketches she had seen back in the day in her life sciences text book, but nothing like this. Noah found it quite amusing to see her staring at his penis like that.

Noah: (chuckling) “Hawu (Goodness), Neriah. Ungayibamba ma ufuna (You can touch it if you want to). Phela eyakho manje (It belongs to you now).”

Neriah found herself blushing, feeling flushed and overwhelmed with heat. She looked away and tried to act like she was playing with her phone.

Noah: “Ngabe uphuze iwine kancane (You should have drank a bit of wine). You can’t be so nervous.”

She still blushed and said nothing, while he chuckled and made a conversation about how beautiful their day was. At least that made her keep her eyes away from his penis. After he was done throwing the water out, he came back with a bottle of Drosdy Hof Natural Sweet White wine and a bottle of Windhoek Draught for himself. He was a serious occasional drinker, but he just had to make his wife relax that night. He didn’t want to get her drunk, but he wanted her to enjoy her first night being married to Noah. He poured her a glass and opened his draught.

Noah: “Neriah, ngaze nga jabula namhlanje (I am so happy today). Ngiyabonga mfazi wami (Thank you my wife). Thank you for choosing me.”

Neriah blushed as they made a toast and started sipping on their cold beverages. Two glasses down, she was feeling a little bit more relaxed. That was also the very first night that they would be kissing each other in a passionate way. Noah slowly touched Neriah’s thigh which was under her robe. As they were dressed in robes, life would be made much easier. He stared into the less nervous Neriah’s eyes.

Noah: “Ma Mkhabela (Mrs. Mkhabela), ngicela ukukucabuza (May I kiss you)?”

Noah’s way of asking for consent was very sweet and also made her knees weak every time. She nodded slowly as she felt his soft lips touch hers, with his soft, warm hands touch her face. She didn’t know what to do, but the alcohol told her to just go with the flow. After about 10 seconds or so, she was already in the rhythm of French kissing. Their tongues were twirling, their lips were moving to the same rhythm. It was a beautiful act and an awesome feeling for Neriah, which made

her feel so tingly down there. She had never felt so many butterflies all over her body.

Noah's penis immediately rose and stood rock hard. It had been sleeping for years, so this was a new feeling to him as well. Noah found himself getting on top of his willing wife. Her legs slowly parted ways, allowing him to adjust his body beautifully in between her tights. He found his hands magically caressing her majestic body, embracing her beautiful, desert-like texture. Her breasts felt like pure silk straight from the shop, while her nipples rose and pointed right at him. He found his lips sucking every ounce of her body, and gently kissing her nipples. Neriah, was moaning as if it was her very first time with a man.

Neriah: "Oh, Noah..."

Noah: (moaning) "Ma Mkhabela..."

His hand travelled slowly to her robe as he untied it. He then made his way to her vagina. He slowly started rubbing her clitoris, like a soulful man playing the guitar. Neriah felt like

magic was flowing all around her body. Her movements had become involuntary, while her whole body had slowly surrendered to Noah. Noah's lips and mouth moved all the way down her abdomen and once he reached her vagina, she quickly stopped him. She had never had that done to her before.

Neriah: "Wait!"

Noah: "It's okay, relax. Let me please you, mfazi wami (my wife). If you don't like it, then let me know and I will stop, okay?"

Neriah nodded reluctantly and slowly let him devour her. As soon as his hot tongue landed on her clitoris, she lay back down and closed her eyes. She felt herself moaning and breathing heavily. The feeling was rather magical and tantalizing. No food she had ever tasted before had done such to her. It was an incredible feeling. Seeing his wife moan like that gave Noah great pleasure. The more she moaned, the more he sucked and licked. Neriah felt a hot gushy feeling consume her as she finally had her first orgasm.

She didn't understand what was happening to her, but it left her feeling happy and embarrassed at the same time. Noah chuckled as he saw her. He got back up and kissed her passionately. She had never tasted her own vaginal liquids before, but my goodness it left her craving for more. Noah finally positioned himself onto her and slowly made his entrance into his new home. He felt her tighten a bit and jump a little bit, but after a few thrusts, they were both moaning out loud.

Neriah: "Oh, Noah... Yoh, Modimo o nketsang (Oh, my God. What are you doing to me)?"

Noah: (moaning) "Neriah... Sthandwa sami (My love)...."

Noah knew that it had been a while since he had had sex and that he most probably wouldn't have lasted long, but thankfully Neriah didn't see that since she was used to way shorter rounds with Pieter. Both of them came and Noah collapsed on top of Neriah after a few minutes of absolute bliss.

Noah: "I love you, Neriah."

Neriah: "I love you, Noah."

7

“The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide you’re not going to stay where you are.” – J.P. Morgan

Two years later

Life had been such a breeze for the Mkhabela’s. Neriah had been blessed with a beautiful confidant and Noah couldn’t have been happier. Lehumo had just finished her matric and never bothered her parents. Of course, Noah had kept his promise and built them their dream home. Neriah was still one of the head servants for the Royal family and she couldn’t have been happier. She enjoyed her new sense of freedom and loved making her own money. She and Noah had been blessed with a baby boy named Hosea, just like the Prophet in the Bible.

The name was given to him by Bongi, as per custom apparently. Neriah and Noah both loved the name, and even though they had a tough time accepting that they would be parents again above 35, they were very happy. Lehumo had been a good big sister to her brother and well, life had been very bliss ever since. The queen had been trying to see what kind of person Neriah was, until she actually just let it all go.

Everyone around the kingdom had grown very fond of Neriah and her beautiful talent for baking – except Queen Kuli. She felt as if Neriah was taking her spotlight – something she didn't want to see happen to her. She had just been keeping her eye on Neriah for those two years. Lehumo had just finished writing her final matric paper and it was her birthday the following day. She would occasionally visit her mother often at the royal palace – but usually for a very brief time.

Noah had appointed a nanny for Hosea, but Neriah didn't want him to be confined to the house full time so he went to crèche on most days. Lehumo was very happy on this particular day, as she had felt that it would be a start of a great journey since she had been planning to go study nursing. It was not a very tough decision for her to make, and Noah being the best dad in the whole world, he managed to get her a part-time weekend job at the local clinic. She started off helping the Admin staff with their filing and would occasionally shadow the nurses and doctors there.

She enjoyed doing it for free even and Noah couldn't be prouder, hence he had been planning a great 18th Birthday

party for her. It was a surprise and hidden from her, obviously. As Lehumo greeted her friend Brenda goodbye, she made her way into the royal grounds. Well, Lehumo had grown into a beautiful young lady, much like the spitting image of her mother's younger self.

She was gorgeous, with caramel skin, a rather petite body, but her buttocks and curves were a lot bigger than her mother's. Overall, she had an hour-glass figure and a smile that captivated everyone around Zululand. When she had just arrived at her new school, it didn't take too long for everyone to know her. She hated attention just like her mother, and was rather calm – a lot calmer than her mother.

She was a ticking timebomb, though. As she walked into the yard, she met with one of the Princes, the second born, Prince Gatsha. He was a rather good looking young man; with fairly dark skin and had the deepest dimples in Zululand. He had the strength of a warrior, the personality of a king in the making and the attitude of a very humble man. He was also an Engineering graduate and was not a huge fan of the ladies, unlike his brother elder Shaka, who was a ladies man and would sleep with everything that had a skirt on, and was also a drop out.

Gatsha was very much his father's spitting image, while Shaka was quite the opposite and very much like his mother hence they got on so well. Shaka and Gatsha had always had differences, as Shaka was always competing with Gatsha – despite Gatsha being five years younger than him. He always felt like he was in his shadow and he had the very unpleasant manner of looking down at people who were less fortunate. Their family setting was rather odd, since Gatsha never cared about the chieftaincy much.

Prince Gatsha: (smiling) “Awu, Ntombenhle (Hello, beautiful). Unjani (How are you)?”

Lehumo had learnt how to speak Zulu – although she didn't like it much.

Lehumo: (smiling) “Hi, Prince Gatsha. Ngiyaphila, wena unjani (I'm well, thanks, how are you)?”

Prince Gatsha: “Sengiright ngoba sengibone wena angithi (I'm alright now that I have seen you).”

Lehumo felt something that day which she had never felt before – goosebumps of all kind everywhere on her body. What startled her was the tingly feeling she felt in her tummy as she saw Prince Gatsha’s smile. “There is no way that I could be in love” – she thought to herself. She found herself feeling dumbstruck as she was staring at Prince Gatsha. He of course didn’t mind at all, he hardly had seen such beautiful and well mannered young girls.

His mother had been trying to get him to marry – since the King married her when he was just 18. Prince Gatsha, being 25 at that time, he was nowhere near thinking of getting married even. He had always reassured his parents that he would most definitely marry when he had found the right one. Queen Kuli never gave up finding him possible suitors, since his elder brother ends up sleeping with all the possible wives right before Gatsha could even consider being with them.

Prince Gatsha: (chuckling) “Waze wa ba muhle, Ntombenhle (You are so beautiful, young lady). Ufuze uma wakho ngempela (You really took after your mother).”

Lehumo found herself blushing as she looked down. She knew she was blushing for the first time in her life due to a boy because her cheeks felt warm.

Prince Gatsha: “Ngcela ukuk’hipa (May I please take you out) some time?”

Lehumo didn’t even know how to answer that as she had never even been out with a boy.

Lehumo: (blushing) “Oh, I don’t know what my parents would say about that. I have never done such.”

Prince Gatsha: “Nginga thanda ukubacela ke (I’d love to ask them for permission). That is if you accept my proposal to take you out on a date.”

Lehumo didn’t know what to say

but her heart betrayed her and let her head respond to this beautiful creature’s humble request.

Lehumo: (nodding) "Okay."

Gatsha felt himself smiling ear to ear.

Gatsha: "How does tomorrow sound?"

She nearly nodded, but then she remembered that it was going to be a very special day for her.

Lehumo: "Oh, I am afraid that won't do. It's my birthday tomorrow."

Gatsha felt himself get excited even more.

Gatsha: "Oh, that's even better. Am I invited to your party?"

Lehumo: (chuckling) "I don't know about that. I mean, I don't even know if I will even be having a party. My parents haven't said anything to me."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Well, I am very close with your mother and I can tell that they most definitely have something big planned for you tomorrow."

Lehumo: (frowning) "Why would my mother tell you about a party for me and not me?"

Gatsha: "She didn't exactly tell me, I just know. Tell you what, I can find out for you if you want to."

Lehumo: "But then that wouldn't be much of a surprise now, would it?"

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Smart lady. So, Lehumo, let's say they do host a party for you. Am I allowed to come?"

Lehumo: (smiling) "Well, it depends."

Gatsha: "On what, Ntombenhle (beautiful)."

Lehumo: “On whether you bring a gift or not.”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “That can be arranged. I’ll be sure to bring you the best gift ever – one that will blow you away.”

Lehumo realized how seriously Gatsha took her statement, and felt a bit regretful asking a man - let alone the prince to bring her a present on her birthday. She started feeling a bit worried. What if her mother found out? She wouldn’t like it one bit.

Lehumo: “I was kidding, Prince Gatsha, really.”

Gatsha: (smiling) “Well, I’m not.”

Lehumo: “How do you know my name by the way?”

Gatsha: “Well, I have heard your mother tell me about you a few times – besides, everyone knows you. How can they not know the prettiest girl in our village?”

Lehumo felt really honoured to hear the prince call her pretty. She had never really paid attention to any boy at school call her beautiful – until she met a man like Gatsha – a real man. Lehumo didn’t realize she had been talking to Gatsha for a while until she heard her mother calling out for her at the Royal entrance.

Neriah: (shouting) “Lehumo! Kgale o eme mowe (You’ve been standing out there forever). Come help me with these plastics!”

Gatsha turned around and smiled at Neriah as he greeted and waved at her. She waved back with a smile as always and Lehumo approached her.

Gatsha: (smiling) “See you tomorrow, Ntombenhle (beautiful).”

Lehumo smiled and approached her mother hesitantly. Her mother looked at her with a puzzled look as she saw Lehumo's bright red cheeks and her broad smile.

Neriah: (frowning) "And then?"

Lehumo: "And then eng (what), Mama?"

Neriah took one look at her daughter and Lehumo looked down and picked up the plastic bags without saying a word further to her mother. That moment right there – where Lehumo was trying really hard to conceal her smile from her mother – that showed Neriah that Lehumo was a grown woman and that she had finally fallen in love. Neriah was not really upset about her falling for Gatsha, but she was a bit worried as she didn't want her daughter's heart to get broken.

She knew very well that the rules of the kingdom meant that royal members had to marry into royalty. That alone, stung Neriah a little bit. She knew what young love could do to a people as she was also once young and in love when she met Pieter. There was nothing she could do as being against it

would only make things worse and possibly push her daughter away from her. She thought it was necessary to attack the issue while it was still hot, but first she would have to observe first. Lucky for her she had given herself enough time to study her daughter and as a result they were very close and Lehumo could never lie to her mother or even hide anything from her.

Noah had become such a wonderful father to her, that he would occasionally give her life lessons on love and how to spot the right man. Lehumo carried all three plastic bags for her mother without complaining about how heavy they were or even asking what was inside. That was the second sign that she was in love. As they were about to walk out, Gatsha surprised them both.

Gatsha: “Mam’Neriah, ngicela ukunikhapa (may I please take you home)?”

Neriah didn’t really find it odd because he would offer and she would tell him she was fine. She didn’t want Queen Kuli to start saying some things about her. That day, she saw the spark between her daughter and Prince Gatsha – and she knew right away that he actually meant that he wanted to walk Lehumo

home and not the both of them. Neriah was really not a “cockblocker” of some sort, she was actually smart.

Neriah: “Oh, yes, my boy. That would be lovely. But, you two carry on, I think I left my cellphone behind in the house. I will catch up with you – you two go ahead.”

She noticed Lehumo’s bright smile as soon as she excused herself and noticed the glimmer in Gatsha’s eyes and she knew right there and then that those two were on a journey of love. How smooth it was going to be – that was something indefinite. Gatsha took the plastics from Lehumo and walked out of the Royal Grounds with her.

People started whispering and looking at Lehumo in a way she had never been looked at before – looks full of envy and wonder. The girls wondered why her? They had been dying to get his attention for years – some even slept with Shaka just to get to Gatsha, but all their efforts went to vain. Gatsha had something that Shaka could never have – Pride, self-respect and most importantly – huge respect for women.

Gatsha: (smiling) “Ntombenhle (beautiful), your mother told me you were doing matric.”

Lehumo was rather chuffed to hear that her mother had been bragging about her and that the prince seemed so impressed.

Lehumo: (smiling) “Yes, I just wrote my final paper today – Life Sciences Paper 2.”

Gatsha: “Your favourite subject. No wonder you want to be a Nurse. That profession would most definitely suit your loving nature.”

She felt those goosebumps appear once again. He knew so much about her already while she knew nothing about him other than his name and title.

Lehumo: “You know so much about me, yet I know nothing about you. That is not very fair, don’t you think?”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “That is what dates are for, Ntombenhle (Beautiful). Besides, you have a lifetime to get to know me.”

Lehumo: (puzzled) “What do you mean?”

Gatsha: “I mean I am going to make you my wife one of these days.”

She laughed and then remembered that those are the exact words Noah told said to her mother and it became a reality. She remembered his famous words that day; “Lehumo, my baby. You are not getting any younger, and I think it is high time I start giving you straightforward lessons about men. A man can either want two things from you: ‘To steal what’s between your legs or to steal your heart.’

She then asked him how she would be able to tell what he wanted to do between the two and he responded by saying: “If he wants your precious treasure between your legs, he won’t waste his time by asking you much about your future, he won’t want to know what your interests are and what it is you would like in life. He will also make it a mission for you to love him

and not the other way around. What HE likes will be important. But the one that wants to steal your heart and hold it captive forever will make sure that YOU come first – even when it is really not necessary.

When he really loves you – the whole world won't matter and you will be the only girl he sees – no matter how beautiful you are. Always make sure that when you fall in love you ask a man these three questions: 1. What do you think about God? 2. What do you like about me? 3. Where do you see us in five years? If his answers have a lot of "Me" instead of "We" then you will know that he is not the right one for you."

That conversation replayed itself at the back of her mind as she took that fateful walk with Gatsha that day. On that very day, Gatsha knew that he had met the one who had stolen his heart and not only that, but his future queen.

“We accept the love we think we deserve” – Stephen Chbosky

Gatsha seemed to amaze Lehumo and Neriah even more when he did the most chivalrous thing they could ever think of.

Lehumo: “Thank you, Gatsha. You don’t have to walk me in, you know.”

Gatsha: “I can never make a beautiful girl like you walk in alone njena.”

Lehumo blushed as he walked in with her and he greeted the house nanny and introduced himself to her. He even greeted Hosea. He asked the nanny permission to walk into the house. No one has ever really done such, Lehumo thought to herself. He didn’t disregard her presence and didn’t even need to know whether she was the nanny or part of the family. He walked in with the plastic bags and placed them on the kitchen counter.

Gatsha: (walking out) “Ntombenhle (Beautiful). Ngicela sime ngaphandle (May we please wait outside)?”

Lehumo: “Wait for whom, Gatsha and why don’t you take a seat so I can offer you something to drink? It is rather hot outside.”

Gatsha: “Cha (No), Ngiyabonga (Thank you), kodwa (but) I’d rather wait outside. I can never sit in another man’s house without being permitted to enter in the first place. I only did that because I couldn’t bear seeing you carry all those plastics all the way to the house. A woman should never be left to carry so many things on her own.”

Lehumo was impressed. She was most definitely doting over him.

Lehumo: “I see. So, now who are we waiting for?”

Gatsha: “For your mother, angithi (isn’t it)? She needs to see that you were home safe and that I didn’t try anything with

you. Other than that, we should also be standing here, checking if she really is safe or not.”

Wow, Lehumo thought to herself. This guy was a keeper. She then decided to ask him one of the questions Noah told her about.

Lehumo: “May I ask you something?”

Gatsha: “Go right ahead, Ntombenhle (Beautiful).”

Lehumo: “What do you think about God?”

Then she looked at him and remembered Noah’s words “If he hesitates too long then he does not have a relationship with God at all. That is not a problem, although willingness to learn is key. Then, Gatsha gave her a shocking answer.

Gatsha: “Well, I personally think that God is an amazing spirit. I mean, He managed to create us all and make us unique. He made sure that we all are born into a world of choice, but what

I am most grateful for at this present moment is that He created a beautiful creature like you and preserved you just for me.”

Hmm, smooth talker, she thought. He really sounded genuine and she couldn't help but stare in his eyes, but he went on.

Gatsha: “You know, a lot of people think that I am rich, but I am not – my parents are. I personally wish I wasn't born into royalty.”

He didn't elaborate about that but she could see that he meant that as he said it with a heavy heart.

Gatsha: “Royalty is really not everything. I personally would be very happy with the woman of my dreams even if we were living in a hut. Just as long as love is served on a daily basis and God grants us all the blessings we ask for.”

Yep, that was quite a brilliant answer. She was so intrigued to learn more about this mysterious prince until Neriah

approached them. Gatsha was so nice, he slightly bowed and smiled at her.

Gatsha: “Mam’Neriah, as promised, your daughter was brought home safely.”

Neriah: (smiling) “Thank you, Gatsha.”

Gatsha: “I will see you two beautiful ladies tomorrow.”

Neriah: (puzzled) “What’s happening tomorrow?”

Gatsha: “Come on, Ma. We cannot let the cat out of the bag just like that, angithi (right)? I’ll see you tomorrow. Lehumo

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keep well. It was really nice officially meeting you.”

He smiled as he walked away. He kept looking back at them with a broad smile. Of course Neriah was a bit shocked that he told her all about the following day. She didn’t tell anyone

about her plans so she was quite puzzled. Neriah went into the house with Lehumo and let her take a bath and change as she was about to help Neriah prepare for dinner as always.

Noah was on his way back home after a long shift on the road. Lehumo took a bath and bathed Hosea as well. She found her mother halfway done with the pap and helped her peel the veggies in preparation for the stew. Neriah thought it was the perfect time to start a conversation with her daughter about the Prince.

Neriah: "So, how was your day today?"

Lehumo: (smiling) "It was lovely, Mama. I enjoyed my paper. Brenda felt it was a bit tough, but I aced it. I can feel it."

Neriah: "Hmm, a ke bolele ka di exam (I'm not talking about your exams) and you know it. Ke bolela ka Gatsha (I'm talking about Gatsha)."

Lehumo: "O ra bjang (what do you mean), Mama?"

Neriah: “Akere wa tseba nna ga ke setlaela (You know I’m no fool, right)?”

Lehumo: (chuckling) “Of course not, Mama.”

Neriah: “E tla ka tsona (Out with it).”

Lehumo: (smiling) “There is nothing to tell, Mama, other than he is a nice guy.”

Neriah: “Oho, kea bona (I see). I can see that you don’t want to talk, but just know that I am here if you need to talk about anything.”

Lehumo: “Thank you.”

Neriah: “For the record, I saw the spark in his eyes too. If you need to ask – no need. He most definitely loves you.”

That validation right there from her mother was enough for Lehumo to know that Gatsha was indeed the one. She was obviously inexperienced and knew nothing about love, but she knew enough to see how a man took care of the woman he loved by looking at her parents' relationship with each other.

Gatsha on the other hand was over the moon. He had never felt the way he did that day after his walk with Lehumo. He had had a few relationships and even one close to marriage, but the girl broke his heart and it took him quite a while to recover from it. He walked home ignoring everything and everyone on the road until he headed straight home to his father's study. He knocked on the door and found him in there.

King Sfiso: "Ngena (Come in)."

He smiled as she saw his son walk in with a broad smile on his face. He immediately took off his glasses and stopped whatever he was busy with. That was just how seriously he took Gatsha.

King Sfiso: (smiling) “Mfana wami (My boy). Yini (What is it)? You look so happy.”

Gatsha: (smiling) “Ngimtholile, Baba (I have found her, Dad). I have found my missing rib.”

King Sfiso: (chuckling) “It’s about damn time. You are such a late bloomer, kodwa (but) I am happy for you, my son.”

Gatsha: “Ngiyabonga, Baba (thank you, dad).”

King Sfiso: “Who is she?”

Gatsha: “It’s Lehumo, Mam’Neriah and Malume (Uncle) Noah’s daughter.”

King Sfiso scratched his head for a moment.

Gatsha: (sigh) “I know, Baba (Dad). I know we are not supposed to marry non-royals, but I love her.”

King Sfiso: (serious) “Do you love her enough to marry her?”

Gatsha: “If I could I would do it today even, but I would like to get to know her. She has her whole future ahead of her and I would like her to feel at ease with me first. I cannot bombard her with marriage when she has just come of age. I’d like to take my time with her, Baba (Dad).”

King Sfiso: (nodding) “I hear you, my son. I support you very well.”

Gatsha: (relieved) “Thank you, Baba (Dad). What about the council? How will I get to marry her when the law states that non-royals cannot be married into royalty?”

King Sfiso: “I want to see you happy, mfana wami (my boy). The laws can always be changed. I don’t see a reason why that law must still stand even today for non-royals are also human.”

That alone made Gatsha’s day. He could even imagine himself marrying his love. He didn’t care about being the king or not, as long as he had Lehumo by his side – he was happy.

“You know you’re in love when you can’t fall asleep because reality is finally better than your dreams” – Dr. Seuss

Neriah was very pleased to see that her daughter had found a new sense of happiness, more especially since she was about to turn 18. She sat in one of the kitchen chairs staring at her daughter, deep in thought. She couldn’t believe that she had come thus far with her and most importantly she really couldn’t believe that God had blessed her with such a wonderful child. She thought to herself; ‘what would life had been like had she stayed in that miserable marriage with Pieter?’ Would she even have lived until thus far? Ecclesiastes 2:26 came to mind – “To the person who pleases Him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.”

That to her, meant that if you have put your full trust in God, you will be granted happiness and don’t need to worry about misfortune. Indeed, Noah came at the perfect time and he is most definitely proof that there are still good men out

there. She was thinking about Gatsha; she had known him for a mere two years and he is the complete opposite of his elder brother Shaka, and she really knew deep down that he would be perfect for her daughter – had he not been of royalty. She knew just how much of a witch the Queen was, and that really left her a bit unsettled. Overall, she had to share the news with her husband before they went to bed that night. She actually didn't realize just how deep in thought she had been, until Lehumo called her back to earth.

Lehumo: “Hao, Mama. I have been calling you.”

Neriah: (smiling) “I'm sorry, ngwanaka (my child). Be o reng (What were you saying)?”

Lehumo: “Be ke re o nagana eng ga kana (I was asking what it is that has you so deep in thought)? Or o nagana birthday yaka (Or are you thinking of my birthday)?”

Neriah: (chuckling) “Wa phapha wena (You're too forward).”

She didn't give any details out and right then, Noah graced them with his long-awaited presence. Of course, the three of them were very happy to see him.

Noah: (smiling) "I'm home, family. My goodness, I have missed you."

Neriah stood up and gave the kids a chance to embrace him. After Lehumo and Hosea hugged him, he gave his wife a long hug and a small peck on the lips. Affection is not something out of the ordinary in the Mkhabela household, so Lehumo never saw it as weird for her parents to be kissing one another. In fact, she had never seen the two of them fight unlike when Neriah was married to Peiter.

Noah went to his room to get changed. He couldn't wait to eat the lovely dinner his wife and daughter had prepared for him. He would hardly eat a few hours before going back home because he just knew that they had prepared him a wonderful meal always. They usually would wait for him so that they could eat with him. They prayed and enjoyed their meal, with Noah complimenting the food as always.

Noah: “Yoh (Wow), MaMkhabela (Mrs. Mkhabela), My daughter, ukudla lokhu kumnandi (this food is very delicious). Ngiyabonga (Thank you).”

Neriah: “You’re welcome, my husband.”

Lehumo: “So, Papa, re dira eng gosasa (what are we doing tomorrow)?”

Noah: (chuckling) “Hayi (No), Lehumo, you are very impatient, yazi (you know). You need to be a lot more like your mother. Besides, you should know me by now, I’m a man of many surprises.”

Lehumo knew that he wouldn’t budge at all, so she gave up on asking and decided on waiting. Neriah took that as an opportunity to let her husband know about Lehumo’s new beau.

Neriah: “So, my husband, your daughter seems to be in love.”

Lehumo: (embarrassed) “Mama...”

Neriah: “There is nothing to be embarrassed about here, Lehumo. You are turning 18.”

Noah: (frowning) “Who is he?”

Lehumo: (embarrassed) “It’s no one, Papa (Dad).”

Neriah: “It’s the young Prince, Gatsha.”

Noah: (Wide-eyed) “Heh?”

Neriah: “Yes, and he seems to have fallen hard for your daughter. He even walked her home and carried the plastics for her.”

Noah smiled at the thought. He knew just as well as Neriah that in a perfect world Gatsha and his daughter would be the perfect match. But in this case, royalty has so many rules and

he was really not sure if his fragile daughter, one who had never even kissed a boy would be able to handle the harshness that comes with marrying into royalty – that is if it were to even happen.

Noah: “Is it true, my baby?”

Lehumo looked down in embarrassment. She didn’t understand why she even felt bad because it was 100% true.

Noah: “There is nothing to be ashamed of, my daughter. Does he make you smile whenever you think of him or even hear his name?”

Lehumo nodded.

Noah: “Does he look at you like you are the only girl in the world?”

Lehumo nodded anxiously.

Noah: "Did you ask him question number one already?"

Lehumo nodded.

Noah: "What was his response?"

Lehumo explained Gatsha's heartwarming response about his thoughts on God to her father and Noah knew that it was going to be a bumpy ride for those two. He knew that Gatsha was the opposite of his brother and that the Queen hated non-royals with a passion, so she wouldn't take it lightly her son marrying a commoner.

Noah: (smiling) "Then you are in love, ntombi yami (My daughter). You have my blessing."

Lehumo just jumped out of pure joy and hugged her father with so much relief. Noah's smile and joy was tainted with a bit of sadness as he knew that things would get ugly. He thought that he needed to speak to his mother the following day. She

always knew just what to do. After dinner, Lehumo went to bed with a huge smile on her face and her heart dancing to a very happy tune. She had no idea that love could make someone go crazy the way she was already going. She even decided to pray about it before she went to bed. She knelt down and did what her mother taught her from a young age.

Lehumo: (praying) “Modimo wa rona (Our God), our Loving God, our Merciful God, oh Jehova. Ke lebogela matsatsi a ke bileng le ona kaofe lefaseng (I thank you for all my days I have had on earth so far). I thank you for giving me such wonderful parents, such a wonderful brother and most importantly that I never sleep with an empty stomach. I thank you that I grew up in a loving home and that nothing is missing in my life.

I ask that you please protect my heart on this journey that I am about to embark on. I don't know, Modimo (God)

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but I truly feel like I am in love with the Prince. You know each one of us on this earth – both inside and outside. We can lie to one another, but not to you. You have given me an amazing life; you have proven to us that there is love after all – true love at that. I ask that you please grant me the same happiness that

you have given my mother. For you say in Jeremiah 1:5 – “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” I may not be a prophet, but I do know that each of us has a destiny to fulfil and that you would never hurt us intentionally. We all deserve to be loved and to love. Please protect my heart, oh, Lord, no matter what. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.”

It was that very night that Lehumo’s ancestors found Prince Gatsha worthy and that they finally put them together and were preparing to join them as one. Gatsha and Lehumo had no idea that it was their ancestors that made sure they made their way to one another. Such love is powerful – the underground gang choosing a soulmate for you. It is also such love that is the most difficult to let go of, for it is the purest and also can be the most dangerous. Noah on the other hand found himself worried sick after his bath. He found his wife reading the Bible as always and went to sit next to her. He had already put young Hosea to bed.

Noah: (smiling) “Ufunda iverse bani (Which verse are you reading)?”

Neriah: (smiling) “I was praying and asking God for guidance regarding this whole issue with Gatsha and Lehumo.”

Noah: “And?”

Neriah: (Sigh) “Upon finishing my prayer, I found myself landing on this very verse. “Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” – Mark 10:9.”

Neither Noah nor Neriah were prophets, but they both knew what that meant.

Noah: “It’s time to accept it, my wife. Lehumo is a grown woman now and Gatsha can take care of her. It is really entirely up to him to make sure that she does not get hurt by his family.”

Neriah: (teary) “I know, but I just love her so much. I am worried that she might fall into the same footsteps I did.”

Noah: “Don’t worry, I think we have raised her pretty well. I truly believe that she will know what to do should trouble arise.”

Neriah smiled at her husband as she asked for reassurance from him. She knew that love didn’t come easily, but thinking of her daughter going through trouble all in the name of love is really not something she was prepared for. She thought only time would tell.

Gatsha on the other hand couldn’t even stop smiling and humming all the way through dinner, leaving his mother entirely annoyed because she always made it a point to know what happened in her children’s lives. She had such a hold over her son Shaka, but Gatsha was a hard nut to crack. He was mostly close to his father and not her, and that added to her frustration. While Gatsha was humming, his father was even chuckling. Queen Kuli knew that he knew what Gatsha was so happy about.

She tried asking, but neither of them wanted to spill the beans. The King was a good man and a man who was very good at keeping secrets – it was not as if he was oblivious to his

wife's filthy tendencies. He also married her out of obligation and didn't want that for his sons. He already saw Shaka going down a road he didn't even imagine, but what could he do? Queen Kuli even felt as if the whole dinner was distasteful as she kept looking at the smiling Gatsha. Shaka on the other hand was just as annoyed. He hated seeing his brother happy.

It was then more than sibling rivalry. His deep envy and jealousy towards Gatsha had reached new heights. He was at a stage that he could be ready to kill him should the time have come. After dinner, Gatsha decided to retreat to his room and the annoyed Shaka followed him trying to get some information out of his brother. Shaka was very impulsive and had zero emotional intelligence. After so many years he still failed to get some tact to get closer to his brother.

Shaka: "Manje uyaphi wena (Where are you going now)?"

Gatsha: "Yini (What)? Am I supposed to answer to you now, Shaka?"

Shaka: (chuckling) “Hawu (Goodness), Bhuti (Brother), it’s not like that at all. I was just asking if you would like to grab a drink with me.”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “You think I’m stupid wena, ne? I mean since when do we even sit and have a drink together?”

Shaka: “Hawu (Wow), Gatsha. Se kunje, vele (So, it’s like this now)?”

Gatsha: “It has always been like this. It even became worse when you slept with a woman I once loved and you impregnated her. You did well by forcing her to abort. I wouldn’t want anyone carrying your filthy seed into this world.”

Shaka was about to retaliate, but Gatsha ignored him as usual. Gatsha was not a short-tempered man. He knew just when to fight and that was not the time. Shaka was left standing at the bottom of the stairs, shouting at Gatsha, who just walked to his room.

Shaka: (angrily) “Uyambona ke, Mama (You see him now, Mama)?”

Queen Kuli: “Yini manje (What is it now)?”

Shaka: (fuming) “He doesn’t let shit go! Must he always remind me about what I did with Sizakele?! I mean it was a mistake and brothers are supposed to stick together and forgive each other! I mean I should be the one mourning since she aborted my child.”

The level of entitlement that Shaka had reached was seriously disturbing to his father, King Sfiso. He knew his son didn’t even have any morals to begin with, not even any principles, but to raise such an unapologetic child, was rather disturbing to him.

King Sfiso: (Annoyed) “Shaka, you were wrong. At least for once, just admit your mistakes for goodness sake!”

King Sfiso was a calm man even when angry so whenever he raised his voice they knew he was livid.

Queen Kuli: “Kodwa (But), my husband, you always take Gatsha’s side without even feeling for your first born. He is the future king of this kingdom, we have to – “

She didn’t even get to finish her sentence.

King Sfiso: “No future King of mine shall be as disrespectful, unremorseful and loose like Shaka!”

He even banged his fists on the table, leaving both Shaka and Kuli in shock.

Shaka: “But, Baba (Dad), must you really show me that you love me less than Gatsha?”

King Sfiso: “This is not even about love. I love my children all equally. It is your blatant disrespect I cannot handle. I hate your annoying mannerisms, your lack of compassion and your disrespectful ways – for yourself, women and this kingdom. You forgot that we had to pay 10 cows for what you

did to Sizakele. You should be very happy she managed to go to Varsity and get married. You on the other hand, have a long way to go, my son. You cannot get ready to be called a kign when you are not even fit to be a Prince.”

He left Shaka and Kuli standing right there – gob smacked. Kuli was just one of those meddling mothers. She knew deep down that she was wrong and was ruining Shaka, but she just couldn't help it. Her constant babying and reassurance towards Shaka became his downfall. That alone made him be the weaker son and allowed his brother to win the battle of kingship against him.

“The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become – because He made us. He invented us. He intended all the different people that you and I were intended to be... it is when I turn to Christ, when I give up myself to His personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own.” – C.S. Lewis

Lehumo’s 18th birthday had finally come, and the person whom everyone didn’t expect to be the first one awake in the royal house surprised them all. Gatsha was up and about very early at about 6am. He had made a few calls the previous day, ordering a book especially for Lehumo. He had occasionally spoken to Neriah and she would speak about how much Lehumo loved reading books. Neriah had no idea, but Gatsha had always been intrigued by Lehumo.

Unlike his brother, he wasn’t one to be forward and go for any woman. He took his time to study a woman of interest. He really didn’t what to get her, so he decided on ‘Living beyond your feelings’ by Joyce Meyer, a very lovely bottle of Spier Pinotage wine – although he wasn’t sure she was a drinker or not, and a bunch of white lilies. He chose being against roses

since it was rather typical and from his experience, not many ladies love roses. Besides, he loved being unique and different.

He also had such great respect for Noah and Neriah and didn't want to seem disrespectful by inviting himself without their permission, so he had decided to go ask for their permission in person. He also was a man of very few words, but of many actions. So, he decided to get Neriah the book 'Planted with a Purpose' by T.D. Jakes also with a lovely bottle of Spier Chardonnay. He had heard her say that she took a glass or two of red wine on occasion and she also got Noah the book 'Daddy Loves his Girls' by T.D. Jakes and a bottle of 12 Year Old Glenfiddich. He had to go fetch the gifts from his friend at the mall before heading to the Mkhabela household. He believed that although a person didn't drink, it was the thought that counted – always.

He walked down the stairs dressed in a gorgeous pair of Diesel Jeans, with a white Givenchy top and he was ready to leave. He had found his mother, Queen Kuli sitting in the lounge, looking like she had hardly slept a wink the previous night. She was even more distraught when she saw him humming all the way down the stairs. She knew that look – that was a look of a man in love, which was the biggest stress for her since she had

promised a fellow queen from another kingdom that Gatsha would marry her daughter.

Gatsha: (smiling) “Sawubona (Hello), Ma. Unjani (How are you)?”

Queen Kuli: (fake smile) “Hello, my boy. Ngiyaphila (I’m well), how are you?”

Gatsha: “I am better than ever. Yini ungathi awulalanga kodwa (Why does it seem as if you haven’t slept a wink, though)?”

Queen Kuli: (chuckling) “Ag, just some mild insomnia. Nothing hectic.”

Gatsha: “I can make you a cup of green tea, if you’d like.”

That was the exact difference between Gatsha and Shaka. Gatsha was very loving and he would do anything for his mother – except be her pet. He would even offer to rub her feet after a long day, but Shaka would never offer. He was one

to be asked by his mother – always. Queen Kuli was unfortunately much like Shaka, she lacked tact. She couldn't pretend for very long and would always strive to hit the nail on the head too early.

Queen Kuli: "No, thank you, mfana wami (my boy). But you can tell me why you're so happy instead."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Hawu (Gosh), Ma. Umuntu akufanele ukuthi anovuka ajabulile kuphela (Can't a person just wake up in a happy mood for no reason)?"

Queen Kuli: "Come on, Gatsha. I know you are lying to me. It's about that girl, isn't it?"

Gatsha: "Which girl?"

Queen Kuli: "Neriah's daughter. And don't you dare lie to me. I have reliable sources."

Gatsha knew very well that his mother was capable of paying people to spy on him.

Gatsha: “Mother, I am not hiding anything from you. I am allowed to have my own life and own share of secrets. If you need to know anything, believe you will know.”

Kuli didn't take it very lightly.

Queen Kuli: (angered) “You're in love with a servant's daughter and you expect me to keep quiet, Gatsha?! Do you plan on making me the laughing stock of the whole Zululand? What will people say if they heard a prince has fallen for a mere commoner?!”

That really hit Gatsha's nerve because as much as Neriah or any other employee of theirs was a 'servant', they were still human.

Gatsha: “Mother, ngenhlonipho (with all due respect), ngicela ungalinge ukhulume lawo amagama futhi (I ask that you never repeat those words) – especially in my presence. Neriah might

be a servant to you, but she is more like a mother to me. And as for Lehumo, she is not a commoner – she is the one who has my heart. And if you dare try to do to me what you did to that girl Shaka fell in love with, you'll regret it.”

He said that in such a calm manner and walked out without saying anything further. Kuli knew very well that he meant every word he had said on that day, but she just kept pushing. She refused to accept that Gatsha was in love with Neriah's daughter. She would look for ways to destroy their love, but little did she know that the more she tried, the more their love grew for one another.

Meanwhile, in the Mkhabela household, Lehumo was truly happy that she had finally turned 18 and that she was finally done with school. She was woken up by Noah and Neriah walking into her room with a tray full of a very salivating English breakfast, as they sang happy birthday to her. She had no choice but to wake up and she couldn't help but smile as they both warmed her heart.

Neriah: (smiling) “Happy Birthday, moratuwa waka (my love).”

Lehumo: (smiling) "Thank you, Ma. Thank you, Papa."

Noah made her birthday extra special by taking out a small gift bag he had hidden from her as of last night. He liked surprises much like Gatsha. He handed it to Lehumo as she looked excited.

Lehumo: (smiling) "For me?"

Noah: (nodded) "Yes. It's from us, open it."

She didn't hesitate to open it and found two envelopes. She decided to open the thickest one and it was a formal letter typed especially by Noah and Neriah.

"Dear Lehumo

Your mother and I love you so much, as you know not a day goes by that we don't remind you of our love for you. However, I would like to start with myself; the day you entered my life had been the happiest day in my life. I had longed for pure love for very long and I am eternally grateful to

God for blessing me with you, your mother and Hosea. I know now that even if God would take me now, I would have no regrets because I have experienced what most people die without finding. You are officially an adult now and I want to do right by you, so therefore, your mother and I had decided a few years ago that we would ensure that you have enough money to study whatever you desire. Take this as our gift to you. With love, your parents.

P.S. Don't ever change the person you are – keep blossoming, my flower.”

As she scrolled down with her already tear-ridden eyes, she saw something astonishing.

“Sanlam Savings Plan For Lehumo Mkhabela for R400 000.”

She burst into tears thinking that Noah had saved up that money for as long as he could even remember and now he was giving it all to her to go study.

Lehumo: “Oh, Papa (Dad), this is too much. I had already applied for bursaries.”

Noah: “One can never be too careful or certain about those. This is our gift to you, my baby. Treasure it and use it wisely. Should any of those bursaries respond, you can save the money for something else.”

She hugged both her parents in so much tears. They also felt a bit teary and that was one of the best moments of Lehumo’s life.

Lehumo: “I really don’t know how to thank you.”

Neriah: (chuckling) “You can do that later. Open the next envelope.”

She wiped her tears off as she opened the next envelope. She was stunned to find a few R100 and R200 notes which had amounted to R1000 with a small letter attached. “Go and spoil yourself with your friend.”

Lehumo: (excited) "Hah! Mama, I know this was all your idea!"

Mama: (smiling) "You are a woman now, my child. It is high time I gave you the life I never had. Now, don't waste your time

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eat up and go take a shower. Brenda will be here in half an hour."

Lehumo: "Mara (But), Brenda. She is so good at keeping secrets."

Noah: "She had to be bribed first."

Lehumo chuckled as they left her to enjoy her breakfast in peace while they went on to prepare for the day's party. Lehumo's parents were so wonderful to her. She had seemingly forgotten who Pieter was since he never even made an attempt to change his life or be closer to her again after everything, so she just moved on with life and accepted Noah

as her new father. She had even changed her surname from Pieter's to Noah's. She did her business and wore a pair of jeans and a white tank top.

Her hair was naturally long, so she tied it up into a ponytail and headed out. She found Brenda waiting for her excitedly with a limosine. Her parents were very extra, really. Everyone outside were very surprised as to how Noah and Neriah could afford such with their salaries, but little did they know that saving went a long way. She kissed her parents and headed out with her friend Brenda.

Her parents were all set and had even hired a driver for them to enjoy their day at the spa and go for some shopping. As they were about to prepare for the day ahead, Gatsha parked his BMW 2 Series outside their gate. Neriah was very happy to see him, while Noah was frowning a little bit. He stood at the gate, out of respect, as Neriah went outside and met him halfway.

Neriah: (smiling) "Sawubona (Hello) Gatsha."

Gatsha: "Sawubona (Hello), Ma. May I please enter?"

Neriah smiled in awe at his incredibly amazing mannerisms.

Neriah: “Yes, you may, Gatsha.”

Gatsha: “Ngenhlonipho, Ma (Out of respect), Ngicela ubuze uBaba noma kuright ukuthi nginga ngena na (may you please ask Mr. Mkhabela if I may enter)?”

Neriah: (smiling) “Okay, hold on.”

She walked back into the house and found her husband peeling some vegetables.

Neriah: “Mogatshaka (My husband), Prince Gatsha is asking for your permission to enter.”

Noah hadn't expected that at all from the Prince himself. He was indeed chuffed by that boy. He nodded out of shock while Neriah went back outside to call Gatsha to come in. He hurried

back to his car and took out the gifts he had bought for them and hurried right into the yard. Upon meeting Mam'Neriah, he shook her hand gently.

Gatsha: "Nice to see you again, Ma."

Neriah smiled at him while Noah looked at him with shock in his eyes. His whole face was actually paralyzed by shock. He was even more surprised by the fact that Gatsha had his cap in his hands as a sign of respect for their household, alongside the gift bags.

Gatsha: "Sawubona, Baba (Hello, Sir)."

Noah was so shocked, Gatsha had his head bowed awaiting his response.

Noah: "Yebo, Sawubona, Prince Gatsha (Yes, hello)."

Gatsha: "Ninjani, Baba (How are you, Sir)?"

Noah: “Ngiyaphila, unjani kodwa wena Nkosi (I’m well, how are you, our Prince)?”

Gatsha: “I’m well, thank you.”

Noah: “What brings you here?”

Gatsha: “Eish, Baba (sir), I had heard that you are hosting a birthday party for Lehumo, so I wanted to come and ask you personally if I could help around with anything that you needed.”

Noah: (smiling) “Hawu (Wow), what would people say seeing you, the prince helping out in a commoner’s yard?”

Gatsha: “With all due respect, Baba (Sir), I am my own person. I may have been born into royalty, but it does not define me. Even God himself had made us all equal. I came here because I have taken an interest in Lehumo, and I believe that

she might feel the same. I came here to humble myself and ask for your permission to get to know her.”

That was a shocker, really. They both didn't expect that he would just say that so quickly.

Noah: (smiling) “Ngiyakuzwa (I hear you). Kodwa (but), have you forgotten a bout the rules of your kingdom, Prince Gatsha?”

Gatsha: (shaking head) “No, sir. I might have been born into those rules, but I don't have to follow them. You see, sir, I firmly believe in love. I believe that God would never put us on this earth to suffer especially at the hands of other people. I know that I am in love with your daughter, sir.”

Neriah found herself in immense tears, fighting them back very hard.

Noah: (impressed) “Do you mind me asking you a few questions?”

Gatsha: “No, sir. You may proceed.”

Noah: “I hear your plea, and I am quite honoured that a man like you has an interest in my daughter, but what guarantee do I have that you love her and you won’t break her heart?”

Gatsha: (smiling) “Because I vow to protect her, first and foremost. I want to protect her from all this evil in this world. I vow to love her and show her what love really means and I will never allow anyone to hurt her – even myself. I know, love does not come with a manual and people get hurt all the time, but I would never do that to her intentionally. People aren’t perfect, Baba (Sir), but love is. Pure love with God’s presence in it is of perfection and I want to give her nothing but pure love.”

Noah was smiling from ear to ear. He had failed long ago trying to be serious with Gatsha.

Noah: “And if your family disapprove of that? What then?”

Gatsha: “I have already spoken to my father about my interests in Lehumo, sir, and he has vowed to meet up with the council to have the laws changed. I give you my word, I will make sure I treat Lehumo well, provided I get given the chance to prove it to you.”

Noah and Neriah were smiling as they looked at each other and nodded once. They both knew that Gatsha was very much in love with their daughter, but Noah, as a father, couldn't give away his daughter that easily.

Noah: “Okay, I will allow you a chance to get to know my daughter, but you shall not be permitted to have her over to your house for anything at all. At least not until you are certain that you want to marry her.”

Gatsha was so happy, that is all he needed to hear.

Gatsha: (smiling) “Ngiyabonga (Thank you), Baba (sir).”

Gatsha extended his hand for a handshake of which Noah was more than happy to accept.

“Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.” – Lao Tzu

The day was going just fine, as Lehumo went out to enjoy her first moments of being 18 with her best friend Brenda, her mother, Noah and Prince Gatsha were planning the perfect birthday for her. Neriah had invited Beatrice and her friend Raesibe from Lephallale, while Noah had invited a few of his work friends and friends from church. It was nothing major, and who could forget Bongi of course.

But nothing could ever stay secret for long in Zululand, as Queen Kuli had sent one of her loyal garden servants to spy on Gatsha, a lot of people had heard that Prince Gatsha was helping out at the Mkhabela household. Rumours became rife and it wasn't long before the news of Gatsha's romantic relationship had spread across the village. Imagine that, a whole story flying around without your knowledge.

Gatsha hadn't even proposed to Lehumo properly, but people had already formulated their own ideas and conclusions. Unluckily for Kuli, her husband, King Sfiso was

always one step ahead of her – just like Gatsha. While Lehumo was at the spa with Brenda, they had to cut their trip very short due to rude people making their presence known. They both had just finished getting their full spa treatments and on their way to do some shopping. Upon leaving the spa, they were amazed to find Prince Shaka walking right towards them with one of the township ‘whores’ Bulelwa.

Brenda: (smiling) “Yoh, chomi (friend). I had so much fun, man. It was my very first time at the spa, kodwa. I need to get myself a boyfriend who can spoil me like that very often.”

Lehumo: (chuckling) “Come on, Brenda, man. You honestly don’t need a man to do all that for you. You can do that all on your own.”

Brenda: “Of course you would say that. You have the most sought after Prince Gatsha trying to steal your heart,”

Lehumo: (blushing) “Come on, Brenda. He never asked me out or anything. You shouldn’t be jumping to conclusions.”

Brenda: "I am not jumping to anything. That is not what is being said around Zululand."

Lehumo: (frowning) "What do you mean?"

Brenda was about to fill Lehumo in on what was being said about her, when Shaka made his very unpleasant appearance.

Shaka: (cocky) "Well, well, well. If it isn't the most sought after girl in Zululand."

Lehumo never liked Shaka. She always heard stories about him and that made her dislike her even more.

Lehumo: (annoyed) "Excuse me?"

Shaka: (mimicking Lehumo) "Nyescuse me? Yazi nina amantombazana we MaPedi nihlupha kabi (You know, you Pedi girls are so annoying). Why couldn't you stay back in your village? You just had to come here and cause trouble, didn't you?"

Lehumo was getting angered, and was about to walk away, until she heard Bulelwa make a derogatory statement towards her.

Bulelwa: (chuckling) “Look at her, baby. I doubt Gatsha would even fall for a shapeless thing like her. I mean she isn’t even that pretty.”

Lehumo was rather confident, thanks to her mother and Noah. She didn’t need to be the prettiest girl in the world, but with her beautiful caramel skin tone and gorgeous hour glass figure, she knew that Bulelwa was just trying to make her feel small. For her to even say that she wasn’t “that pretty”, showed that at least she knew that she was pretty – although not pretty enough for her.

Lehumo: (annoyed) “Listen here, Shaka and whoever you are. I don’t know you and quite frankly I don’t need to know you. For the mere fact that you took the time out of your ‘perfect’ lives just to come all the way here to insult me, shows that I do intimidate you. As for you, girly, no one said Gatsha wanted me and even if he did – I don’t see how any of that would be your

concern. I mean, you have the eldest Prince's arm around your miserable waist yet you still have the time to insult girls younger than you? What are you? Five years old? Get a grip, secure that bag because clearly school isn't something of your caliber. Now, if you will excuse me, I have a birthday to celebrate."

She didn't even give them both a chance to say anything further. Brenda walked right after her, laughing at the astonished Shaka and the very exasperated Bulelwa.

Bulelwa: (livid) "Aren't you going to do something, Shaka? She literally just insulted me – insulted us!"

Shaka: (clicking tongue) "Mxm, Awuthule nawe (Shut up), Bulelwa man. Uyadina sometimes (You can be annoying at times)."

Bulelwa was so saddened, as Shaka was left staring at Lehumo until she made her way out of the mall. No girl had ever spoken to him like that – with such authority in her voice and such confidence. He had always had girls who would do everything and anything he said and just by replaying Lehumo's response towards him – that alone made him want Lehumo

even more than he ever had before. Shaka was one of those greedy men – he couldn't love any woman right, no matter how hard he tried, but he refused to let his brother love these women.

Meanwhile Lehumo was fuming, it took her a while to calm down. The Limo driver was rather surprised that they had left the mall so quickly. Lehumo didn't even wait for him to open the door for them, she literally shoved herself into the limousine.

Driver: (puzzled) "Is everything okay, ma'am?"

Lehumo: (annoyed) "Yes! Everything is fine, may you please drive?!"

The driver looked at Lehumo and then at Brenda, who tried to ease the situation.

Brenda: "Oh, don't worry, sir. An irritating boy tried to ruin her birthday."

Driver: (puzzled) “Who might this boy be?”

Brenda: “The elder Prince.”

Driver: (chuckling) “Oh, Prince Shaka? He has a tendency of doing that. He is the most annoying Prince anyone has ever come across. No wonder he isn’t married yet. My advice to you, young lady, don’t ever let old men with small minds get to you like that. He most probably does not know how to interact with young ladies with self-respect like the two of you. Now, come on. I received strict instructions not to let you go back home until I was told to bring you home. Since you wanted to do some shopping, I shall take you to another mall nearby – without the annoying Prince.”

He chuckled along with Brenda, while Lehumo was still fuming.

Brenda: “Hey, the Bible says in Proverbs 29:22 – “AN angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins.”

Lehumo: (chuckling) “Hao, Bee, since when do you quote the Bible so well?”

Brenda: “Since I am sitting next to one of the most amazing teachers I have ever come across.”

Lehumo: (chuckling) “Oh? Is that the only scripture I have taught you about such situations?”

Brenda surprised her friend.

Brenda: “Proverbs 15:18 – “The heart of the goldy thinks carefully before speaking; the mouth of the wicked overflows with evil words. Corinthians 10:4-5 “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. Proverbs 15:1 – “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Lehumo: (impressed) “Okay, okay, I get your point.”

Brenda: “Does that mean I will get myself a nice hubby like the Prince one day?”

Lehumo: (laughing) “Bathong (Goodness), Brenda! You don’t have to quote verses just to get a man. My father says that when a man loves you, you won’t even need to get his attention. He will show you without you feeling the need to prove yourself.”

Brenda smiled at the thought; although she was not as confident as Lehumo, she had a little bit of faith in herself. She was one broken soul, but a very good friend to Lehumo til the very end.

Meanwhile, back at the Mkhabela household, Bongi arrived along with Raesibe, whom she met at the taxi rank. She wanted to buy some fruits, and came across her so she decided to give her a lift. Of course, Beatrice and Neriah were delighted to see Raesibe.

Bongi: (shouting at the gate and hooting) “Haibo (Goodness)! Is someone going to open the gate for me or kumele ngizenzele pho (must I do it myself)?”

Noah was about to do it, but Prince Gatsha offered gracefully.

Gatsha: “Allow me, Baba (Father).”

Noah nodded at this graceful young man. Gatsha rushed towards the gate, with not a single care in the world that his expensive jeans and shirt had a bit of dirt on them after he was helping with the tables and carrying chairs and speakers around.

Gatsha: (opening the gate) “Ngicela ningene bo Mama (Please come in, ladies).”

Bongi was so impressed, and Raesibe was drooling over the young man.

Raesibe: (whispering) “Who is that?”

Bongi: “Someone who is way too royal and way too young for you.”

Raesibe was a widow, and a very sexually deprived widow who had wine on the sly and hid her drinking from her church. Gatsha closed the gate

but didn't end there, he walked up to them and waited for them to exit the car and gracefully introduced himself.

Gatsha: “Sawubona Ma (Hello, Ma). My name is Gatsha.”

Raesibe: (smiling) “Pleased to meet you, Gatsha.”

Bongi: “Pleased to officially meet you, Prince Gatsha.”

Gatsha: “Please, no need to call me Prince. I'm just Gatsha.”

Bongi was humbled by his attitude. She knew that her dream was not a dream that went into vain.

Bong: (smiling) “You are going to be one of the greatest kings in this country – one better than your father even.”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “No, Ma. I am the second born, I am not even in line to the throne and I don’t even want it.”

Bongi: “You’ll see. Give it time. You will have to fight for it and will have no choice but to take it.”

Gatsha took no note of Bongi’s imperative words, and carried their bags for them. It was hardly ten minutes later, when the King stopped right at their gate with his big Mercedes Benz. He wasted no time and got out of his car. Of course, the nosy people and a few of Queen Kuli’s nosy workers were acting as if they were walking past, but luckily for the Mkhabela’s, they had a wall high enough to block people from peeping through. The only time they could attempt to see what was happening was through the gate and back in the day one couldn’t just stand at someone’s gate and look at what they were doing. That was considered pure witchcraft.

King Sfiso: (shouting) “Greetings, Ba ka Mkhabela (The Mkhabela’s). Ngicela ukungena (May I come in)?”

They were so surprised by his humbleness.

Noah: “Yebo, I shall open for you.”

Gatsha quickly got up.

Gatsha: “No, Baba (father), allow me.”

Gatsha rushed towards the gate and people started murmuring, but ofcourse he didn’t care. He opened the gate and was just as surprised as everyone as to why his father was there. He didn’t even come with a guard. He made his way out and greeted everyone by hand.

King Sfiso: “Greetings once again, I know you are all shocked as to why I am here.”

Noah: “Yes, had we known we would have prepared a feast fit for a king.”

King Sfiso: (chuckling) Nonsense, Noah. I am a man, just like you. I don’t even like fancy food.”

Noah: (chuckling) “Okay, why are you here if I may ask?”

King Sfiso: (sigh) “Well, my wife sent people out to spy on you Gatsha, not only that, rumours are already flying that Gatsha is intending on marrying Lehumo.”

Gatsha: (annoyed) “Kodwa (But) why can’t these people ever mind their business? It is not entirely lies, though, Baba. So why is this a problem?”

King Sfiso: “Well, because this puts a damper in my plans. I was supposed to inform the council of the changes I wanted to make to the current law about royals marrying non-royals, but well, since these rumours are so rife, they heard about it and have requested a meeting as soon as tomorrow.”

Noah was a bit annoyed and so was Neriah. Bongi didn't even seem surprised, as she saw it coming. Shame, Lehumo and Gatsha's love was already tainted with pure hatred and jealousy before it had even began. Beatrice was not surprised at all, but her heart ached as she truly had hope that Queen Kuli would change for the better one day.

Gatsha: (sigh) "So, what now?"

King Sfiso: "Now, I request permission to spend the lovely day with you. That is if it is alright with you, Noah."

Noah was more than delighted to host the King of Zululand in his house.

Noah: "I can never say no to guests, but only if my wife is okay with it."

Neriah: "You can be so full of nonsense, man. Of course you are welcome, my king."

King Sfiso: "Please, call me Sfiso."

Neriah: (chuckling) "That will never happen. Come, have a seat. Your son brought my husband some nice whiskey, so perhaps you can enjoy it together."

King Sfiso: "I would rather help out while having that drink, Neriah. I cannot sit and do nothing even as a guest."

Noah: "Well, in that case, you can help me finish braaing the meat."

Neriah: "Good. I'll go get you some glasses."

Raesibe: (whispering) "Hao, mokgotsi (Wow, friend). Does he not want a second wife or a concubine nyana?"

Neriah: (frowning) "Raesibe, behave please. Before ke go koba (I kick you out)."

Beatrice and Bonggi were chuckling.

Raesibe: “Askies (Sorry), but akere wena o e gwetja mehleng, rena ba bangwe dololo (but you get it everyday, some of us we don’t get any at all).”

Bonggi: “Ai, man Raesibe. My husband died more than 30 years ago. What do you think keeps me so sane?”

Beatrice: “Alcohol.”

They all laughed.

Bonggi: “Not only that, but my bff – my hello Lola 20 speed vibrator.”

They all looked at her shocked.

Bonggi: “And of course, my gardener Meshack.”

That was enough to make them laugh for days, leaving Beatrice and Neriah embarrassed. A few hours later, a few braai sessions and drinks later, Noah, Gatsha and Sfiso were getting along like a house on fire. Lehumo finally made it home and got the surprise of her life. She was ordered to go change into her party outfit, after she had to dry her tears.

Gatsha immediately straightened up when she walked through that gate. He had never seen such an angelic person before in his life. He was so in love, that everyone around him could see right through him. Lehumo came out wearing a beautiful, long, white flowey dress with gold sandals – fitting right to her Egyptian themed party. Yep, that was Bongi's idea. She was so happy, and Brenda was delighted to see her smile so much. She was not a speech person, but of course, Bongi had to make one.

Bongi: "I know you hate speeches, my baby, but this is a special day for you. As the gogo, I have to make a speech, the best speech, actually. I pray for you more than anything – to find your way through life and to be your own person. You are an amazing young soul and I pray that God preserves you for

better things to come. As God said, obey your father and mother and you shall be rewarded. Ephesians 6:1 – “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” You have been such an obedient child, Lehumo, and for that, your days will be very long in this life.

I want you to remember that life has no short cuts, no matter how bad the pain gets – you have to face it to overcome and achieve better things. With that said, I leave you with this; Proverbs 31:30 – “Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” Never forget that the Bible is your ultimate weapon and your knees should never grow tired of being on the floor. Pray always no matter how bleak the future seems, my child. For you know the Bible, you know God more than any young woman I know in this world. Make your parents proud. I love you so much.”

Lehumo was so happy but something within her gut told her that those words were deeper than what she meant. She even had those goosebumps as she felt Prince Gatsha staring at her every now and then. She didn't know what the future held for her, but she knew that God had bigger plans in store for her.

“Tension in the long run, is a more dangerous force than any feud known to man.” – Criss Jami

Lehumo and Gatsha walked back hand in hand, smiling at one another. Noah and King Sfiso were happy to see them, until King Sfiso became alarmed by Gatsha’s swollen hand.

King Sfiso: (puzzled) “Gatsha, what happened to your hand?”

Gatsha: (looking down) “It’s nothing, Baba (Father).”

King Sfiso knew both his sons in and out and Gatsha looking down was a clear indication that he was lying. He, like most parents hated being lied to. King Sfiso got angry and rushed towards Gatsha. Gatsha, being a gentleman in love, pulled Lehumo behind him as he was ready to face his father’s wrath without fear. Noah, seeing that, he knew this was a man after his daughter’s heart and that he intended to nurture her heart.

King Sfiso: “Have I taught you to run amock these streets fighting?!”

Gatsha: “Cha (No), Baba. I am not to be blamed.”

King Sfiso: (shouting) “Then how to you explain your bruised knuckles and swollen hand?!”

Gatsha did not want to seem like a weakling, running to his father over his brother’s tendencies, so he still went against telling his father the actual truth over what happened.

Gatsha: I’d rather not say.”

King Sfiso: (frustrated) “Gatsha, you decide to embarrass me like this right in front of your girlfriend’s family?!”

Lehumo couldn’t understand why Gatsha wasn’t telling his father the truth and how he would have rather allowed him to beat him right in front of everyone, so she decided to step in and rescue her man.

Lehumo: “Forgive me for interrupting you, my King, but it really wasn’t Gatsha’s fault. He didn’t start any fight.”

Gatsha: (firmly) “Leave it, Lehumo.”

She noticed that he was upset as he called her Lehumo instead of Ntombenhle, but that didn’t stop her from being hotheaded.

Lehumo: “No, I can’t, Gatsha. Ntate (Sir), it is your first born son who provoked Gatsha while we were having a quiet and peaceful walk in the street. He insulted me by calling me a word no one has ever called me before in all my life and Gatsha got upset and punched him. It was the very same brother of his, who saw me at the mall earlier on today and decided to insult me along with that girl he was with.”

Noah found himself rather angered by Shaka’s supposed behaviour towards his daughter, while King Sifso felt embarrassed by his reaction and Gatsha was left puzzled.

Gatsha: "Why didn't you tell me?"

Lehumo: "Same reason you refused to tell your father about what happened to your hand."

King Sfiso: "My son, forgive me for shouting at you. It really was not my intention. I will deal with Shaka once we get home."

Gatsha: (frowning) "No, Father. I can fight my own battles."

King Sfiso: "This battle has gone on for way too long. It is high time your brother knew who was in charge of this Kingdom. Noah, I apologize sincerely, my dear friend. I will ensure my filthy son apologizes in the right manner. I do hope and wish that this won't end our newly formed friendship."

Noah: "Of course not. All is well between us, Sfiso."

He smiled and nodded as he said goodbye to the family. Gatsha said he'd help them pack up and tidy up before he headed back home.

King Sfiso eventually made it back to his house – fuming. As soon as he walked in and saw his wife and son Shaka concocting something while looking at her phone, he became even angrier.

King Sfiso: (Hey, wena (you), slima ndini (you fool)! Yini lento uyiyezile namhlanje (What is the nonsense you did today)?!”

Shaka knew instantly what his father was talking about. He knew that Gatsha would tell him one way or another and assumed that Gatsha did indeed run to his father. But, with a hotheaded personality, instead of humbling himself to his father

Shaka answered his father in a very disrespecting tone, leaving Sfiso breathing fire.

Shaka: (shouting) “Wena (You), Baba (Father), you’re always taking Gatsha’s side – always! When will you ever favour me like that?!”

King Sfiso grabbed Shaka by the collar of his shirt and punched him twice. Shaka fell onto the floor, and the pain from Gatsha’s blow earlier on came back twice as hard right after his father’s punches.

Queen Kuli: (shocked) “Sfiso! How can you beat your son up like a measly dog?!”

Sfiso: (Angrily) “Thula wena (Shut up)! Sukuma, wena (Get up)! Angithi uyenza ungathi ukhuliswe estradeni nje nge nja (You act as if you were raised in the streets like a mere dog)! Do I look like an animal to you, Shaka?! Have I ever insulted your mother?!”

Shaka: (looking down) “No, Baba (Dad).”

Sfiso: “Then why, Shaka? Why do you go around insulting Mkhabela’s daughter like she is some cheap slut?! Is it not bad enough what you did to Gatsha’s previous girlfriends?! Now you want to rob him of this happiness as well? All because you have no confidence within yourself to actually find a woman who loves you for you. Who loves the animal in you.”

Shaka kept quiet.

Sfiso: “I will not stand for this nonsense anymore, Shaka. Sengizwile ngawe (I’ve had enough of you). I am officially cutting you off from your allowance.”

Shaka: (shocked) “What?! You can’t do that, Baba (Dad)!”

King Sfiso: “Life has taught me that I have been too soft on you. You’re 30 now and old enough to make your own money. With that mouth of yours, I am sure you can find a job really fast. Angithi unamaconnections wena (you keep saying you have connections, don’t you)?”

Kuli: “But Sfiso, how can you treat your own son like this? All because of that nobody?! I mean look, she’s trending all over social media! She is a whore!”

Sfiso: “I don’t care what you think. That “whore” will be Gatsha’s wife very soon. I called the council to meet tomorrow. Royals will now be able to marry non-royals.”

Kuli: (shocked) “Ini (What)?! You want to bring commoners into this family now, Sfiso?! You can’t do that, I won’t allow it.”

Sfiso: “I can and I will. At least Gatsha will find the kind of love and happiness I never found in you.”

That statement was enough to drive Kuli further down a path full of depression, hate and rage. She was already unstable and now that she knew exactly how her husband felt, she just couldn’t bear seeing Lehumo enter her family as one of the Princesses.

Kuli: (teary) “Sfiso, you really don’t mean that...”

Sfiso: (chuckling) “You like acting all innocent, all this while you keep hiding what you did to me years ago. I forgave you, didn’t I? You like calling innocent girls whores, but I guess it takes one to know one.”

Kuli found herself breaking down right there on the hard floor, with Shaka trying to defend his mother. He quickly got up, but he stopped himself because he knew that he had no chance as his father was much stronger than him.

Shaka: (angered) “Baba (Dad), you cannot speak to my mother like that!”

King Sfiso: “You sure inherited your mother’s evil nature. Now, if I hear of you two concocting anything against Gatsha and Lehumo, I will have you thrown out and banned from this Kingdom forever. Do I make myself clear?!”

Shaka couldn’t believe that his father was actually serious. He stared at him in silence as Kuli wailed on the floor like a new widow.

King Sfiso: “You know I hate repeating myself. You know how I get when my patience and kindness gets tested.”

He said nothing further as he walked up the stairs and retreated to his room, leaving Shaka and Kuli defeated – as if they had lost one of their most prized possessions in life. A few minutes later, Gatsha walked in. he wasn’t surprised seeing his mother wail on the floor with Shaka bleeding through the mouth and nose.

Gatsha: “Sanibonani (Good evening).”

Kuli cried even worse when she saw him and ran towards him. She threw herself in her arms, hoping that Gatsha would feel a bit of pain seeing his mother cry like that.

Gatsha: (pulling Kuli away from him) “Yini manje (What is it)?”

Kuli: (crying) “Your father.... He.... Wena kahle kahle (You)... how could you, Gatsha? How could you allow that thing to come between us? Our family?”

Gatsha: (annoyed) “Ma, don’t you ever stop, though?”

He let go of her and proceeded to walk up the stairs without saying a word further to his mother or Shaka. All he wanted was peace and time to think about his new girlfriend. He couldn’t wait to see her again. Meanwhile, Kuli looked like she had a plan up her sleeve, but who knows – would it work?

“Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.” – William Shakespeare

The following day was Sunday, and of course, Gatsha got up very early – earlier than all of the Royal members. He took a shower in his ensuite bedroom and headed to church. Shaka had been in Jo’burg for quite a few years. He had decided to stay right after graduating, and kept himself busy with his job that side. It was good money, but he just lacked something when Sizakele hurt him by falling pregnant with his brother’s child. He really just felt it was time to go back home and recover. He had been home for over a year, and already had plans to start building a few landmarks and increasing the economic state of Zululand. He was about to leave, until he was met with his father, dressed in his suit in the dining area.

King Sfiso: “Gatsha, uyaphi ekseni kangaka (Where are you going so early in the morning)?”

Gatsha: “Sawubona, Baba (Hello, Father). Ngisaya esontweni (I’m going to church).”

King Sfiso: (sigh) "I thought you'd be here during the council meeting."

Gatsha: "I don't mind, but I thought that you need to do with Shaka since he is elder."

King Sfiso: "You know very well no one wants him as king."

Gatsha: "What time do you start?"

King Sfiso: "At midday."

Gatsha: "No problem. Church service will be finished by then. I'll see you later."

King Sfiso: "Hang on, let me go with you. That's if you don't mind."

Gatsha: (smiling) "Not at all. You haven't been to church in ages. It's going to rain today."

King Sfiso: (laughing slightly) "I just feel a bit overwhelmed today."

Gatsha: "I can tell, but don't worry. God has plenty to say to the weary and doubtful. Maybe you will receive your long awaited message from Him. Come."

King Sfiso: "Just as you will most probably get your long awaited message regarding Lehumo?"

Gatsha: (chuckling) "I already received my message long ago. God spoke to me and told me that she was the one."

King Sfiso: (sad) "I wish I had followed my heart just like you are doing now."

Gatsha: (puzzled) "Usho kanjani, Baba (What do you mean, Father)?"

King Sfiso: (Smiling slightly) “Nothing. Let’s go.”

Gatsha knew that there was more to his father’s statement, but he decided not to dwell on it. It must have been a very heavy burden to carry since he didn’t want to share it as of yet. He knew that his father would let him know soon enough, so they both headed out and got into Gatsha’s car for a change and headed to church. Upon entering, of course Gatsha’s eyes were wandering as he was looking for Lehumo. He saw her sitting with her mother and father right in front. While everyone was amazed and rather surprised to see the King and one of his sons in church, some wanted to ululate and cause a scene, but the King was so firm he didn’t want anyone to treat him extra special just because he had made his presence known.

He took off his hat as a respectful gentleman, he was dressed in his royal attire – well, half of it as he had worn one of his expensive suits with leopard skin draped across his left shoulder. Leopard was the spirit animal of the Dhlamini kingdom. Lehumo must have been alarmed by the whispering and all the eyes wandering at the back. As she turned to look, her eyes met with Gatsha’s and immediately the spark he had placed in her eyes arose. Gatsha confidently walked ahead and

passed everyone, while the king gladly walked behind him smiling as they finally made their way to Noah, Neriah and Lehumo who was carrying Hosea in her lap. Gatsha greeted Noah and Neriah by hand, and so did King Sfiso.

Noah: (smiling) “Hawu (Goodness), King Sfiso. Uyakhona ukungena lana kanti (I didn’t know you even knew where the church was situated).”

King Sfiso and Noah hit it off from the get go. Sfiso took no offence from Noah and treated him like his good old friend. He had had a best friend from back in the day who was also his advisor, but even he was not very close to his heart. For some reason, King Sfiso never trusted his advisor and his advisor knew it deep down although he had never told him.

King Sfiso: (chuckling) “Hawu (Wow), I know the church, I have just been a bit too busy lately.”

Noah: “Well, a man can never be too busy for God. Even if you don’t make it to church regularly, I’m sure you pray regularly.”

King Sfiso: (sigh) “I stopped praying a while ago, to be honest, my friend.”

Noah: “I see it in your eyes, my dear friend. They have been tainted by sadness and they seem so grief stricken. I have no idea what happened – but all I know is that we all deserve second chances.”

It was as if Noah was speaking to Sfiso as if he knew just what Sfiso had been hiding all these years. His face had been masked with immense pain and he had no choice but to hide it. He nodded while deep in thought, while Gatsha had asked Neriah if he could gladly sit next to Lehumo. She didn't mind, so he took his seat. While those two were blossoming in their new relationship status, the Pastor eventually came to the pulpit and the congregation started singing a hymn.

Pastor: “Ngiyabonga, bazalwane (Thank you, congregation). As you all know, today marks the very first day of December month. We know it can get tough as many people will be traveling home, matriculants have finished writing and await their results to be released in January. Some of our loved ones will be coming back for holidays; traveling at odd hours of the

morning even. Our youth will also be way into partying and will be drinking until they just can't anymore. I urge with you to keep this month in your prayers, for we cannot allow the Devil to make our world his playground."

Congregation: "Amen."

Pastor: "However, that is not my sermon topic for the day. Today, I'd like to speak about regrets. Since we are nearly ending the year, I don't want each and everyone of you to draft a list of new year's resolutions in the new year. I want you to do it before we end off the year. That way, you can have a brilliant, wide-eyed, brand new start to the new year. You see, regret, amongst other emotions, are just really painful. It evokes such pain and immense helplessness in the regretful person.

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that you just don't know what to do. Regret has caused a lot of marriages to break and fall apart, a lot of people to commit suicide and even kill their loved ones. We don't teach our kids

from a young age that life is like a circle, there is a starting point, but we do not know when the end point will be situated at. For all we know, your circle could be half-drawn already and you'd die before you can be able to draw a whole circle.

The point is, not everyone is meant to draw a full, whole circle in their lives. Such is important when coming to friends and loved ones. Some are in your life for a season – to teach you a lesson about yourself and people, while some are in your life for a reason and can remain forever – all depending on you.

Acts 3:19 – “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” A lot of people have regrets based on their past; a lot of people have said some harsh and hurtful words to their loved ones – especially siblings and parents yet they never had the chance to at least apologize and mend broken wounds. Pride gets in the way, and it becomes a very dangerous emotion called regret, that sticks to you like mould.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 – “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.” Many people still can't heal and are stuck in the past. All those “I should've, could've,

would've should be turned into I should, I can and I will. For time waits for no man and when the clock stops ticking and God calls you home, all that is left is memories in people's minds and thoughts, videos and pictures of you. Make the most of everything and remember that there is a time for everything. At times, you all think that once you get a time for something, you might get it again. God makes no mistakes.

Ecclesiastes 7:10 – “Do not say, “Why were the old days better than these?” For it is not wise to ask such questions.” A lot of you still think yes, the past days were still better than these days, but that is because you fail to create new memories. If you failed to tell someone that you love them back then, do it now. Do it now without hesitation and most importantly without expectation.

If you need to say I'm sorry, you'll be amazed as to how many people actually still yearn to hear those words from those who have wronged them, just for them to heal and move on. Yes, actions speak louder than words, but at times words soothe the wounded and heal a broken heart. It is better for you to die knowing that you did try than to die without trying nothing at all.”

King Sfiso had tears flowing down his cheeks and he didn't even bother removing them. It was as if he was at the right place at the right time, for the Pastor was talking to him. He had some deep-seated pain buried in his heart for years, and now he was finally letting go and digging deeply into the core of the problem. He felt he could not die without experiencing some form of true love. The pastor finished his sermon and King Sfiso felt so relieved afterwards.

As they left, he made sure not to engage in any conversation with the other congregants for all they wanted to do was to gossip and ask what he was actually doing there. A lot of the young women thought that King Sfiso had come to find Gatsha a wife, even though they knew that he couldn't marry out of royalty – they still had hope. Neriah was greeting a few of the church women goodbye, while Gatsha and Lehumo took Hosea for a walk for some ice cream after church, just across the street. Noah took that as the perfect opportunity to ask Sfiso about what happened.

Noah: “Sfiso, yini ekhlukumeze enhlizweni kangaka (what broke your heart so badly)?”

King Sfiso: (sigh) “Is it that obvious?”

Noah: (chuckling) “I am a good judge of character.”

King Sfiso: “Eish, years ago, before I met Kuli, I was in love with a beautiful woman named Khensani. She was my world, Noah. The way Gatsha looks at your daughter, that was the very same way I looked at her and she looked at me right back. It was just pure love at first sight. I loved her so much, I was ready to defy my father just to marry her. He didn’t want us to get married as the law had stated that royals could not marry non-royals. When my father refused to give me consent to marry her, Khensi and I had planned on running away and eloping. I didn’t have my father’s money, but I was willing to do everything just for her – even working as a pauper was just fine.

For some strange reason, she just told me that she didn’t want to be with me anymore – a few hours before we had to leave. She had said that she didn’t love me, of which I still doubt even today. I don’t know, it felt like she was coerced into doing so, but well, such is life. I was badly bruised, and

then Kuli came along. I didn't love her and I still don't, but after she fell pregnant with Shaka right before we got married, I had to do right by her. Three kids and 30 years later, I am still heartbroken."

Noah felt so much pain for his dear friend. He had no idea that he had actually settled with his wife. It must have been painful really, hearing that broke Noah's heart and he truly felt he couldn't just let everything be. He knew that he had to try and find a way to find Khensani. He didn't have the King's resources, but he had a lot of friends especially from work. The doubt in King Sfiso's voice made Noah realize that perhaps something more serious must have happened to Khensani.

“If you tell the truth, you don’t have to remember anything.” –
Mark Twain

While Noah was still stuck on the whole Khensani issue, he couldn’t help but think of a familiar woman of which King Sfiso had described as that Khensani he had lost years ago. He had met a friend years before while he was driving busses in Johannesburg, who had a wife of a similar description. That very same friend died though, but he had only met the wife a few times. He just wanted to make sure, and who knew? That might have been the gateway to King Sfiso’s last minute happiness. It is indeed never too late for anything in life – no matter how old you are.

King Sfiso: “Noah, I have a meeting with the council in an hour. Would you and your family like to join me for lunch at my house?”

King Sfiso was one of the most humble Kings that ever lived. He hardly referred to his house as the Royal Palace. To him, it was a house just like any other.

Noah: “We’d love to, but what would your wife and children say?”

King Sfiso: “Don’t worry about those. I love having guests around my house. Plus, I’d like to introduce you to my Whiskey collection.”

Noah: (chuckling) “Careful, my wife might think you are trying to corrupt me and turn me into an alcoholic.”

King Sfiso laughed slightly and so did Neriah.

Neriah: “I’d love to, but I left my mother in law, Raesibe and Beatrice at my house. They were too tired to get up this morning.”

King Sfiso: “We can go fetch them if you would like.”

Neriah: "I wouldn't want to impose so much trouble on you, my king."

King Sfiso: "Nonsense, Neriah. You are family."

Gatsha: "Baba, it's okay. You, Baba Noah and Mam' Neriah can go ahead. I'll bring them all along with Lehumo."

King Sfiso: (smiling) "Problem solved. Come, Noah, lead the way."

King Sfiso meant that he would let Noah drive him along with Neriah to his house in his own car, instead of Gatsha's car.

Noah: (puzzled) "What will your council friends say when we pitch up in my old car?"

King Sfiso: (chuckling) "Who cares what they think? I used to own a Camry just like yours before I became King, you know. If I had it any other way, I wouldn't lead such a life."

Noah was rather impressed that he had found a friend such as King Sfiso. Little did he know what Sfiso had planned in his mind. Queen Kuli had been rather busy – too busy behind Sfiso’s back, so he was planning to get rid of someone who was too comfortable for his own liking. They went ahead as Noah opened the door for Neriah, who insisted she sit at the back so that Noah and his new friend could catch up in the front. Meanwhile, Gatsha and Lehumo had a very lovely talk in the car on the way to her house.

Gatsha: “Ntombenhle (Beautiful), may I take you out for lunch tomorrow after your shift at the clinic?”

Lehumo: “You don’t forget, neh (hey)?”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “I am a very attentive man, Lehumo. So, what do you say?”

Lehumo: “Okay, I guess an outing with my very first boyfriend wouldn’t hurt.”

Gatsha: (smiling) “I am very honoured to be your first, and I intend on being your last.”

That sent so many tantalizing signals through Lehumo’s body. As they landed right outside the gate, they found Bonggi already dressed sitting on the porch.

Bonggi: (shouting) “Hawu (Goodness)! Why nisishiyile, Lehumo (Why did you leave us behind)?”

Lehumo: “Hello, Ma. Mama said you were sleeping and didn’t want to disturb you.”

Bonggi: “Ai, phela we had to hear from random people that the King and his son were at church today. Sawubona Gatsha (Hello).”

Gatsha: (smiling) “Sawubona (Hello), Mam’ Bonggi.”

Bonggi: “Manje, why nize lana (So, why are you here)?”

Lehumo: “We came to fetch you personally. We have been formally invited to lunch with the King at his Palace.”

Bongi: (excitedly) “Yoh! Ngazile (I knew it)! Beatrice! Raesibe! Sheshisani (Hurry up)! We have a formal event to go to! Ai, those two aren’t even properly dressed. As you can see, I am always ready.”

Indeed she was right. Bongzi would always dress up no matter what. Even on a random day when she was chilling at home on her own. Lehumo and Gatsha chuckled while Raesibe and Beatrice hurried outside. They locked the door and made their way to the car.

Raesibe: (smiling) “Hmm, so, Gatsha, wena le Lehumo la jola bjale (are you and Lehumo dating now)?”

Lehumo blushed out of embarrassment while Gatsha smiled proudly.

Beatrice: “Oh, Raesibe, uyaphapha (you’re too forward).”

Bongi: “I agree. You need a man, wena (you).”

Raesibe: “I am just asking, mos.”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “Ma, asijoli (we’re not dating). Ukujola (dating) is for those who are not serious about the future. Lehumo and I sisemathandweni (are in love).”

He gently held Lehumo’s hand and kissed the back of it, leaving her smiling all the way. Beatrice and Bongi were impressed beyond, while Raesibe wanted to ask more questions.

Raesibe: “Hao banna (Wow)! Ke ditaba tse bose tseuwe mos (that’s good news, right)? Bjale, lenyalana neng (So, when are you two getting married) –“

Beatrice: “Raesibe, we have arrived here at the Palace. There’s someone I’m dying for you to meet. I think he might solve your problems. ALL of them.”

Bongi and Gatsha laughed, while Raesibe seemed really surprised and forgot all about her questions to Gatsha and Lehumo. As Gatsha drove in after being let in by the Guards, he was rather shocked to find a whole lot of cars in the yard. Usually when the royal council members arrived, the yard was never that full. It looked as if it was more than a meeting – more like a party or get together of some sort. Gatsha got even more irritated when he saw one particular car – a red Mercedes A200. There was only one person who was known to the royal family who owned that car. His jaw tightened immediately, but he remained calm for Lehumo's sake. He parked the car and opened the door for Lehumo. The other ladies at the back didn't mind opening the door for themselves.

Raesibe: "Ai, Beatrice. O kae motho ouwe (Where's that person)? I need a man lenna (also) who will open the door for me."

Bongi knew that something a little bad was about to happen, but it would blow over. She had seen that red car and the woman who owned it in one of her visions.

Beatrice on the other hand also knew who it belonged to. She had worked for the Royal family for so long that she had known all of their secrets – all of them. She was very good at keeping secrets – especially those that didn't involve her. As they walked in, Gatsha held Lehumo's hand firmly, and they were met by a blast from the past.

Sizakele: (smiling) "Hello, Gatsha. Long time no see."

There she was – the woman who had broken Gatsha's heart almost to the point of depression. She had her long weave as always, outrageously long red painted nails, very high red Jimmy Choo's on with a very revealing skirt and blouse on. She was a sex symbol indeed, and very attractive

but damaged goods in Gatsha's eyes. Lehumo sensed the tension from Gatsha as he squeezed her hand even tighter. Sizakele was the far opposite of Lehumo – they were both beautiful, but Lehumo was a lot more natural than her.

Gatsha: "Sizakele. Ufunani la (What are you doing here)?"

Sizakele: "Hawu (Wow), babe. I came to see you."

She attempted to touch him, but Gatsha violently pushed her hand away without letting go of Lehumo. Bongsi, Raesibe and Beatrice were right behind Gatsha and Lehumo, watching the whole scene in awkwardness.

Gatsha: (annoyed) “Don’t you ever – ever do that again. As you can see I am with my woman and I don’t have time for whores.”

Sizakele: (hurt) “But, Gatsha, I – “

Gatsha: “Out of my way.”

She knew that Gatsha was not playing, so she moved out of the way and let Gatsha and Lehumo pass, while Bongsi, Beatrice and Raesibe stared at the heartbroken Sizakele.

Raesibe: (whispering) “O hlatswa bjang washing ka manala ale (How does she do the laundry with those nails)?”

Beatrice: “A re ye wena (let’s go).”

Sizakele stared at Gatsha walking away with Lehumo and she knew right there and then that Gatsha was indeed in love. As they walked through the house, they heard some commotion in the lounge. It seemed as if King Sfiso was reprimanding a group of people.

King Sfiso: “ Kukwami la (This is my house)! How dare you walk here in without my permission?!”

Gatsha walked ahead with Lehumo in his hand. She tried to let go of his grip, but he held on. She started feeling her palms sweat as nervousness suddenly took over. King Sfiso was standing in the middle of people who didn't look familiar to Lehumo at all. They must have probably been the Royal Council members. Queen Kuli was sitting opposite the King with Shaka by her side. Princess Ayanda was also sitting there, staring at everyone. Next to King Sfiso was Noah, who looked absolutely calm. A man who looked more or less the King's age, decided to speak.

Bheki: “My King, I can explain.”

King Sfiso: "As my royal advisor and dear friend, Bheki. I expected better from you than this disrespect. Don't keep me waiting."

Bheki: "My King, the Queen summoned us here."

King Sfiso: "Oho, as usual you overrule my decisions and listen to her. Is she the King of this kingdom?"

Bheki: (looking down) "No, my king."

King Sfiso: "Then how dare you – all of you decide to let yourselves into my house and cause commotion like this?"

Queen Kuli: "My King, I asked them here because I feel that you have been acting irrationally these days. Your choices have proven that maybe it is time for you to step down."

King Sfiso: “You keep proving to me how big of a mistake it was to marry you, Kuli.”

Queen Kuli: “Sfiso...”

King Sfiso: “Quiet! Since you all feel that you know what is good for me, I suggest you get out of my face! Maybe it is high time I find myself new council members. Ones that I will be able to trust.”

They all kept quiet and looked at him in shock.

Bheki: “Sfiso, we’ve been friends for so long. You can’t possibly do this to us.”

King Sfiso: “Does being friends involve you fucking my wife?!”

Wow, everyone was so shocked. Judging by Kuli and Bheki’s reactions they were guilty.

Raesibe: (shocked) “Tjo (Wow)! Kgane di bowa bjana ga bo kgoshing (I had no idea Royals had so much drama)!”

Kuli tried to change the topic as she tried moving away from the humiliating topic.

Queen Kuli: “Manje Sfiso (So now), you brought these nobodies into my house and decided to humiliate me in front of them!”

King Sfiso: (chuckling) “You are one stupid woman. You really thought I didn’t know? How you and Bheki had been stealing money from me right under my nose. Had it not been for Gatsha I would have never known. You have proven to me yet again that once a whore – always a whore. I forgave you the first time, did you really think that I would forgive you the second time?”

She kept quiet and looked down.

Bheki: “Sfiso, I can explain.”

King Sfiso: "Save it for someone who cares."

He looked at one of his guards.

King Sfiso: "Take him away to the prison chambers. I'll see what to do with him later on."

Bheki: "No! Sfiso, wait!"

He shouted as he was being taken away, while Kuli looked down in shame.

King Sfiso: "Now that that is out of the way, I would like to get to the bottom of it all. I have eyes and ears everywhere. If any of you try to overrule me, I will find out and let you go without even thinking twice. I am not a man to be messed with and clearly all of you have been underestimating me for all these years. This woman you see right here is just a queen by name. All decisions will be made by me – The King of Zululand.

If any of you try such a stunt as Bheki did, I promise you, I will make sure you regret your decision. I called you here because I wanted to clarify a few things. As of today, I am making changes to a few of our laws. I have decided that as of today, Royals will be allowed to marry the ones they love – be they of royalty or not. Royals will be officially granted permission to marry non-royals.”

A few of them gasped but were too afraid to speak up.

King Sfiso: “It is clear that you have been speaking behind my back. Speak up, I am all ears.”

They kept quiet.

King Sfiso: “Well then, it is official. The law stands as of today. I will be signing the documents and returning them back to the royal court. As of today as well, no royal member will be receiving an allowance for just being of royalty. If he or she does not take part in any of our royal functions or duties, then they will be receiving no money from the royal family.”

Everyone was so shocked by him, and just gasped in silence. Shaka remained angered, but he said nothing more avoiding another punch from his father. Gatsha was too happy to see his father finally take action, while Princess Ayanda was shocked to the core.

Princess Ayanda: “Kodwa (But) Baba (Dad)! How will I survive?! This is not fair at all!”

King Sfiso: “Life is not fair to anyone – especially spoiled 20 year olds born with a silver spoon. You are turning 21 soon, and until you finally decide to actually finish a degree, you will be receiving no money from me.”

Princess Ayanda: “Kodwa (But) – “

King Sfiso: (interrupting) “If you have nothing valid or positive to say, state your points to me in writing and bring me the letter no later than today.”

One of the members decided to ask a rather valid question which shocked everyone even more, and angered Queen Kuli and Shaka.

Member: “King Sfiso, now that you have gotten rid of Bheki for valid reasons of course. Who will be your advisor from now on?”

King Sfiso: “Good question. I was saving the best for last.”

He turned and looked at the confused Noah.

King Sfiso: “Noah, I know that you and I haven’t known each other for very long, but before I ask you this important question, I would like to let you know that Shaka will apologize to Lehumo by paying 10 cows directly from his own Trust account.”

Kuli: “Ini (What)?!”

Shaka: “Over my dead – “

He didn't even finish his sentence when King Sfiso gave him a death stare.

King Sfiso: "With that said, I am not buying you or bribing you, but I have been looking for a confidante like you to take over from Bheki for years, ever since I found out what he and Kuli had been doing behind my back. Would you like to be my Advisor?"

That was a shocker. No one expected it – not even Noah nor Neriah.

Noah: (shocked) "I'd have to speak to my wife first."

Neriah: (smiling) "No need. I don't mind at all."

She looked at her husband and he smiled back.

Noah: "Then it's settled. I'd be honoured."

Noah took out his hand to be shook by King Sfiso, but the King had another form of affection in mind. He hugged him and Noah hugged him back, leaving everyone stunned. Neriah started ululating, as Bongi, Beatrice and Raesibe ululated right back.

King Sfiso: “Now that the day’s festivities have gone so well, I have one more thing to announce.”

Kuli looked at him with a pained expression on her face, and Shaka anxiously waiting.

King Sfiso: “We all know that my first born Shaka is not worthy of the title of being King, so as soon as Gatsha marries his chosen one, Lehumo, he will officially be crowned King on his wedding day. Meeting adjourned.”

It was at that very moment that Queen Kuli fainted, as Shaka held onto her. Gatsha was rather surprised, but happy that he had finally gotten the blessing to marry Lehumo very soon. Lehumo was very shocked – it was a lot to take it. They hadn’t even been dating for a week and already marriage talks were being said of. Was she even ready to be the Queen of Zululand?

“There are three types of lies – lies, damn lies, and statistics.” – Benjamin Disraeli

That very Sunday was a rather sad day for Kuli and Shaka, but a very happy one for everyone else. Noah didn't really think that he would retire from being a bus driver at the age of 41, but well it was indeed time for him to cash in on his pension after 22 years of service. With the job of an advisor, he would surely have more time with his family and earn a lot more than he did as a bus driver. With Lehumo headed to Varsity, Hosea would have a lot more time with both parents. King Sfiso felt that he did something for good for himself for a change that evening as he sat in his bed.

He took out his Bible that his mother had given him years before she had passed on. It had been so long since he had prayed, since he had read a Bible verse. He had lost so much hope, so much willingness to live, but Gatsha out of all his children kept him going. He had kept secrets buried in order to save his wife from shame. He opened the Bible and came across a verse that spoke to the heart. Matthew 10:26-28 – “Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that

shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.” He truly felt as if God was speaking to him as he decided to pray.

King Sfiso: “Dear God, Oh, Jehovah, ngicela ungixolele (please forgive me). I haven’t been a very loyal servant to you for years – yet I have never slept with an empty stomach, my children have never complained about a lack of money and my house remains standing. I have been filled with so much regret and hatred towards my wife, that I didn’t see the need to pray anymore. Please, oh, Lord. Fill me with your spirit, add grace upon my life so that I can also indeed be happy like my son, Gatsha. I lack so much happiness, my soul is empty and my heart has given up on life. I ask that you please bless me with what need be, your grace is amazing and I am eternally grateful. I ask this in Jesus name. Amen.”

Immediately as he finished praying, he put his Bible away and Kuli walked in looking like death itself. Her face was swollen and her eyes were bloodshot

but King Sfiso didn’t care.

Queen Kuli: “Sfiso, can we talk?”

King Sfiso: "About what, Kuli?"

Queen Kuli: "I'm sorry."

King Sfiso: "If you are going to apologize, don't bother because we both know that it's not true."

Queen Kuli: (looking down) "Can we fix things?"

King Sfiso: "I am only keeping you here for the sake of your children and also for the mere fact that you would be humiliated by your own family if you had to go back home. Other than that, our marriage is over. 30 years of marriage was built on lies and deceit. I think I deserve better at least."

Kuli knew that her husband had taken the last straw and her marriage was indeed over, but as usual she refused to give up without a fight.

King Sfiso: “By the way, if you dare even try to interfere in Gatsha’s relationship with Lehumo, I promise you, I will kill you with my bare hands. If you dare bring that whore Sizakele over to my house ever again, I will burn you right in front of your children. Do you understand me?”

It was the very first time that King Sfiso had threatened Kuli like that ever. She nodded in fear knowing the deepest secret she had been keeping from Sfiso. If he found out then he would most definitely kill her without a doubt.

In the middle of the night, Kuli decided to sneak out and go find out if someone had been keeping his mouth shut. She struggled sleeping, so she figured she might as well go ahead and check him out. She made her way down to the Royal Chambers where they keep prisoners until they get sent to jail or prison depending on the crime. She found the guard who refused to let her in, and of course money talks. She took out a thousand rand.

Guard: “Be quick.”

She nodded and made her way to Bheki's chamber. The guard opened for her and she found Bheki staring at the ceiling. He looked like he had not slept a wink since he was put in there.

Queen Kuli: "Bheki..."

Bheki: "Ufunani (What do you want)?"

Queen Kuli: "I came to talk to you."

Bheki: "If you haven't come here to break me out or come to tell me that you have chosen me for once, then just leave."

Queen Kuli: "Kodwa (But), Bheki. Please understand my situation."

Bheki: "Which situation? The fact that I am letting another man raise my children and there is literally nothing I can do about it?! I should have never listened to you, Kuli. Look at me now – facing the music alone all because I was stupid enough to fall for my best friend's wife."

Queen Kuli: “Not so loud, Bheki. The guard might hear you.”

Bheki: “What’s the point? Even if he does, my children would never choose a pauper like me over royalty. They don’t even know I exist nje.”

Queen Kuli: “Please, Bheki. Don’t be like this.”

Bheki: “There is nothing for me to live for anymore, Kuli. You would have never choose me. You love money more than anything. Tell Shaka and Ayanda I love them.”

That seemed like a goodbye from Bheki, but he was not making sense anymore.

Queen Kuli: “What are you saying?”

Bheki: “Leave. I’d like a moment of peace.”

Kuli didn’t understand why Bheki was being so cold towards her. They had shared so many good memories together. She left with her heart broken all over again, but unbeknownst to her, she didn’t realize that she had broken two men’s hearts simultaneously all because of her selfishness. In that, a friendship fell apart and two children were born out of wedlock right under the King’s nose.

“Only courageous hearts can endure the bitterness of truth.” –
Michael Bassey Johnson

It had been a painful few months for Queen Kuli. As Gatsha and Lehumo’s love for one another grew by the day, so did her bitterness. King Sfiso had been glowing more than ever before. He had been a greater king – even greater than his father. He had just started a new development with his son, Gatsha. He managed to get investors and thanks to Gatsha, Nkosi Mall would gather greater money and more employment to the people of Zululand.

Neriah had been well and happy and Hosea had been a very busy toddler. Noah had finally settled in his Advisor role and he had grown so close to King Sfiso, leaving the rest of the council members utterly jealous of their relationship. Queen Kuli had lost a bit of weight, more especially after Bheki killed himself right in the chamber that evening.

She wailed so much, and King Sfiso didn’t even bother to be her source of comfort. As of that evening, the last ounce of love he had for her had died along with Bheki. He didn’t even give him

a proper royal burial, of which his wife understood very well after finding out that he had been having an affair with Queen Kuli. Shaka had become so drawn to hatred and envy towards his brother, even more than when Lehumo had been his heart's keeper.

He had girls lose interest in him because he didn't have any more income as before. So, he settled to being his father's PA – of which he wasn't too bad at it, really. He had less time to go out, less money and of course, less swag – leaving him internally enraged each and every day as he saw Gatsha. His efforts to get Lehumo to fall for him had gone to waste, but just like his mother, he never gave up.

It was Lehumo's 19th Birthday, and she had just finished her first year of Nursing. She had of course become so popular at her University, since she was the Prince's girlfriend. Some girls hated her, while most wanted to be her. Brenda was always there to defend her, since Lehumo really hated saying much. That was her weak point because the day she decided to speak up was the day she would explode and let it all out.

Gatsha had been such a wonderful boyfriend to her, and he had been planning a great surprise for her birthday, but in order for it to happen, he needed her parents' official blessing first. Of course, he was the very first person to call her just after midnight to wish her a happy birthday, and he sent her to the spa with Brenda early in the morning. It had become a thing for them to do on her birthday it seemed. Gatsha made his way to Noah's house nervously. He knocked.

Noah: "Ngena (Come in)."

Neriah: "Ai, My husband. How many times must I warn you about that? You can't always tell people to come in without asking who it is."

Noah: (snickering) "Relax, my wife. We walk with Jesus."

Neriah: "Mxm, oho."

Gatsha: (smiling nervously) "Sanibonani (Hello)."

Neriah: (smiling) “Hello, Gatsha. Kunjani mfana wami (How are you, my son)?”

Gatsha: (rubbing forehead) “I’m well, Ma. How are you?”

Neriah: “I’m fine, thank you. Sit down, you look so nervous. What is it? Is there something wrong?”

Gatsha: “Eish, Ma. How can you tell that I am nervous?”

Neriah: “Because my own husband had that very same look when he asked me to marry him.”

Neriah had given the secret away and Gatsha smiled guilty as charged.

Neriah: (shocked) “Heh! Hao (Wow)! So, ke nnete vele (it’s really true)?”

Gatsha: (frowning) “What is?”

Noah: “Ai, my wife. My mother had a dream the other day and said that she saw a funeral in her dream. That is usually a sign for the opposite – a wedding.”

Gatsha: (smiling) “Indeed she was right, Baba (Father). I came here to ask for your permission. I’d like to ask for your daughter’s hand in marriage.”

Neriah started ululating before Noah could even respond.

Neriah: (ululating) “A riye riye riye riye! Yoh, Modimo ke o mogolo (God is great)! Ngwanenyana wa ka wa nyalwa (My daughter is getting married) Chesa, Dankie Modimo (Oh, yes! Thank you, Lord)! Sala wena Satan (In your face, Satan)!”

Noah: “Neriah, calm down.”

Neriah: “Askies (Sorry), ke no te kwa ke thabile moyeng (I’m just too excited).”

Noah: “Have you thought long and hard about this? You two getting married means that you will become King and she Queen. Do you think she can handle that?”

Gatsha: “I firmly believe so, Baba. We have spoken about this and believe me, I wouldn’t do this if I knew that she wasn’t ready. I am willing to protect and love her with all my heart. I’d die for her.”

Neriah: (ululating) “Oh, Modimo (God), you can bless a person abundantly! Deutoronomy 28:2 – “And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God.” Gatsha, you have just made me the happiest woman alive right now. Every mother wishes for their children to be blessed with husbands half as good as you. You have shown me that good men still exist in this world.”

Noah: “Neriah, hayi (goodness), you can be so dramatic.”

Neriah: “Not as dramatic as you. Are you even prepared to lose your daughter to Gatsha?”

Noah: “Uyabona ke manje (You see now), ufuna ukungifakela istress (you want to add more stress for me).”

Neriah: “Sorry, my husband. You’ll see her everyday, don’t worry. Wena (You), Gatsha, you have my blessing.”

Gatsha: “Thank you, Ma.”

She hugged him.

Noah: “Mfana wami (My boy), you had better take good care of her. I don’t want any problems. Marriage comes with a lot of troubles, but it is up to you, the husband to take good care of her and show her that you two stand together as a team – no matter what.”

Gatsha: (nodding) “I hear you, Baba (Father).”

Noah: “You have my blessing. You have had my blessing the moment I saw the way you look at her. I just couldn’t tell you, you were going to take advantage of me.”

Gatsha laughed in relief. At least he had one thing out of the way, and now, he had to go and finalize the romantic evening he had planned for Lehumo. As he greeted them goodbye, Noah seemed deep in thought.

Neriah: “Keng jwale (What is it now)? Don’t tell me you’re having second thoughts, Noah.”

Noah: (shaking head) “It’s not that I’m worried about. It’s my mother’s recent dream that I am worried about.”

Neriah: “Don’t worry about that. It will probably pass. Remember Proverbs 3:6 – “In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Noah: (smiling) “How can I forget? Psalm 55:17 – “Evening, morning, and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.”

Neriah: “Now you see why I married you.”

Noah: (chuckling) “Speaking of distress, I have a lot of distress down there that needs some fixing.”

Neriah: (blushing) “Yoh, Modimo (Oh, God)! Noah, mara o stout waitse (but you can be so naughty).”

Noah: (smiling) “Naughty just for you, my love. Now, what do you say? It’s just us.”

Neriah: “I’ll do anything you wish as long as we pray first that our daughter’s engagement goes well today. Then, we can do anything you desire, my husband.”

Noah: (smiling mischievously) “I like the way you think.”

Meanwhile, Gatsha was so happy that he had to go back to his house and let his father know that he was granted permission to marry the love of his life. Of course, he had a whole party planned for her at the palace, that would also be the celebration of their engagement. However, only King Sfiso knew Gatsha’s plans. Everyone else knew it as a birthday party

only. To avoid any mishaps and possible poisoning of food, Gatsha hired a catering company to do everything for him. He strictly instructed them to not allow anyone else to touch the food. He rushed up to his father's study, in absolute joy and found him already awaiting good news.

Gatsha: "Baba (Father)."

King Sfiso: "And? Don't keep me in suspense, phela."

Gatsha: (smiling) "They agreed."

King Sfiso jumped out of his chair and rushed to embrace his son. He started ululating and chanting his clan names.

King Sfiso: (Clan praises) "Nkosi, Ndlangamandla, Mntungwa, Siwela, Mbhulazi, wena wasemandlovini, wena owadlumuntu wamyenga ngendaba, mlotshwa, wena owawela ngenhla ngoba ngezansi wesabi zingwenya, wena kamaqgomasholwane, umlotshwa akangakanani ngoba nasentendeni yesandla uyenela. Mphazima kalanga, mawandla ngendlela. My son,

you have done well. This is exactly how a man should behave. I am very proud of you.”

Gatsha: “Thank you, Father. I am just worried that she might not be able to handle the ways of this kingdom.”

King Sfiso: “It is up to you to make things alright for your wife. If people disturb her peace, get rid of them. If people become toxic towards her, get rid of them. If the environment becomes toxic itself – make it better and if all else fails, remove her from such. It is your duty to provide for her and make sure she is happy. How else will she make you happy if she herself is unhappy? Remember, a happy wife equals a happy life.”

Gatsha nodded as he listened to his father attentively.

Gatsha: “I hear you, Baba (Father).”

King Sfiso: “I cannot wait to have grandchildren already. It has been so long since we have had small feet running around in here.”

He ululated and chanted one last time, while shaking Gatsha's hand and hugging him non stop. Kuli decided to barge into King Sfiso's office

leaving him very dissatisfied with her behaviour.

King Sfiso: "And then?"

Queen Kuli: "Oh, Ngiyaxolisa (I'm sorry), my husband. I heard some noise from here so I decided to come and check up on you two. Is everything okay? It seems as if we are celebrating something."

King Sfiso: (firmly) "Gatsha and I are celebrating the opening of the mall, besides don't you know how to knock?"

Queen Kuli: (saddened) "Oh, I'm sorry. Next time I'll be sure to knock. Forgive me."

King Sfiso: "Forgiveness as well as Vengeance is for the Lord – not me."

King Sfiso had become so good with punchlines and sarcasm, that Kuli was always left frustrated whenever she tried to initiate conversations with him.

Kuli: (nodding) “Okay. Is there anything I can help with for the party, Gatsha?”

Gatsha: “No, ma.”

Queen Kuli: “Alright then.”

She closed the door in sadness, as Gatsha asked his father a question he had been dying to ask.

Gatsha: “Baba (Father), do you think you could ever forgive her?”

King Sfiso: “Son, had you known half of the things I knew that she had done, you wouldn’t even have stayed like I have. I lost a good woman once, and I’d do anything to be half as happy as you are right now.”

Gatsha: "Then why don't you divorce her?"

King Sfiso: "And leave her with nothing but shame? Her family will disown her. I don't think I can be so cruel."

Gatsha: "You're a good man, father. Indeed, you shall be happy once again."

Gatsha smiled and gave his father once more hug before leaving. As he was about to walk out of the house, he found Queen Kuli waiting for him at the door.

Queen Kuli: (smiling) "Gatsha, is there something you would like to tell me?"

Gatsha: "No, mother. I do have to be somewhere else, though."

Queen Kuli: “Gatsha, we hardly spend any time together, my son.”

Gatsha: “Hawu (Wow), Ma, we will get to do that, just not now. I’ll see you later.”

Gatsha stormed out, leaving Kuli frustrated. She knew that Gatsha was hiding something and she hated being sidelined. She had tried to be a good person, but that was not something that was within her nature. Kuli was born greedy. Upon leaving, Gatsha made his way to the mall. He was on his way to pick Lehumo up, and Brenda knew that Gatsha had a beautiful surprise set for Lehumo, but she wasn’t allowed to talk. Of course, he bribed her with a thousand rand to keep her busy for a few hours until it was time for the party.

Gatsha had asked Brenda to take Lehumo out to the nearest salon, where she had to get her hair done and get a nice dress. Money was no issue, as Gatsha had some money saved from his previous job. He was also doing a good job with the current development in Zululand, so he was safe. Lehumo couldn’t understand why she had to dress up in an evening

gown at midday, but knowing Brenda she refused to tell the actual truth.

Lehumo: “Hai, man, Bee. Why do I have to wear such a dress? Do you have any idea how hot it is in Zululand?”

Brenda: “Ag, man, Lehumo, wa balabala man (you love complaining). You look so gorgeous. See it as a practise run for your birthday, man. You can’t look dull when you’re turning 19. Batho ba tla reng (What would people say)?”

Lehumo: “Since I taught you how to speak Sepedi you are really abusing it.”

Brenda: “It’s my job, honey. Now, come. You’re wasting time.”

Lehumo: “Re ya kae (Where are we going)?”

Brenda: (sigh) “Ro nwa bjala (We’re going to drink). Come.”

Lehumo: "In this dress?"

Brenda: "Yoh, Nkosi yami (Oh, my goodness)!"

Lehumo: "Okay, e re ke homole (Let me keep quiet)."

Brenda: "Kea leboga (Thank you)."

They walked out of the mall with everyone turning their heads staring at Lehumo in awe and shock. Of course the girls who knew her were beyond jealous, but she had gotten used to the stares by then. As she walked out, she found Gatsha dressed in a gorgeous black Italian suit, standing outside a Black Jaguar. He looked like a very fine and very matured bottle of mine. She looked at Brenda who smiled at her excitedly.

Brenda: "Ska ntebella (don't stare at me), keep walking moghel (girl)."

Lehumo found herself feeling all sorts of nervousness as tears were threatening her eyes.

Brenda: “And don’t you dare start crying, please. You haven’t even seen anything yet.”

Lehumo tried to keep herself together as she forced the tears back in.

Gatsha: (smiling) “Bee, I owe you.”

Brenda: “Of course you do. I’ll see you two lovebirds later.”

Brenda waved goodbye at the both of them and disappeared back into the mall.

Gatsha: (smiling) “Ntombenhle (Beautiful).”

Lehumo: (blushing) “Hi. What’s all this? People are staring at us, Gatsha.”

Gatsha: "Let them stare, I have the most beautiful girl right in my arms."

Lehumo: (chuckling) "Seriously, siyaphi (where are we going)?"

Gatsha: "We're going to a place where we'll decide on our future. Are you ready?"

Lehumo: (nervous) "I guess so."

He smiled as he opened the door for her and she got in. He got in and started driving. They made their way to an open field, where they were met with a white man Lehumo was unfamiliar with. He was standing right in front of a helicopter. Lehumo has never flown before, so that was something really scary for her.

Gatsha got out and opened the door for her. They approached the man who was smiling at them both.

Victor: (smiling) "Mr. Ncube, Mrs. Ncube."

Gatsha: (smiling) "Vic. I trust you with my car. Don't mess it up."

Victor: (chuckling) "I would never. Enjoy your ride, sir."

Gatsha: (smiling) "Will do."

He handed him the keys as he went into Gatsha's car and he left.

Gatsha: "Are you ready, MaNcube (Mrs. Ncube)?"

Lehumo: (nervous) "Gatsha, I have never flown before. I am about to wet myself right now."

Gatsha gave Lehumo a long, passionate kiss. They hadn't been intimate before, as Gatsha had sworn that he would only sleep with her the day he wed her. She thought he was joking, but after a year of being together, she saw just how serious he

was. Even Brenda was rather shocked that Gatsha waited that long. He broke the kiss, leaving Lehumo speechless, and a bit wet down there. Bee had told her countless times that whenever a girl gets horny, she becomes wet. Of course it was a topic which was still a bit too raw for an innocent girl like Lehumo.

Gatsha: "Do you trust me?"

Lehumo: "Yes..."

Gatsha: "Come."

He led her into the chopper, and buckled her in. He got into his seat and reassured her that everything would be alright. He started the helicopter, and Lehumo was a bit nervous, but Gatsha kept talking, which eased her mood a little bit. She was so amazed as she looked at the view of Zululand from up in the sky.

She even managed to find some courage to take a picture and a video of the view and of the both of them in the helicopter. She knew that Gatsha was a man of many talents, but that she didn't expect at all. The whole time, Gatsha had been referring to her as MaNcube (Mrs. Ncube) instead of the usual Ntombenhle (Beautiful), but as innocent as she was, she didn't get the hint.

Gatsha: "Can you guess where we're about to land, MaNcube (Mrs. Ncube)?"

Lehumo: "I have no idea. Please, enlighten me."

Gatsha: "Welcome to Cape Town."

Lehumo was rather shocked as she had never been to Cape Town before. Gatsha landed carefully and she was glad that she had finally made it on the ground in one piece.

Gatsha: "Please don't tell me that you really did wet your pants."

Lehumo: (laughing) "I almost did."

They both laughed as they headed to a car that looks like Gatsha's Jaguar. There was a driver in there who greeted the two of them and it was not long before they stopped at the beach.

Gatsha: "MaNcube (Mrs. Ncube), please trust me."

Lehumo: "I trust you."

He put a blindfold over her eyes and helped her walk out of the car. She could feel that she was walking onto the sand, as her heels were getting stuck in the sand every now and then.

Gatsha: "We're almost there."

She nodded in excitement and nervousness. Then they stopped. Gatsha slowly removed the blindfold and she opened

her eyes. She was in absolute awe to find a beautifully decorated round table with two chairs opposite one another. Two big balloons on the side of the table resembling the number 19, a big teddy bear with a bunch of white lillies.

Gatsha: "Happy birthday, My love."

Lehumo: (teary) "Gatsha... this feels like I am in a movie."

Gatsha: "Well, we're in our own movie, my love. As you know, I am not a man who likes to play games, so let me get right into it."

Lehumo didn't see it coming as Gatsha reached for his pockets in his pants and took out a small, black ring box. He knelt down on one knee right before Lehumo. They were right under a chapel, especially made for them, so that the sun wouldn't disturb their peace. He held her hand and she felt the tears fall instantly.

Gatsha: “Ntombenhle (Beautiful), Sphalaphala sami (My beautiful girl), Sthandwa se nhliziyo yami (My heart’s keeper), ungishaya ngaphakadi (You rock my world), in more ways than one. You drive me so crazy that I have your beautiful scent etched into my mind. Your beautiful soul purifies mine and the air that I breathe. I never thought that I could be the man I am today, but because of you, I made it.

You made me believe that angels do exist and that God makes no mistakes. You made me believe in love again, you made me see the world in the eyes of love. You have shown me that life is too short and that you need to grab every chance you get with both hands whenever you can. Lehumo, your name means riches, you have richly blessed my life and for that I am eternally grateful.

I cannot wait to see what our beautiful children will look like. You are the epitome of grace, beauty and intelligence. I cannot even imagine a life without you. If I could, I would repaint the sky with your image, so that everyone could see what I see. 1 John 4: 18 – 19 says “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.”

You see, I used to fear love so much, but you taught me that fear is useless when you fear the unknown. I feared falling hard and now that I have, I wish I had done it way sooner with you. Our love is so perfect, that I literally feel our hearts beat simultaneously. Lehumo Mkhabela, please do me the honours of becoming my wife. Will you marry me?"

17

Apologies I thought I had uploaded this.

"You know you're in love when you can't fall asleep because reality is finally better than your dreams."

Dr. Seuss

Lehumo stood there gobsmacked. She only saw those things happening in movies. Never in her wildest dreams did she even think that Gatsha had that much money to begin with. She knew that the Ncube's were rich, but just didn't know how rich. She knew Gatsha had his own money, but a helicopter trip to Cape Town was on another level.

Gatsha: "What do you say, Ntombenhle (Beautiful)?"

Lehumo: "Yes, yes I'll marry you."

Gatsha put on the beautiful, blue diamond sapphire ring on Lehumo's finger. It was draped with 18 carat diamonds all round and it sparkled for days. Lehumo had never worn a diamond anything in her life before, so that was a special moment for her. Gatsha got up and kissed his soon to be wife. The sun was staring at its audience, while their heartbeats intertwined with one another. That was a moment that she cherished till her last days on earth.

Gatsha: (smiling) "MaNcube (Mrs. Ncube), you don't know how anxious I have been all day. Thank you for making my day."

Lehumo: "Are you kidding me, Gatsha?! You made my day! Never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine myself getting engaged on the beach on my 19th birthday!"

Gatsha: "For a moment I thought you were going to say no."

Lehumo: "No? Why would I refuse? I love you and that's all that matters. No wonder you kept asking me about the future and wedding rings! You picked the one I liked from that magazine, you sly dog!"

Gatsha: (chuckling) "I told you – I'm a very attentive man."

Lehumo: "I know you're dying for us to eat, but I have never been on a beach before let alone in Cape Town and I am dying to feel the water. Can I?"

Gatsha: "Of course, my love. This is your day, you can do as you please."

Lehumo: "I'm not a very good swimmer

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so you'll have to come with me."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Alright. Let's take off our shoes first."

She nodded in excitement as they took off their shoes. They left everything on the table and ran towards the water. Of course, the water felt a bit cold and weird for Lehumo as the waves kept hitting their feet.

Lehumo: "I have heard that the beach water cleanses bad luck off a person."

Gatsha: "Well, we must be in the right place because we're about to start our future together as Mr. and Mrs. Ncube."

Lehumo smiled as Gatsha held her firmly in a dancing position.

Gatsha: "I was planning to have our first dance as an engaged couple right after you said yes, but what more perfect moment than dancing in the water?"

Lehumo just smiled at her gorgeous, chocolate man. She looked at his hazel brown eyes and beautiful dimples and couldn't even imagine life without him. It was amazing that she was only 19 and yet she carried the maturity of a woman as old as Gatsha. With Gatsha being only 26, the age difference was not so bad and he knew that he needn't have to rush her into anything as she was still a child in one form. Gatsha signalled to the waiter and immediately, a song started playing. "If this isn't love" by Jennifer Hudson.

Lehumo: (smiling) "You're so cheesy, baby."

Gatsha: (smiling) "Baby? I like that. For the first time since we have started dating you actually called me with a pet name. It's nothing fancy, but I love it."

Lehumo: (chuckling) "I actually want to call you G."

Gatsha: (frowning) "G? Do I look like a gangster to you, Lehumo?"

Lehumo: (chuckling) "Yoh (wow)! O setse o mpitsa Lehumo (you're calling me Lehumo already)? That means you're mad. I'm playing. Ke tla go bitsa (I'll call you) King G."

Gatsha: (clicking tongue) "That's not bad, but still sounds gangsterish. You'll have lots of pet names for me when I have you screaming my name in our bed."

Lehumo: (embarrassed) "What's it like? I mean sex? Is it painful? Bee says it is painful the first time."

Gatsha: "It is, but it is beautiful if you do it with someone you love and someone you intend on staying with for a very long time. You'll see. I don't want you to worry about that right now. Like I said, no pressure from my side. I want our first time to be amazing and unforgettable."

Lehumo nodded even though she had always wondered what it would be like having sex for the very first time. Bee told her that it is absolutely nothing like on tv. They went out of the water, and had a delicious seafood meal.

Gatsha: "Ngiyathemba awusuthanga ngoba (I hope you're not full yet because) there is plenty more coming."

Lehumo: "Hawu (Wow), Gatsha. What could be better than this?"

Gatsha: "You'll see."

Lehumo nodded as they got back into the car and headed back to the warehouse where they parked the helicopter. They headed back home with Lehumo who couldn't stop staring at her new ring.

“10 tips for Overcoming Bitterness; 1. Avoid anger; 2. Live joyfully; 3. Shun envy; 4. Practice gratitude; 5. Seek peace; 6. Forgive; 7. Be content; 8. Tame your ego; 9. Murmur less; 10. Love more.” – Matshona Dhliwayo

In no time, Gatsha had brought Lehumo back to his house for her last surprise for the evening. Her parents; Beatrice; Bonggi and the Ncube Royal Family had been waiting anxiously for their return. Everyone was dressed to the Tee – even Shaka and Queen Kuli, but they unfortunately couldn't hide their annoyance. Princess Ayanda was her usual self, even more bitter than before now that she could no longer have the lavish lifestyle she had before.

She had even lost “friends” because of that. She was no longer Minister of Finance and her friends couldn't deal with that anymore. They also had a very special guest who made her appearance without anyone expecting it – except Bonggi of course. Gatsha was outside as he drove into the yard, Lehumo was not too puzzled by the many cars that were outside.

Gatsha: (smiling) “Are you ready?”

Lehumo: (smiling) "I guess so."

He walked out and opened the door for her as usual. As they walked into the house, the lights were off, and immediately when Gatsha switched on the light everyone shouted.

Everyone: "Surprise!"

Lehumo: (shocked) "Yoh (Wow)! Guys! Hah! Mama! Papa (Dad)! Gatsha, mara (Oh, Gatsha)!"

Gatsha: (smiling) "Askies (Sorry), my love. Happy birthday once again."

Brenda walked up to them and gave them both hugs.

Brenda: (smiling) "Congratulations, my bestie!"

Lehumo: (teary) “Bee, o sleg waitse (you’re so mean)!”

Brenda: (laughing) “Blame your man.”

Bongi: “Hayi (No), sukani (Move). I want to see the ring.”

As they congratulated them – Queen Kuli was too shocked to even smile, while Shaka was enraged and silenced. Princess Ayanda, was not even bothered.

Gatsha: “Okay, okay. Ngicela niphe umfazi wami ispace (Please give my wife some air), please. She needs to go change and fit into the theme.”

Bongi: “Ai, barely a few hours you have been engaged and already you are so possessive. Hmm, be careful, Lehumo.”

Everyone except the jealous trio laughed.

King Sfiso: “You’d better bring her back soon, weh Gatsha.”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “Okay, Baba (Dad).”

Gatsha walked with Lehumo to his room, without even looking at the jealous trio. He opened the door for her and she was a bit hesitant to walk in as she had never been to his bedroom.

Lehumo: “Eish, Gatsha. Ba tla reng (What would they say)?”

Gatsha: “Relax, they know I’d never do anything to you. I respect my parents’ home and most importantly I respect you too much. Come.”

She walked in and found a beautiful long white dress with gold shoes awaiting her.

Lehumo: “How do you even know my size?”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “You are so funny, Ntombenhle (Beautiful). I’ll leave you to change. See you in a bit.”

He kissed her gently on the cheek and left. As she was getting dressed, she heard a stern knock on the door. Before she could answer, the person barged right in. She got puzzled as she was not fully dressed yet, so she hid her upper body with the other half of the dress. She was stunned to see Queen Kuli standing before her.

Lehumo: (shocked) "Oh, Ma. I didn't expect you here."

Queen Kuli: (frowning) "Why is that? This is my house after all, isn't it?"

Lehumo could smell the hate from where she was standing, but as her mother taught her, she decided to respond in a calm yet stern manner. Her father had also taught her that being nice does not mean letting people take you for a mere fool.

Lehumo: (smiling) "Of course, it is your house, Mme (Ma), but this is your son's bedroom, isn't it?"

Queen Kuli expected Lehumo to get upset with her and retaliate, but she was rather upset to find that Lehumo was calmer than expected.

Queen Kuli: (annoyed) “Oh? You think you’re clever, don’t you? Just because wena ungena iUniversity ucabanga ukuthi (you’re in Varsity you think that) you’re better than everyone else? Well, let me tell you something, girly. This is my house, MY kingdom. I’ll never allow a village girl like you to enter my family and ruin my son. You have already turned him against me and the road ends here for you.”

Lehumo was in no mood to let that bitter witch rain on her parade.

Lehumo: (smiling) “Mme (Ma), I don’t know what I ever did to you, but I am very sorry. I mean no harm as I only fell in love with Gatsha and he happened to fall for me right back. The Bible refuses for me to argue with angered people, for Ephesians 4: 31 – 32 says; “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Queen Kuli felt rather angered as she didn't seem to get the reaction she wanted from Lehumo. She was so bitter, that everytime someone told her about God and the Bible, she became worse.

Queen Kuli: (Angered) "You really think you're the next best thing since sliced bread, neh (isn't it)? Are you even a virgin? Shaka was right about you. You're nothing but a poor whore – "

She didn't even get to finish her sentence when Lehumo calmly put her in her place.

Lehumo: (smiling) "Hebrews 12:15 – "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it may be defiled."

Queen Kuli: (fuming) "Yazini (you know what)? I don't have – "

Lehumo: (interrupting) “ Daniel 9:9 – “The Lord oru God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him.” God will forgive you, Mme (Ma). It’s never too late.”

Queen Kuli: (fuming) “Yazini wena (You know what) Mary mother of Jesus – “

Lehumo: (interrupting) “I don’t mean to be rude, but my fiancé is waiting for me.”

Queen Kuli was about to start swearing again, but Gatsha knocked and opened the door. His smile quickly faded when he saw Kuli’s red face and Lehumo smiling. He found the whole scene rather odd and he knew that his mother was up to no good.

Gatsha: (frowning) “Ma, ufunani ngapha (what do you want in here)?”

Queen Kuli: (softly) “Bengithi (I was just) – “

Lehumo decided to save her ass, leaving Queen Kuli even more confused.

Lehumo: (smiling) “She just came to wish me good luck and welcomed me into the family.”

Gatsha: (raised eyebrow) “Oho.”

Queen Kuli: (hastily) “Let me leave. I’ll see you later, Lehumo.”

She left without even looking at Gatsha. As soon as she closed the door, Lehumo got dressed quickly unaware that Gatsha was staring at her beautiful body. He had never seen her half naked.

Gatsha: “What did she want?”

Lehumo: “I just told you, love.”

Gatsha: “Lehumo, you know how I feel about lies.”

Lehumo: “I know, love. I know. Come, let’s go. We don’t want everyone to think we are doing the deed, do you?”

Gatsha was still uneasy about his mother’s presence in his room, but he decided to let it go. They walked out and Lehumo saw a new face amongst the crowd that she didn’t see when they arrived a few minutes before.

Gatsha: (smiling) “I’d like you to meet someone very dear to me.”

He pulled Lehumo towards him and held her hand. They approached the old woman who looked a lot like King Sfiso.

Gatsha: (smiling) “Ntombenhle (Beautiful) meet my great-grandmother, Queen Nozipho.”

Queen Nozipho immediately smiled at Lehumo. She held out her hands and Lehumo thought she wanted to embrace her, but instead she held her face and stared at her – almost as if she was analysing every part of her face. Everyone was staring

in silence, as she was staring at Lehumo's face. It felt as if they all knew what she was doing – except for Lehumo who was just cluelessly standing there, with her heart beating out of her chest.

Queen Nozipho: (smiling) “Hmm, this is such rare beauty indeed. A pure, Pedi gem you are. You are very pure hearted, Lehumo. Your mother did well by giving you such a powerful name. You are very soft-hearted and kind, but you give up very easily. You were destined to be with my great-grandson, and you will rule this kingdom and change many ways for the better. You will be a far better queen than the current one we have here.”

That was obviously a hint at Queen Kuli, who was very unimpressed by Queen Nozipho's comment. She was exactly like Bongi – she said anything and everything that came to her mind.

Queen Nozipho: (smile) “Oh, your fragile heart will get the best of you one day, but you will have to be strong in order to pull through what's coming your way. Because of your presence, the future king will make great choices for this kingdom. I

name you “Nonhlanhla”. You’ll bring us a lot of luck and fortune, my daughter. You are welcomed and the ancestors chose you way before Gatsha did.”

She gave Lehumo a long, warm hug and she actually felt an overwhelming spirit overcome her, while everyone kept quiet for a while. Bongi started ululating, and so did Beatrice and Neriah.

Queen Nozipho started whispering a few clan praises into Lehumo’s ear, leaving her speechless with tears warming her red cheeks.

Queen Nozipho: (praises) “Ncube, Mzilankatha, Gabadeli, Nhlansi, Nkambule, se nimkhethile indodakazi yeni, indhlovukazi yenu (you have chosen your daughter, your queen). The rest is in your hands, protect her for danger is lurking. Only you know her fate! Lehumo, be very careful of your mother in law.

You are a prayer warrior, and never stop praying. You are supposed to birth the next and only future prince of this

kingdom. It all depends on you. Don't disappoint me and most importantly – don't rob yourself of the future you deserve. If you don't give birth to your prince, the wrong one will. Stay strong, mntwanami (my child)."

She broke the hug between them and kissed Lehumo on both cheeks. Suddenly they heard thunder and rain pouring. Lehumo was overwhelmed with emotions, so was Gatsha as he shed a tear. Lehumo heard some animal growling sounds and she startled a bit, but Gatsha reassured her that she was safe and held her hand.

King Sfiso: (smiling) "That hasn't happened in a very long time."

Lehumo thought she was the only one who heard the roaring, but seemed as if everyone heard it too.

Queen Nozipho: (smiling) "Don't worry, my darling. We have Leopards as our totems. Those animal sounds you hear and the sudden rain is the ancestors' approval. That hasn't happened in sixty years. It last happened when I was getting married – exactly sixty years ago."

Bongi and Neriah couldn't hide their excitement as they ululated once again, leaving Queen Kuli even more upset.

Queen Nozipho: "Hawu (Goodness), Kuli. Why ungathi umuncu (why do you seem so sour)? Are you coming down with something?"

Queen Kuli: "I think it must be a flu. Suddenly I am not feeling very well. I think it's best I go lay down."

Queen Nozipho: "Good idea, makoti (daughter in law)."

Queen Kuli: "Goodnight."

Everyone could see the disappointment on her face, as Shaka left with her.

Shaka: "I'll help you up, mother."

Princess Ayanda: "I'll be in my room if anyone needs me."

Queen Nozipho: "Like we'd notice if you were gone. Hamba sisi (Go, sis)."

It seemed as if everyone was legit afraid of Queen Nozipho. She seemed like a very strict woman and straight talker. She was rather strong for someone who was 80 years old.

Queen Nozipho: "Don't mind them, wena. Asibone le ring (Let's see the ring)."

Lehumo smiled as she wiped her tears away.

Queen Nozipho: "Ho ho, we (hey) Sfiso, your son has some taste, man. How much did this cost you, Gatsha?"

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Hawu (Wow), Gogo (granny). An arm and a leg."

Queen Nozipho: “Keep it up. Umfazi uyaspoiliwa (women need to be spoiled).”

They continued to enjoy the festivities while Lehumo was bombarded with gifts galore. As the celebration was happening downstairs, Queen Kuli found herself overcome with bitterness, anger and pure hatred and frustration. The moment she walked into her bedroom, she started pacing up and down, blowing hot air out of her mouth and cursing.

Queen Kuli: (angry) “Fok (Fuck)!”

Shaka: “Ma, calm down, ngiyakucela (I beg of you).”

Queen Kuli: (enraged) “Dammit, man, Shaka! Don’t you see? The odds are against you already!”

Shaka: (confused) “Ma, ukhuluma ngani (what are you talking about)?”

Queen Kuli: "It's bad enough you're not Sfiso's son, and now he's sidelining you to be the next in line to the throne!"

Kuli didn't even realize what a huge bomb she had dropped until Shaka asked her to repeat what she had just said.

Shaka: "Uthini (What)?"

Queen Kuli: (regretful) "Eish..."

Shaka: (teary) "Are you saying Sfiso isn't my father?"

Queen Kuli: "Ag, man. You were bound to find out anyway, man Shaka. Stop being weak. I didn't give birth to a weakling. Your father sacrificed his own life and killed himself just so you could keep enjoying the freedom of royalty. Do you want to throw all of that away now?"

Shaka started weeping.

Queen Kuli: (shouting) "I asked you a question, Shaka!"

Shaka: (weeping) "No, Ma."

Queen Kuli: "Do you want to be King or not?"

Shaka: (crying) "Yes..."

Queen Kuli: "Then stop crying and stay strong. You are my son and I expect you to be strong."

She walked up to him and wiped his tears away.

Queen Kuli: "You are a strong man, Shaka, you are destined for greatness. You were not named after Sfiso's father for no reason. You will get that throne. I'll make sure of it, okay?"

Shaka nodded, failing to keep the tears from falling down his face. It was for the very first time that Shaka actually understood why he and Gatsha never looked alike nor had the same taste in anything. It was at that very moment he knew

why he and Sfiso just never connected. He finally understood why he got on so well with Bheki all those years – it was because he was his biological father.

It pained him seeing how pathetic his own life was, but his mother had given him a glimpse of hope. False hope it was. Queen Kuli failed to see that she was actually damaging Shaka even further than she had. She didn't care, for her it was all about revenge and greed and she would stop at nothing until she got what she wanted.

“When people become difficult to love, love them harder and pray for them even more. That’s how you overcome evil with good.” – Jeannette Coron

It didn’t take very long for Gatsha and Lehumo to decide on a wedding date. They had agreed on the following year, on 26 March, Gatsha’s 27th birthday. He couldn’t wait any longer to finally claim her as his wife and he was really excited. One would swear he was the bride. As the days went by, Kuli remained even more bitter, and so was Shaka. They really couldn’t even hide it anymore – especially when Queen Nozipho was around. Gatsha and Lehumo were in their own world, really. They couldn’t care much about people who didn’t want them to be happy. It was the day before the wedding, and of course Bongsi and Neriah planned the whole thing. Beatrice was an excellent cook, even though they had hired catering to do the cooking and everything else.

Lehumo was hoping for a small wedding, but that was not going to happen with her about to be the next Queen of Zululand. King Sfiso was more than happy to step down as the king as he felt that Gatsha would be more than happy to do

that. While the women were cooking and preparing for the following day's festivities, the men were outside having a drink and a very nice chat about life itself. Gatsha was also with them, as they didn't want him to see Lehumo before the wedding day. It was bad luck as they said. He was with Noah and his father, sitting around the fire. Shaka had forced himself to sit with them even though he was mute.

Noah: "Gatsha, mfana wami (my boy). Are you ready for tomorrow?"

Gatsha: (smiling) "I was born ready, Baba (Father)."

King Sfiso: "Good. You see, Shaka. Now it is your turn to find yourself a suitable maiden."

Shaka just gave king Sfiso one look and didn't say anything in return. The fact that King Sfiso was not his father, haunted him ever since his mother had told him about it. King Sfiso didn't want to rain on Gatsha's parade, so he let Shaka be.

Gatsha: “Baba (Father), let me go and make a phone call to my wife. Ngiyabuya manje (I’ll be right back).”

King Sfiso: (chuckling) “How I wish I could experience that. True love.”

Noah: “I have something to show you.”

King Sfiso: (puzzled) “What is that?”

Noah: “We’ll have to wait until everyone is asleep.”

He nudged towards Shaka, and King Sfiso got the hint as he nodded. He was really not expecting the surprise that Noah had planned for him. That was the evening that King Sfiso was about to experience true love all over again after all those years. Meanwhile, Gatsha just couldn’t bear the thought of being away from Lehumo. He hadn’t even tasted her forbidden fruit yet, imagine how we behaved after that.

Lehumo: (smiling) “My husband.”

Gatsha: "Hello, my wife. Unjani (How are you)?"

Lehumo: "Gatsha, you asked me that a few minutes ago on WhatsApp. I'm fine."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Be prepared because I am going to irritate you like this for the rest of your life. I miss you already."

Lehumo: (smiling) "I miss you too, love. Mama is watching me and said that she is going to take my phone because you're keeping me busy."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Okay, then. Ngiyakuthanda yezwa (I love you, okay)?"

Lehumo: "Le nna kea go rata (I love you too)."

Lehumo hung up and went back to the women. Kuli was as white as a sheet, with all the depression that had been

attacking her. Neriah, Bongsi, Raesibe and Beatrice were indulging in some wine along with Brenda, not having a care in the world what Kuli was thinking of.

Beatrice: “Lehumo, that man is too attached to you. I wouldn’t be surprised if he decided to carry you with him in his suitcase on his way to work.”

Raesibe: (laughing) “Yoh, she is one lucky girl. Rena ba bangwe ne ba no re checka ge ba bowa moshomong (Some of us were only checked on when our husbands returned from work).”

Neriah: “Ai, Alfred le ena man ne a bora (Alfred was rather boring, you know).”

Raesibe: “O ka bolela gape (You can say that again). Ka re le mapaying ne a bora wa nkwa (Even in bed he was boring, hey).”

Lehumo felt her cheeks become red yet again. She surely was not prepared for that conversation. Especially from women who were her mother’s age.

Bongi: “Ai, I don’t get why women love suffering so much. I’d never allow myself to be sexually deprived. My husband and I had a very healthy sex life, even after he died, I just had to find myself someone who would make sure I get an orgasm at least once a day.”

Neriah: “Ai, Ma mara keng heh (Really, Ma, really)? Lehumo o mo (Lehumo is here).”

Beatrice: “The more reason to say these things with her here. Come on, Neriah. Haven’t you given the poor girl some tips? I mean she is clueless this one. What if she gets there and lays there like a chicken?”

Bongi: “Have you even taught her anything about foreplay and what to expect on her wedding night?”

Lehumo felt herself become even more embarrassed, while Brenda was silently taking notes even though she had already had sex before.

Neriah: “Hayi man. Lea bona bjale (You see now).”

Raesibe: “I am glad she gets to hear this, because no one told us what to do when we got married. Imagine being 18 and not knowing a thing about a whole penis. Yoh, bophelo ne bo le boima (Life was tough indeed).”

Bongi: “All I can say Lehumo, is that you need to relax. He has to touch you in the right places, kiss you right and once you become wet down there, you know that you are ready.”

Queen Kuli: (annoyed) “Shouldn’t you be too old to be talking about such things right now?”

Raesibe: (annoyed) “Ai, wena wa itebala gore ne o fana le best friend ya monnago (You forget you were fornicating with your husband’s best friend). Ska itira betere ka rena asseblief (don’t act better than us).”

No one felt the need to call Raesibe to order, because well Queen Kuli had deserved it.

Queen Kuli: "Excuse me."

Raesibe: "With pleasure."

Queen Kuli walked out and the rest of the women laughed, while Lehumo remained embarrassed.

Lehumo: "Hao, Ma. Tlabe le se go ge mosadi yole a nhlakisha (you won't be here when she mistreats me). Please, don't be mean to her."

Bongi: "If you allow her to mistreat you then I'll know you're seriously dumb. No matter who anyone is, Lehumo don't ever let them walk over you. I think it is high time I told you what I did to my monster mother in law."

Brenda: "Oh, please, Ma. Tell us."

Bongi: “She was just like that bitch Kuli. She hated me the moment she laid eyes on me of which I just didn’t get. But, thank God for the personality I have, I didn’t wait for her to start shit with me. The first day we stayed at her house, she ordered me to get up at 5am and start the fire, cook for everyone in the house and clean. My husband didn’t want any of that and told her straight that I wouldn’t be doing that. When he finally left for work, I was left with her and her mother. I was enjoying my sleep after a long night’s workout, and she decided to barge into my bedroom, hitting me with a broomstick forcing me to wake up. I couldn’t stand that, so I took the broom right out of her hands and I beat her up with it. Her mother tried to come and overpower me, so I beat them both up.”

Lehumo, Neriah, Raesibe, Brenda and Beatrice found themselves laughing so much.

Brenda: “Hah (Wow)! Then what happened afterwards?”

Bongi: “Oh, I told them straight that I was no slave and I would do what I could when it suited me. I mean the managed just

fine without me so why did they feel the need to make me a slave and punish me for marrying the breadwinner?”

Lehumo: “I’m sure they hated you ever since.”

Bongi: “Not a chance. One day I had gone out shopping and came back with plastic bags full of clothes and food. They didn’t expect anything from me, but I had bought each of them a brand new dress and pair of shoes. They were so happy and had a change of heart. By the end of that day, my husband had found us drinking a bottle of wine and dancing together. We remained close ever since until they died.”

Lehumo was humoured by that story indeed, but she couldn’t help but feel that her own marriage would not have such a happy ending. Her mother in law was a real bitch. As they were enjoying their drinks, they heard some noise coming from an unfamiliar voice. It sounded like the woman was walking up the stairs towards them.

Woman: (shouting) “Why ngingamenywanga mina, Kuli (Why was I not invited, Kuli)?! Do I have to hear from people in our

village saying that you're getting a new makoti?! Not just that but one that is not even of royalty?! Ukuphi ena (Where is she)?!"

The next moment, the door flung open and it was a woman who looked just like Kuli, but much older. She had very big curves and very large breasts, and a very unpleasant face.

Woman: "Oho, this is why this kingdom is falling apart and why you are the laughing stock! You have women – a whole bunch of women drinking in a room with children while they should be cooking!"

Bongi and Neriah immediately felt offended and stood up.

Bongi: "Uthini wena (What did you just say)?!"

Woman: "Ungzwile (you heard me)."

Kuli looked a bit pleased that her mother was there to stir up some trouble, and had a slight smirk on her face, but Bongi and Neriah didn't want to have any drama.

Bongi: "I don't take kindly to women like you who decide to stir trouble on beautiful evenings like these."

Woman: "Hey wena (you)!"

Neriah: "I don't think you understood that very well, Magogo (Granny). This is not your kingdom – this is my daughter's kingdom now. So, I suggest you leave the same way you walked in here

unless you would like to acquaint yourself with my fists."

Neriah shocked her daughter by rolling her sleeves up, and so did Bongi. She had never seen her mother fight with anyone.

Woman: "Mxm, uyabona ke Kuli (you see now). I should have had a firmer hand with you. Look now, your whole kingdom is turning into a laughing stock with unruly women."

Raesibe: “Ai, le wena o bolela thata man (you talk too much). Go and ask your daughter why she was sleeping with her husband’s advisor. I am even sure that she has even more secrets to tell, like some of her children don’t belong to her husband.”

Kuli’s facial expression suddenly changed, while the woman looked even angrier.

Woman: “What is she talking about, Kuli?!”

Kuli: “Eish, Mama nawe. Asihambe (Let’s go).”

The woman was still complaining, until Kuli dragged her out of the room and closed the door. Beatrice, Bongsi, Neriah, Brenda and Lehumo laughed.

Beatrice: “Really, Raesibe? Did you have to go there?”

Raesibe: “Don’t act like you have never suspected it, Beatrice. You have been working here for years.”

Beatrice: “I am not saying anything, mina (nna).”

Raesibe: “Wa bona gore wa tseba (You see? You know).”

Bongi: “Hayi man. Let’s sleep a bit before that tall witch comes and disturbs us again. We have an early morning ahead of us.”

They locked the door and decided to all sleep in one bedroom. Lehumo had trouble sleeping that evening, she couldn’t understand if it was the normal nerves of a wedding or the low-key fear she had of staying in one house with Queen Kuli. Meanwhile, Shaka indeed left Noah and King Sfiso, and most of the men retreated to their rooms. It was finally time for Noah to reveal his big surprise.

King Sfiso: “Noah, Bafo (Brother), kudala ngimile (I’ve been waiting). I feel like Lehumo now awaiting a big surprise from her husband.”

Noah: (chuckling) "I'm sorry. I couldn't let you do it while everyone was awake. Care to take a brief walk with me?"

King Sfiso: "Njani (How), Noah? It is just after midnight. Can't we drive?"

Noah: "I'm afraid if we do, we'd get caught out, my dear friend."

King Sfiso: (frowning) "You're not getting me into something illegal, are you?"

Noah: (chuckling) "My only sin is that I am allowing you to do something you should have done long ago. I am giving you the platform to get the answers you have been looking for ever since you got married."

King Sfiso felt a bit puzzled, but he trusted Noah. Nothing had prepared him for what he was about to witness.

King Sfiso: “How far is this place we’re going to?”

Noah: “Five houses away.”

For some odd reason, it didn’t even ring any bell to Sfiso as to who used to live there thirty years ago. He nodded and they took a walk. King Sfiso felt a bit anxious, but not the slightest feeling of being scared attacked him. He really wanted to see this amazing surprise Noah kept speaking of. They finally got the house, and only then it hit King Sfiso that his long lost love used to live there, but he thought she was a thing of the past.

Noah: “Are you ready?”

King Sfiso: “Khauvule lomnyango (Just open the door), Noah. You’re making me panic for no reason.”

Noah chuckled slightly and knocked twice. That must have been the signal that she was awaiting. Within a few minutes, she opened the door and King Sfiso felt himself become instantly paralyzed by shock.

Khensani: (smiling) “Sawubona Sfiso (Hello).”

She still looked the same, and had not aged a day in her life. It actually looked as if she was aging backwards. Her skin, flawless as ever. He thought it was a dream, as he kept blinking a few times. He even held her face gently just to see if it was really her.

King Sfiso: (teary) “Khensi... Nguwe lo (Is this really you)?”

Khensani: (chuckling) “Yes.”

Noah: “I’ll leave you two to it. Bafo (brother), ngizokubona kusasa ekuseni (I’ll see you tomorrow morning).”

King Sfiso was not even bothered about what they would say should he not appear or when Kuli started asking about his whereabouts. Noah knew that adultery was bad, but he couldn’t stand seeing his friend so miserable. He just had to grant him that gift he had been longing for. He hurried back to

the house, and luckily for him he had a very good relationship with the guards and they would never tell on him. He walked into the house and bumped into Queen Kuli.

Queen Kuli: “Hey wena (you), Noah. Uphi uSfiso (Where is Sfiso)?”

Noah knew how rude Kuli was and he never allowed her to feel as if she had more power than him.

Noah: “Angazi ndhlovukazi (I don’t know, Queen). Why don’t you ask him yourself since he is your husband?”

Queen Kuli: (annoyed) “Ucabanga ukuthi ungubani wena (Who do you think you are) to talk to me like that?”

Noah: “Well, perhaps you forgot, but my name is Noah Mkhabela, advisor to the King – not you. Goodnight Ndhlovukazi (Queen).”

He left her standing there shaking her head in frustration. She knew that it was very unusual for Sfiso to sleep out and he was supposed to be in bed by then. Meanwhile, Sfiso was still shocked that he had the love of his life before him.

Khensani: "Come in. People might see you."

King Sfiso: "Oh, of course."

He took off his hat, that is how respectful he was. Gatsha was indeed his son.

King Sfiso: "Kuzenjani ufike la (How did you end up here)?"

Khensani: "Well, Noah contacted me. I was not shocked really since he knew my late husband, but when he told me about you, I was very hesitant to come – hence I only made sure that no one saw me by coming here at night."

King Sfiso: "I don't understand. You left here without saying goodbye, Khensani. You never wrote or called or

anything. Even your parents refused to tell me about your whereabouts until they died. Even your sister refused, hence I just let it all go. I slept with a pained heart each night, but what else could I do?”

Khensani: (nervous) “I am sorry. It was not my intention to do that to you. Believe me, Sfiso, I really loved you. I had to leave. I was forced to.”

King Sfiso: “What happened? Who forced you?”

Khensani: (looking down) “I can’t tell you. Let’s not talk about that right now.”

King Sfiso held her hands, and they still felt so soft and warm just as they were back in the day when they were young and in love.

King Sfiso: “I never stopped thinking about you. At times I would make love to Kuli and imagine it was you.”

Khensani looked down and a tear escaped her eye, but King Sfiso gently cupped her face and wiped the tear off her face.

King Sfiso: "I still love you, Khensani. Do you still love me?"

Khensani: (teary) "I never stopped loving you, Sfiso. How could I stop when we made a pact?"

Sfiso: "Til the end, together we shall be."

Khensani: (crying) "I'm sorry..."

King Sfiso: "Shhh... we can talk about that later."

King Sfiso couldn't hold himself any longer, he found himself gently placing his lips onto Khensani's and kissing her passionately. He hadn't had such passion in years – not even with Kuli. They had stopped having intercourse years before then. He even felt his penis get hard instantly and felt electrifying goosebumps all over his body as he touched her. Khensani moaned in his mouth. Sfiso pulled out of the

kiss, gently sucked on her neck. She used to love it when he did that.

Khensani: (moaning) “Sfiso...”

She kept moaning with tears streaming endlessly down her face. King Sfiso kissed her cheeks dry and slowly took off her blouse. He missed her melanin skin, which reminded him of pure coffee. He unclipped her bra, and he remembered how he missed seeing her beautiful, petite breasts. Khensani never had children with her deceased husband – out of choice. He thought she was barren, but she just couldn't stomach having another man's children knowing her heart belonged to Sfiso until eternity. Sfiso gently rubbed her breasts as she moaned and his penis responded. He remembered how she was never shy when it came to them making love. Even though they only did it a few times, he remembered it as if it were the day before. He sucked on her beautiful, dark brown nipples. She moaned as she found herself laying back on the couch. He proceeded to take off her skirt and panties at the same time until she was completely naked. He slowly took off his clothes as well, and never took his eyes off hers. The eye contact was immensely beautiful, it felt as if they were remaking their own movie. He was finally naked, with mkhonto risen and ready to

feel her moist vagina, but he was a very attentive and gentle man, much like Gatsha. He wanted her to feel pleasure first, before he inserted his penis into her. He kissed her abdomen and went down slowly until he reached her vagina. He slowly spread her legs and she didn't refuse. She gladly spread them further. He started gently licking her clit, making Khensani go wild. It had been rather long since he had been with a woman, so he didn't want to take too long and disappoint his love by finishing prematurely. He sucked on her a few more times, and went back up and kissed her passionately. He finally entered her temple, and she was as tight as she was all those years ago. King Sfiso found himself moaning harder than before, while kissing Khensani immensely.

Khensani: (moaning) "Oh... aaah, Sfiso..."

King Sfiso: "Khensani... I missed you so much, Sthandwa sami (my love). Please, allow me to be a permanent resident of your body..."

Khensani: "Yes, Sfiso...."

It was not long before they climaxed together as he collapsed on top of her and kissed her again. He was in so much disbelief.

King Sfiso: "I love you, Khensani."

Khensani: "I love you too, Sfiso."

Sfiso: "Are you ready to tell me what really happened?"

Khensani: "I don't think you're going to like what I have to tell you."

“Every moment of your life is a second chance.” – Rick Price

King Sfiso and his darling Khensani didn't even sleep a wink. He was so excited to be with her, that he genuinely thought that should he shut his eyes he'd never see her again. She on the other hand, felt just the same way. She didn't sleep a wink, while they kept making love as if it was the last time they would ever see one another.

King Sfiso: “I'm still waiting for you to tell me what really happened.”

Khensani: “How can I speak when you keep working me out?”

King Sfiso: (chortling) “Ngiyaxolisa (I'm sorry) Sthandwa sami (My love). Now, please, do tell me what made you leave.”

Khensani: (sigh) “Your father didn't want us to be together. When he realized that his efforts to make you stop loving me went to waste, he came to my house one evening

with a few of his men, right after you left and they kidnapped my parents, sister and I. We had bags over our faces, and they tortured us by throwing water over us and suffocating us.”

She started tearing up as he became angry.

Khensani: “Your wife, Kuli was there. He said to me that I’d see my parents die that evening along with my sister and I’d live to tell the tale if I didn’t leave you. What was I supposed to do, Sfiso? I couldn’t lose them just like that all because I fell in love with a Prince who was promised to someone else. I was in so much shock, that I had bled instantly. I had no idea that I was even pregnant. I figured that evening that I had lost my baby – our baby.”

King Sfiso felt so much heart wrenching pain within him. He felt like his heart was being twisted continuously. His father was known for cruelty hence he decided to be the complete opposite. He had no idea that Kuli was part of the murder of his first born child. He gently wiped Khensani’s tears away from her face.

King Sfiso: "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry you had to go through that."

Khensani: "It's okay. It took me years to heal, more especially when I couldn't really vent to anyone about it. They made me leave, and promised to kill me if I refused to leave Zululand. I knew that you were going to marry a witch, but I had no choice. I sacrificed my own happiness, broke your heart and saved three lives that evening. It was a painful choice that I live to regret til this day."

King Sfiso: (tightened jaw) "I'll fix it. All of it. Just so we could be together again. I can't die miserable, Khensani, I refuse."

Khensani: (shaking head) "It's not that simple. There's more."

King Sfiso: (puzzled) "What do you mean?"

Khensani: "A few days before your father passed, he decided to take a trip to Jo'burg to see me - along with your wife. I am guessing they probably wanted to see if I was still keeping my end of the bargain. They came and your father apologized. He said that his days on earth were numbered and he needed to make peace with all those he had wronged, but Kuli on the

other hand was not even remorseful. She told me something very disturbing. She said that she was finally happy and had finally gotten married to the wealthiest prince in South Africa, even though you were a father to children who were not yours.”

King Sfiso looked at her puzzled without saying a word.

Khensani: “Shaka and Princess are not your children – they are Bheki’s.”

King Sfiso kept quiet for a while as if he was deep in thought, but he surprised Khensani with his answer.

King Sfiso: “I know.”

Khensani: “I don’t follow.”

King Sfiso: “I’ve known for a while now.”

Khensani: (shocked) “What? You mean to tell me you continued to have children with her knowing Shaka was not yours?”

King Sfiso: (shaking head) “I only found out a few years ago when Ayanda was 17. I had heard rumours of her and Bheki having an affair, but once I found out, it all made sense. For some reason, I saw Bheki’s spitting image in Shaka’s eyes. Ayanda was the very same. I just knew they weren’t mine from the moment they had both turned one, but I loved them nonetheless. I tried to teach them right from wrong and how to behave and be normal functioning adults, but they really refused to agree with me. They had inherited their father’s ugly traits and there was nothing I could do.”

Khensani: (shocked) “Why did you never confront Kuli?”

King Sfiso: “How could I? Those children know me as their father, so imagine me bursting their bubble and breaking down their whole entire world. They would never be the same again, knowing how greedy they both are – they’d probably kill me before I kicked them out of the house. You see, Khensi, I stopped praying a long time ago when I lost you, but I recently

found God again and whenever I felt like telling them the truth about their paternity, I just couldn't. For Ezekiel 18 says that children shall pay for their father's sins and I just couldn't let that happen. As much as those two are not ideal children for me, I do love them. I have been through some really depressive times, but that night after I confronted Bheki about him sleeping with Kuli, I prayed for the first time in 30 years.

I prayed and the bastard killed himself that very night. I have since learnt that Proverbs 3:5-6 speaks to me as it says "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your path." I have since learnt to put everything in His hands. I have prayed for so long that you would come back to me, Khensani. When I started praying in the correct manner and actually speaking to God, he finally heard me. He blessed me with a great friend like Noah and in turn, you came back to my life. I don't even what to do right now. I have to go help out with my son's wedding, but I just can't afford to leave you here. So please, come with me."

Khensani: (shaking head) "It would be really inappropriate, and besides, we don't want drama at your son's wedding. Go be there for him and I shall see you later."

King Sfiso: “Okay, but if you do change your mind, please do come. It is high time that Kuli learnt that her deeds have come back to haunt her.”

Meanwhile, at the royal palace, everyone was awoken by chaos caused by Kuli’s mother, Queen Nomtha. She was screaming at everyone, including the catering company to clean and do things they were not even hired to do. Gatsha was angered by that, and started scolding her, of which angered her even more.

Queen Nomtha: (shouting) “Phitzelani nina (Hurry up)! You can’t be standing around knowing that there is a wedding taking place very soon. You see why this wedding is cursed already?! The wife and her own pedi people are too lazy to cook!”

Gatsha: (fuming) “Gogo (Granny) Nomtha, I won’t hesitate to throw you out of here if you carry on like this! You want to ruin my wedding before it even begins!”

Nomtha: “Uyabona ke Kuli (You see now), ngabe ufundise abantwana bakho inhlonipho ngabe se ba right manje (Had you only taught your children some manners, they’d be alright now).”

Kuli wanted to stop her mother from causing chaos, afraid that Raesibe and some of Lehumo’s family members might burst and tell everyone her secret, but little did she know that King Sfiso had known all along. All he had to do was change his will formally.

Kuli: “Mama, yekela into uyiyenzayo (Stop what you’re doing).”

Queen Nomtha: “Hayi man (No man), you never even liked her anyway. You told me yourself and now you want to change tune? Aga man!”

Bongi, Neria, Beatrice, Raesibe and Lehumo came running down along with Brenda.

Bongi: “Yini into uyiyenzakho wena (What are you doing)?!”

Queen Nomtha: “Weh (Wow)! Finally, zivukile iyidakwa (the drunks have risen).”

Bongi: (annoyed) “Wena (You), Ngizakushaya wangathembi (I’ll beat you up so fast, you won’t believe it)!”

Just when they thought the drama had only just started, someone came running into the house.

Woman: “Wozani nizobona (Come and see)! Umqombhothi awubilanga (the traditional beer hasn’t brewed)!”

Queen Nomtha: (Laughing) “You see? This wedding is cursed! You know that is bad luck!”

Bongi: (fuming) “You think I didn’t know that you are the one who poured a whole bag of salt into the beer?!”

Queen Nomtha: (shocked) “Ukhuluma ngani (What are you talking about)?”

Queen Nozipho surprised them all as she walked through the door with her knob kerie.

Queen Nozipho: “Sawubona (Hello), troublemaker. Yazi awufundi niks Nomthadazo (You just never learn). Even after the tragic death of your husband. Keep going and you will bury this one when she is nothing but ash.”

Queen Nomtha: (annoyed) “Nozipho.”

Queen Nozipho: (chuckling) “Respect is not one of your strong traits, I see. Even poverty didn’t teach you a thing or two. Bongishe, she indeed was the one who ruined the traditional beer

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but don’t worry, it is still early. You can quickly go make another batch and it will be ready within two hours. You ladies go get busy, I’ll sort this one out.”

As they nodded and were about to leave, a man from the group of men outside came running in.

Man: (shouting) “Ngiyaxolisa ukuniphambanisa (Sorry to disturb you), but the chosen cow is dead.”

Bongi looked at Queen Nomtha in annoyance, while Neriah just couldn't help it.

Neriah: (shouting) “Yoooh! O sele mosadi ke wena (You are a piece of work, woman)! O batla go senya lenyalo la ngwanaka le so thome (You want to ruin my child's marriage before it even begins)!”

Neriah flew right up and gave Queen Nomtha a few slaps. As short as she was, she managed to beat her up until she fell right down. Gatsha was so angry, that he didn't even try to stop her, when Queen Kuli tried to intervene, Gatsha pushed her back so hard that she too fell onto the floor. Bongi eventually pulled Neriah off Queen Nomtha.

Queen Nozipho: “You can choose any other cow. I’ll come and bless it. Wena (You), Nomtha, your days have been numbered. You shall suffer dearly for what you have done today.”

She remembered those words like it was just the day before. She was so scared, because just the last time she was told that, her husband died. Now she immediately thought she would be next.

Queen Nomtha: “Oh, Nozipho, I didn’t meant to do it.”

She bowed before Queen Nozipho, who just gave her one look and moved forward.

Queen Nozipho: (Chuckling) “What do you think you’re doing? I wasn’t born yesterday, child. I’m practically an ancestor. I know the inner you like the back of my hand. Out of my way before you taint my custom made dress.”

She moved along leaving Queen Nomtha crying there. Lehumo cried, as Brenda moved her to her bedroom. Gatsha wanted so badly to carress his wife and comfort her. King Sfiso walked in and found everyone in a sombre mood. Kuli could see a difference in Sfiso, he looked as if he was glowing. She could tell he had just gotten some by the way he was smiling and his walk. He frowned immediately when he looked at her.

King Sfiso: “Kwenzakalani lana (What’s happening here)?”

Gatsha: “Your wife and her mother tried to ruin everything, Baba (Father). Gogo (Granny) poisoned the chosen cow and messed with the traditional beer.”

King Sfiso: (Angered) “How dare you mess with my son’s wedding before it even began, wena (you) Nomthandazo?!”

Queen Nomtha: “Please, forgive me, my king. I had a poor lapse of judgment.”

King Sfiso: “You can have that elsewhere. I am officially banning you from my house and from my Kingdom. Never ever set foot here!”

Queen Nomtha: “You can’t do that, King, please, I beg of you.”

King Sfiso: “Guards, take her away!”

The guards came rushing in and adhered to the King’s command. They dragged her out screaming and kicking, leaving Kuli crying in shock before him. She wasn’t too worried about her old mother, she wanted to know where he was.

Queen Kuli: “Ubuyaphi (Where have you been)?”

King Sfiso: “You lost the right to ask me that nonsense a year ago.”

Queen Kuli once again felt like the dagger that was stabbed through her heart was pierced a little deeper.

King Sfiso: "Since you also can't be trusted, you're not allowed at the ceremony. I am banning you from the wedding. Come near the wedding or near the bride or groom and I will personally kill you."

She was about to wail until she smelled a familiar perfume on him. She had good memory at least. She never forgot a face and nor did she forget a scent.

Queen Kuli: "Nice perfume."

King Sfiso: "Mxm."

He ordered the guards to remove her from the Royal palace for the two day celebration. He didn't want her to mess with anything of the day. He meant every word and was truly happy. He reassured his son that everything would turn out okay.

King Sfiso: "My son, everything will be okay."

Gatsha: (nodding) "I'm just worried about my wife, Baba (Father). I can't even see her, but she is so devastated."

King Sfiso: "Be creative, mfana wami (My boy). Go speak to her through the door. She'd be more than happy to hear your voice."

Gatsha: "Why didn't I think of that?"

King Sfiso: (chuckling) "Because you're in distress and can't think clearly right now."

Gatsha: "Hehe, Baba (Wow, Dad) why are you so chirpy today?"

King Sfiso: "My son is getting married, can't I be happy?"

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Okay. Let me go."

He nodded and hugged his father as he walked up the stairs. He knocked briefly on the door.

Brenda: "Ubani (Who is it)?"

Gatsha: "Bee, it's me. Don't open, I just want to talk to Lehumo."

Brenda: "She says she does not want to talk to you. She says the wedding is off."

Those words pierced Gatsha's heart. He couldn't help but force the door open and found his Lehumo drowning in tears and her eyes swollen. That was no way for a new bride to look on her special day.

Lehumo: (crying) "Gatsha, please don't come near me. You can't see me like this. Go fedile (It's over)."

Gatsha: (teary) “Lehumo, Sthandwa sami (My love). Is this what is going to happen everytime the going gets tough for you?”

Lehumo: (crying) “Your family hates me.”

Gatsha: “But I love you. Is that not enough for you?”

Lehumo: “Go senyegile, Gatsha (Everything is a mess). Is this what is going to happen every two minutes in our marriage? All because o nyala nywanenyana wa mopedi (you’re marrying a pedi girl)?”

Gatsha: “Do you want us to be like Romeo and Juliet? Because say the word and I’ll kill us both right here.”

Lehumo: “Voetsek (Piss off), Gatsha! Ke serious wena wa raloka (I’m serious and you’re busy joking).”

Gatsha: “How can I joke when the most beautiful gem I found wants to break away from me? I have worked too hard for this

day to happen, to capture your heart, Lehumo for you to just decide to leave me all because of my lousy mother. From what I remember, I fell in love with a woman as strong as Ruth in the Bible. I fell in love with a woman who has abiding loyalty and endless devotion to God no matter what. I don't know this Lehumo standing before me, crying over a mere person who does not like her. You have overcome abuse, a drunk of a father and so many people disliking you all because of the way you look and all because you're intelligent. I don't know, but I still want to explore life with you, to grow with you. I promised you the world and I'd rather die than leave this room with you rejecting me."

Lehumo sat there for a second contemplating Gatsha's words. Brenda was in tears as she felt like she was watching a romantic movie.

Lehumo: "I'm so scared, Gatsha."

Gatsha: "Life is unpredictable, my love. Do you even know what tomorrow holds? Do you want to be scared and alone or be scared and face life with me by your side? Because I promise you, should you choose me today, I will never leave

your side until the day I die. Even then, I can reassure you that I'd come haunt you every day, just to be by your side and smell your beautiful scent."

Lehumo: (chuckling) "You can be so silly, Gatsha."

Gatsha: "I'm serious. Say the word."

Lehumo: (sigh) "Okay, I'll face life with you."

Gatsha: "You have to mean it."

Lehumo: "I mean every word."

Gatsha passionately kissed her until they remembered that they weren't alone.

Brenda: (clearing throat) "Save that for the big moment, toe (please), Gatsha."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Sorry, Bee. No more crying, Ma Ncube (Mrs. Ncube)."

Lehumo: (nodding) "No more crying."

He kissed her forehead.

Gatsha: "Ngiyakuthanda, yezwa (I love you, okay)?"

Lehumo: "I love you too."

Brenda: "Okay, thanks for saving the day, but it is high time you left, Gatsha."

Gatsha laughed as he walked out of the room. At least his heart was put at ease as he walked out knowing that his day would finally become reality. Little did he know that by the end of his two day wedding celebration, he'd have killed to save his own life and blood would be shed. A royal family member would have lost a life, bringing turmoil to the one who gained the most out of his existence.

“It is better to be hated for what you are than to be loved for what you are not.” – Andre Gide

While Queen Nomtha was banned from the village, and Queen Kuli was removed from the premises, the women started brewing the beer all over again. Bongi refrained everyone from being angry since it was considered bad luck brewing the beer while having negative emotions. Gatsha kept staring at his pictures which he had taken with Lehumo during the course of their relationship. If anything, he was more than happy. While he was getting dressed, he was more than stunned and rather irritated that Shaka barged into his room without knocking.

Gatsha: (annoyed) “Shaka, awukwazi ukukokota (don’t you know how to knock)?”

Shaka: (softly) “Sorry, I just wanted to come see the guy who’s living my dream.”

Gatsha took a good look at Shaka, who looked like he had just lost his whole life or something. He looked dreadful – very dirty

and unclean which was very much the opposite of the Shaka they all knew. He was a metrosexual – had a mani and pedi every week. A facial almost every day and always smelled like rose gold. Gatsha couldn't understand whether he was depressed or not, but he sure looked a lot more irritating than before.

Gatsha: (annoyed) "Excuse me?"

Shaka: "I'm just saying, you know. Here I am, the first born of this family yet you get to be the ruling King."

Gatsha: (sigh) "I won't do this with you right now, Shaka, not on my wedding day. I owe my wife a happy husband. If you had behaved like a king, you'd be the chosen one right now."

Shaka: "Hmm. Okay."

Just like that, Shaka alked right out of Gatsha's bedroom and slammed the door. He was acting rather oddly, but Gatsha didn't want to waste any ounce of energy on Shaka on the

happiest day of his life. Meanwhile, Lehumo was struggling to get her puffy eyes to go back to their normal size.

Brenda: “Ai, wa bona bjanong (You see now). Had you not been crying your eyes wouldn’t look like you are a huge balloon, nkosiyami (My Goodness).”

Lehumo: “Bee, you’re supposed to make me feel better. You’re not helping.”

Brenda: “Okay, Sorry. Make up will have to do.”

Lehumo looked so beautiful. She was dressed in a beautiful, one hand sparkling wedding dress, draped with diamonds, real diamonds, and in chiffon-lace mermaid style. Gatsha was very attentive, and had her wear custom made Christian Louboutin Platform shoes. She was stunned as to why Gatsha would choose such high shoes for her to wear on a day they might be dancing all day, but she was actually surprised to see just how comfortable they were. Inside they had their initials and wedding date: G & L 26.03. It was a rather special day for them since it was also Gatsha’s 27th birthday. So, no drama was

necessary. She had her hair in a beautiful, uniquely styled bun, draped in pearls and a side veil. She might have been young, but stylish she was. All thanks to Brenda, who didn't want her to look like the typical rural queen bride. She wanted her best friend to make a statement, of which she most definitely did make. A lot of people felt their wedding was too over the top, and that she was overspending the King's money, but one thing about gossipmongers is that they always want to speculate. Gatsha had used his own money for the entire wedding. Queen Kuli was so mean, she didn't want the poor child to have a white wedding, but knowing Bongi and Neriah, they were a good tag team.

Brenda: "Ha-ah. Don't you dare cry now, Lehumo. No, man. You'll mess up my masterpiece."

Lehumo: "Askies (Sorry), friend. I'm just so happy. I don't know why I feel so emotional."

Brenda: "I wish I could relate, but just be strong, mokgotsi (friend)."

Lehumo: “Wena onyalwa neng (When are you getting married)?”

Brenda: (chuckling) “The day I get married, will most probably be the day I lose my mind. Not everyone is meant for that kind of life.”

Lehumo chuckled and let her friend be. They spent a few more minutes doing further touch ups. As they were busy, Bonggi, Beatrice, Raesibe and Neriah walked in in total awe.

Bonggi: (teary) “Oh, mzikulu wami (my grandchild).”

Raesibe: “Yoh nna (My goodness)! Ga ke so bone mosese wa go tura bjana bophelong bjaka (I have never seen such an expensive dress in my whole entire life)! Yoh, di daimane tje kana (So many diamonds)!”

Neriah: (crying) “Oh, Modimo (God)! You have been so kind to me! Deuteronomy 1:1 – “The Lord, the God of your fathers, make you a thousand times as many as you are, and bless you,

as he has promised you!” Oh, Ngwanaka (My child), God indeed makes no mistakes! Your destiny was already written even before He formed you in my womb! For God has promised you a well-deserved life of luxury. I didn’t name you Lehumo (Riches) for no reason; I named you so that you could be richly blessed in all ways in this life. Oh, ngwanaka (My child). You are so beautiful, you have remained respectful and I cannot wish any harm unto you. I love you so much and I thank God for giving me a child like you.”

Lehumo couldn’t help but let the tears fall down her cheeks.

Neriah: (chanting tribal names) “ Rena di aloga re alogile. Matshelape ka tshela monare ka namelela ka hlatloga ka la boKubu le boKwena ge nkabe e se la bo Tawane nkabe la bo Tau le njele!”

Raesibe started rejoicing: (shouting) “A ri ye riye riye riye riye! Haaaa!”

Bongi also loved Lehumo so much, that she didn’t even care whether or not she was her blood. She was introduced to the

Mkhabela ancestors when Noah and Neriah got married, so she was family.

Bongi: (teary and chanting clan names) “Mkhabela, Dhlomo, Dinangwe, Mkhonkhosi, Madlulela, Tekade, Walanga!”

Raesibe: (rejoicing) “A riye riye riye riye riye! Haaaa! Chesa ngwanenyana wa Lephallale (You go, girl from Lephallale)! O charmile Kgoshi gare ga di kgoshi (you stole a pure King’s heart), gona bjale wa nyalwa (now you’re getting married). You have remained pure up until now, not many girls can say that out loud. The Bible says as the second commandment, honour your mother and father and your days shall be increased on this earth. I wish you nothing but abundant blessings, a marriage full of peace, love and free from abuse. You are highly favoured, ngwanenyana (girl). May God be with you.”

It seemed like the perfect opportunity for the women to praise and encourage Lehumo, instead of the same old “Bekezela (hang in there), mosadi o tshwara thipa ka bogale (a woman holds the knife by its sharp edges)” speech. These women came to empower their own.

Beatrice: “I can only wish you well, Lehumo. A marriage that is full of love, communication, trust and honesty will survive all turmoil. Remember that your husband is your best friend, don’t go around spilling the beans in your marriage, for your family might never forgive your husband, even though you would. Love him as the Lord encourages. Never stop praying together, never stop reading scripture together. That is the only way you will defeat the enemy.”

Bongi: “The road that lies ahead is a tough one for you, my baby. But, I know you will make it.”

That was a beautiful moment for Lehumo, and she didn’t take anything negative into account. She found herself crying all over again as they hugged her one by one.

Brenda: “Okay, okay. Se nimoshe umsebenzi wami (you have ruined my work). Now I have to do her make up all over again.”

Bongi: “Siyaxolisa nana (We’re so sorry, my child). You did a great job. Don’t worry, by the time you get married, Lehumo will be an expert with make up.”

Brenda: (excited) “hehe, Mam’Bongi, does it mean you’re actually telling me you had a premonition?”

Bongi: (chuckling) “You’ll see.”

Brenda smiled with ease and continued to fix Lehumo’s make-up. It was finally time for the ceremony, with all the ladies dressed, and Gatsha ever-ready, standing at the altar. All the people of Zululand were invited. Of course, the Bridal party had special seats, and the rest had to sit behind them. It was an ostentatious occasion and everyone had to be properly dressed. King Sfiso went all out, and he couldn’t even wait for Khensani to be by his side. He begged her to come along, of which she came, but as a guest. Not many people knew her, some remembered her briefly – especially Queen Nozipho.

King Sfiso: (smiling) “My love, you made it.”

He gave her a long hug. Luckily for them

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only a few of the royal family and the Mkhabela family, as well as very few of Neriah's family from Lephalale was sitting in the tent.

Khensani: (smiling) "Sfiso, behave please. You don't want to give people the wrong idea."

King Sfiso: "Come on, Khensi. The law of Zululand states that I can have a second wife if I want to."

Khensani: "Don't start, please."

Queen Nozipho saw her and immediately called her.

Queen Nozipho: "Weh, Khensani, woza la (come here)."

Khensani: (nervously) "Sawubona (Hello), Ma."

Queen Nozipho: (smiling) "Waze wa balekela umfana wami (you ran away from my boy). Had you stayed, I was going to

get rid of that Kuli for the both of you. How I wish you were my granddaughter in law.”

Khensani: (chuckling) “It wasn’t that easy, Ma.”

Queen Nozipho: (smiling) “I know. Anyway, I am glad you are here to stay this time.”

Khensani: “Oh, I don’t know about that, Ma.”

Queen Nozipho: (chuckling) “You’re trying to fool this old wizard?”

Khensani: (embarrassed) “No ma, never. Anyway, the guests are starting to walk in. Let me go sit, I’ll see you later.”

Queen Nozipho: “Ungazongihlanyela wena (Don’t be crazy). Ufuna ukuhlala (you want to sit) with those gossipmongers? Come, sit.”

She pulled her next to her before she could even dispute.

Queen Nozipho: “Sfiso, go stand next to your son and keep a good eye on Shaka.”

King Sfiso: “Yebo Ma.”

Shaka was nowhere to be seen which was the best sign anyone could ever ask for. He was drinking at the bar, and no one had noticed him. Little did they know that he was feeding the beast inside of him that would end the two day wedding in a serious disaster. Meanwhile, Noah finally got dressed in his suit and went up to meet his daughter. He knocked briefly on the door.

Neriah: “That must be your father. Come in.”

Noah walked in, and immediately stood still as he stared at Lehumo.

Neriah: “It’s daddy and daughter time. Wozani (Come).”

The ladies didn't dispute or hesitate to walk out. Once they closed the door, Noah held both Lehumo's hands.

Noah: "Mntwana wami (My child), you look so beautiful."

Lehumo: (smiling) "Thank you, daddy."

Noah: "You know, when you and your mother entered my life, I didn't even think that I'd ever be in love ever again. I had just finally given up and told myself that I'd die a bachelor. When you two came along and I saw you both, looking as dreadful as you did, God had spoken to me. Earlier that day, I had made a rather funny pledge to God; I said these exact words: "Dear God, I know I am old and I know that my time has probably passed. Please, bless me with a good wife, give me a sign today. You have two options – either show me the woman I am supposed to marry or show me that I am meant to be alone. I am giving you 24 hours, God. Forgive me if I sound disrespectful, but I just need clarity. Amen." You know, it was barely 6 hours later when I met the two of you. I found myself laughing alone when I sat in my bus waiting for you two at the hospital. I said to God, "you're a funny man, Lord." Indeed, he

works in mysterious ways. I wish for you to be just as blessed as your mother and I are. Gatsha is a great man and it gives me such honour to be giving you away to him today.”

Lehumo was about to cry, but Noah quickly stopped her.

Noah: “Hayi (No), Lehumo. How will you be ready for your wedding night with such puffy eyes?”

Lehumo: (embarrassed) “Papa (Dad)!”

Noah: (chuckling) “Umdala (you’re old) now, sisi (sis). I can’t pretend you’re 16 anymore. Come, let’s do the walk of honour.”

She smiled at him as they prepared themselves to walk down the aisle. Gatsha had decided to give his wife the most unforgettable wedding of all. He asked Ringo to perform for them, yes – the Ringo. As she stood with her father by her side, she heard him sing. She of course thought it was a cd, but little did she know. He started singing “Sondela Sthandwa”, and

everyone was in awe. Most people just wanted to see the “Pedi” wife and the lavish wedding. Rose petals were everywhere, and Gatsha looked so amazing in his own white suit. Standing next to his proud father, with Shaka nowhere in sight. She finally got to the altar, with immense tears in her eyes.

Noah: (smiling) “Gatsha, take good care of her.”

Gatsha: (smiling) “With honour, Baba (Father).”

They hugged instead of shaking hands and he gave Lehumo to her Gatsha. The pastor stood up and after everyone stopped ululating, he started speaking.

Pastor: “Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to witness a beautiful union between two young souls. Love is such a beautiful thing, even God formed us all with Love when he made us. He gave Jesus as His only begotten son out of Love. Now, why do a lot of people say that Love hurts? Let me tell you this, love does not hurt – people do. The world is not evil – people are. Whenever you meet a person, God has blessed us with what we call intuition, you know, that painful feeling in your gut you get when you feel like someone is not

being real about their feelings or intentions towards you. In life, we all have choices. We all get choices in life; we are the ones who choose to stay in love with those we fell in love with – even though we can see they aren't the ones for us. We choose to forgive even though they have wronged us plenty of times. All though God urges forgiveness, he does not urge stupidity. Yes, you need to forgive, but that does not mean you should stay at all times, right? Marriage is a beautiful union, that requires one to love, trust, be faithful with his or her partner until the end of the marriage. Without God as the foundation, the marriage will collapse. Gatsha, do not stop doing what you are doing now for Lehumo. Yes, you will both be busy with life, work and have children, but always make time for one another. No job can ever make your wife happy and no amount of sex can make a man happy. It is all about team work, for God said that "A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife" in Genesis 2:24. Yes, women were made form the man's rib, therefore, you need to be one at all times no matter what. Respect each other, even though the man is the head of the household, it does not mean that your wife should not advise you when you're wrong, Gatsha. I do hope that you remain faithful to one another, for the devil comes in many forms. It is not easy to remain faithful, but with God as your foundation, I can promise you, that you can overcome any evil. Not everyone you see around here who

have come to witness your union wants to see you happy, so be careful of the company you keep. May the good lord bless the new King and Queen of Zululand. Gatsha, I am sure you have been waiting for this moment, my king so I shall not take anymore of your time. Please, start saying your vows.”

Gatsha: (smiling) “”Lehumo, words can only mean something for a period of time, but I do hope that they stick. I have loved you from the moment I saw you. I cannot wait to prove to you that you are indeed worthy of being a queen not only to me, but to the people of Zululand as well. You are the epitome of beauty, flawless beauty. You possess an amazing kind of strength that I never thought I’d ever witness before. I vow to respect you, to love you and be faithful to you til the day I die.”

The crowd started ululating.

Pastor: “Lehumo, please say your vows.”

Lehumo: (teary) “Gatsha, I never thought that I’d ever be in love with a King at my age. You have given me my own Cinderella story. Words cannot explain my love for you. You

have shown me that true love exists and that good men still exist in this world. I vow to respect you, to, to honour you, love you and be faithful to you til eternity.”

The crowd ululated.

Pastor: “Should any of you feel the need to stop this marriage, speak now or forever hold your peace.”

That was the moment that Lehumo dreaded. She honestly felt like there would be drama at her own wedding. Right there and then, Shaka entered, drunk as a skunk.

Shaka: (shouting) “Yimi loyo (That’s me)!”

“A wise man changes his mind, a fool never will.” – Spanish Proverb

Shaka was stumbling across everything in his way, nearly falling over with everyone gasping in shock. Of course, Gatsha was beyond bewildered, with Lehumo upset, and King Sfiso, about to kill someone.

King Sfiso: (Angry) “Shaka!”

Shaka: (laughing) “Yes, that’s me, daddy! Or should I say, the man who raised me. Oh, no, the man who tried to raise me.”

Everyone was in total shock, while King Sfiso remained calm. Gatsha didn’t take what Shaka said to heart as he was drunk. Shaka might have been drunk, but King Sfiso’s reaction stunned him most.

Shaka: (shocked) “You knew?!”

He took one big step and nearly fell onto Lehumo, but Gatsha quickly blocked him from falling on top of her. Noah managed to catch him.

Noah: "I'll take him away. You finish up."

King Sfiso nodded and signalled to the Pastor that he should go on. Lehumo already had tears of sorrow dripping down her eyes, but Gatsha wiped them away.

Gatsha: (whispering) "It's our day today, MaNcube, don't let him ruin it."

She nodded.

Pastor: "As you can see, Bazalwane (congregation), that sentence must be removed from weddings."

A few of them laughed slightly, including Gatsha.

Pastor: “God does not want people who boast when it is your time to shine, those who will do anything in their power to ruin a good moment. Those are the weak, for they know that they cannot do anything to you, so they try and take away your moment. Let us remember why we are all here, bazalwane (congregation). By the power vested in me, I now pronounce you Mr. and Mrs. Ncube, King and Queen of Zululand!”

The crowd ululated, while Gatsha prepared himself to kiss his darling wife. Lehumo was a bit worried that he would give her a deep French kiss, instead of a brief one. She had never kissed anyone before her parents.

Pastor: “You may now kiss your bride, King Gatsha.”

As the crowd ululated, Gatsha wasted no time further as he gently grabbed Lehumo and kissed her so passionately, that people didn't even worry. They kept clapping hands and ululating, while Queen Nozipho had to stand and start praising the two as per tradition.

Queen Nozipho: (clan names) “Mzilankatha, Nhlansi, Gabadeli, Onkatha kayingen’endlini, yangena kubol’izinkaba zabantwana, Zibizendlela, Mlotshwa, Khambule, Mpangazitha, Nina bakwaNkomo zilal’uwaca, ezamadojeyana zilal’amankengana, Nina bakwaMzila kawulandelwa, ukuwalandela – ukuzibambezele, Won’ulandelwa izinkonjane, Nin’enalanel’ilanga laze layoshona kunina, Mpangazitha.”

The crowd rejoiced even more, as Gatsha felt so proud to be standing next to his new wife. Although Lehumo was overwhelmed, she was happy. They both got hugs from their families, and then had to sit in their royal chairs as everyone greeted them and congratulated them. Imagine that, a whole community had to congratulate them – that’s probably over 300 people. They sat there and braved it out. Within an hour and a half, they were all done and it was time to proceed to the reception area. It was the wedding of the century, of course, since everyone was expecting it. Booze was flooding, and so was the food. Shaka had been behaving weirdly that day, but everyone did their own business.

Even though they heard him very well, no one had the guts to confront the king or ask him about what Shaka said. While Queen Kuli was drowning her sorrows alongside her evil

mother, far away from the kingdom, everyone was enjoying themselves at the new King and Queen's wedding. The King had let Lehumo and Gatsha sign their official pledge as the new king and queen, while having a b last. Meanwhile, Queen Kuli's blood pressure had risen immensely, and she felt like she was about to die. She was pacing up and down at her mother's Kingdom.

Queen Nomtha: (annoyed) "Yoh, hayi (No, man). Yekela ukuyenza iUp and down kanje (stop walking up and down like this). Ungiyenza dizzy (you're making me dizzy)."

Queen Kuli: (fuming) "How can I not, Ma?! My life is over!"

Queen Nomtha: "I told you a long time ago that you just need to agree to go see Mkhulu, but you refused."

Queen Kuli: "You know I don't like witchcraft, Ma. I am not a witch."

Queen Nomtha: (lauging) "I birthed you. What do you think you are – a saint? With a heart as evil as yours you might as well be a witch."

Queen Kuli: "I don't practise witchcraft, Ma. I'll never do such."

Queen Nomtha: "Well, you and your late father in law nearly killed Khensani. Had you actually gone my route she wouldn't be back."

Queen Kuli felt a sudden pain hit her right in the pit of her stomach."

Queen Kuli: (shocked) "Utheni (What did you just say)?"

Queen Nomtha: "Ungizwe kahle nje (You heard me well)."

Queen Kuli: "When?"

Queen Nomtha: "Yesterday, last night to be exact. Where do you think your husband spent the night?"

Queen Kuli felt like her mom was telling her the impossible, but everything was making sense. She couldn't believe that all her efforts all those many years ago had gone to waste. She wasn't going to take it lightly. There was no way. Kuli had no idea that she had tempted fate too many times, and that her time was almost running out. She forgot that God always hits you where it hurts the most whenever you just don't listen to him – your children. When he wants you to come back to him, he will hurt you by either hurting your children or taking them away from you one by one. Just as Job's faith was tested in the Bible when God took everything from him, he can do the same to an unruly soul.

Queen Kuli: (saddened) "That's not possible. She was scared... terrified... even years later when I met her in Jo'burg she swore that she would never come back."

Queen Nomtha: "You of all people should know that people never keep their end of the bargain. But anyway, let me keep quiet."

Deep down Queen Kuli wanted to join her mother's evil cult so badly, but the little bit of conscience she had made it

impossible for her to join. Little did she know that by the end of that weekend, she would become a part of a whole group of sorcerers. Back at the Royal Palace, everyone was enjoying themselves. The party continued for the rest of the people, but King Sfiso couldn't wait to be alone with his Khensani, so he decided to leave and go to her house. They went unnoticed because everyone was half drunk at the time. It was about 10pm and Lehumo was just too nervous. Gatsha didn't want to rush her at all, but he felt the moment had arrived.

Gatsha: (whispering) "Mkami (My wife), ashimabe siyolala (let's retreat to our bedroom). We have such a long day ahead of us."

Lehumo: (nervously) "Oh... okay."

Gatsha gently walked alongside his wife and as they walked towards his bedroom

he made her stop before they entered. She was so nervous, it was even visible in her eyes. She was trembling so much, that not even the few glasses of wine she had had made it any easier for her.

Gatsha: (holding her hands) “Ntombenhle (Beautiful), I love you, and I’d never force you to do anything. When you are this nervous, I become uncomfortable. Please, relax. Can you trust me?”

Lehumo nodded nervously as Gatsha opened the door with his dimpled smile. Lehumo was in awe to find that there were rose petals everywhere; on the floor and on the bed and on the way to the bathroom. There were scented candles almost everywhere and the room smelled like Lavender. That was one of the triggers Lehumo had even after she had run away from the Kingdom. Whenever she smelled Lavender, she would feel so much hurt and pain as it reminded her of her love. Lehumo’s nervousness disappeared slowly.

Lehumo: (softly) “Gatsha, what’s all this?”

Gatsha: “I am spoiling my wife after a long day of celebrations. Come.”

Gatsha closed the door and unwittingly forgot to lock. He had never felt unsafe in his own house, so he hardly locked the door whenever he slept. He gently pulled his wife to the bathroom and surprisingly the bathtub had been filled already, while the whole bathroom had smelled of lavender. There was a bucket filled with some ice and champagne, a bowl of strawberries and cream and some biltong – Lehumo’s favourite snack. She felt so much at ease as she noticed how attentive her husband was.

Lehumo: (smiling) “Gatsha, when did you have time to do all this?”

Gatsha: (smiling) “You owe your friend big time.”

She chuckled to herself as she thought of just how clever Bee was. Gatsha slowly unzipped her wedding dress, and her beautiful, caramel skin was exposed as the dress dropped onto the floor. Music was playing, loud enough for them to hear it in the bathroom. He slowly took off her bra, and then her panties, while her back was facing him. She was a bit nervous, as she had never been seen naked by a man before. Gatsha slowly turned her around, as he gently caressed

her arms all the way from her shoulders. She looked down in embarrassment.

Gatsha: “Look at me, Sthandwa sami (My love).”

Lehumo looked up since Gatsha was quite tall.

Gatsha: “Don’t be embarrassed. This is us. You’re so beautiful, Ntombenhle (Beautiful).”

She gulped nervously as he instructed her to remove his clothing.

Gatsha: “I want you to see me – all of me. Please, undress me, Ndhlovukazi (Queen).”

Lehumo did so slowly and nervously and Gatsha didn’t take his eyes off her, not even once. She stared at his bare, built up chest and was shocked to see such a magnificent beaut of a man standing before her. His clothes were finally off and she saw his manhood poking, causing her to gulp even further. She had never seen a penis before, let alone such a big one.

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Let's get into the water, Mkami (My wife)."

She slowly got into the water, as he got in behind her. She rested her head onto his chest and actually heard their hearts beat together, as one. He poured them some champagne, and he made a toast.

Gatsha: "To us, MaNcube (Mrs. Ncube). May our lives be filled with nothing but joy, peace and Godly love."

Lehumo: (smiling) "Cheers."

They took a few sips, as he kept feeding her some biltong and strawberries. He would occasionally rub her perfectly round breasts, and caress her shoulders, arms and tights, while planting gentle kisses on her neck and back. She felt so many electrifying feelings, they were even more intense than his normal touches and hugs. They finally got out of the water and she felt much better a few sips of alcohol and that soothing bath. He lay her on the bed, facing down, and got on top of her. He allowed her to relax as he gave her a gentle massage

while sitting naked on top of her. It was rather awkward as she felt his penis poke her bums, but she tried ignoring it.

The more she ignored it, the more she felt herself get wet down there. His magical touch sent signals down to her nipples, she felt them erect and twitch. He went down to her bums, and started sensually rubbing her bums. He felt her moan out of pleasure, and turned her around. He looked her deep in the eyes and gave her a passionate kiss. She responded gladly, and so did her body. She found herself moaning in his mouth, with their tongues playing hide and seek with one another. The warm breath he would blow onto her neck and into her ear, made her crave for more. Gatsha's tantalizing lips went from her neck to her beautiful breasts. He sucked her nipples in so much excitement and passion, her body betrayed her by moving and shaking to the same rhythm as the way he was sucking her. He felt his whole body become warm, but he wanted that night to be so special for her. He slowly went down to her vagina, and she tried closing her legs, but he spread them apart and started gently licking her clit. Lehumo felt herself going crazy. She had never thought that she would feel so much pleasure down there.

Lehumo: (moaning) "Gatsha...."

Gatsha: (breathing heavily) “Shit... I love the way you call me, baby wami (my baby).”

His mouth went down to her entrance and started sucking her, he would occasionally dip his tongue in there. Lehumo’s hands travelled all the way to his head and held his head firmly and pushed it deeper towards her pussy.

Lehumo: (moaning) “Oh... Gatsha....”

He could feel she was near. Her breathing and moaning became louder and faster. After a few seconds he felt her hold his head tighter, pulling his hair as she gushed onto his face.

Lehumo: “Aahh, wow!”

She felt a bit embarrassed when she saw his wet face, but he gently wiped himself off without making her feel bad. She was about to apologize, but he was so aroused. He went up to her and kissed her passionately again. He dipped his finger into her

pussy, making her moan yet again. He finally positioned himself inbetween her thighs. He pulled out of the kiss and looked at her.

Gatsha: "Are you sure you want to do this, Sthandwa sami (My love)."

By then Lehumo was so erect, she just wanted to feel him in her.

Lehumo: (nodding hastily) "Yes..."

Gatsha: "It's going to hurt, but whenever you want me to stop, let me know, okay?"

Lehumo nodded and he began kissing her as he slowly pushed himself into her. She felt him poking into her, it felt rather odd and weird, unusual rather. It felt moist down there, but painful. Gatsha felt her tightness, and began moaning in pleasure while breathing heavily. Not once did he keep his eyes

off her. He finally managed to push his whole penis into her vagina, and she let out a loud moan.

Lehumo: (moaning) “Aaah!”

Gatsha: “Sthandwa sami (My love), should I stop?”

She felt it was rather useless to stop as they had to do it rather often. Bee did tell her that it was going to be painful the first two times or so, but afterwards it would be magic.

Lehumo: (shaking head) “No...”

Gatsha kissed her gently as he kept going. Lehumo felt the pain everyone was talking about. All other areas of her body was in so much pleasure – except her vagina. Even while he kept rubbing her clit while he was on top of her, it just didn’t take the pain away.

Gatsha: (moaning) “Aaah, fuck! Lehumo, I love you so much, Ndhlovukazi (my queen).”

Gatsha felt himself collapse on his loving Lehumo and let out a loud groan. Lehumo felt her vagina was on so much fire. Gatsha kissed her, gently.

Gatsha: "Wait here, I'm coming."

She nodded, not knowing what to do and immersed herself in the physical pain of sex. She heard Gatsha tap water into the bath tub again and he came out naked from the bathroom and carried her to the bath tub. She felt her vagina become instantly soothed by the warm water and bathe salts. She had always prayed for a man like her father and finally, she was blessed beyond measure. Just like that, she had finally lost her virginity to the man she gave her heart to. Right there and then, she was reminded of the verse from Ephesians 5:25 – "For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her."

“True life is lived when tiny changes occur.” – Leo Tolstoy

Lehumo felt a bit better after her bath with Gatsha. They got into bed as she slowly drifted away in his arms. It was truly a beautiful night. Lehumo was a bit of a deep sleeper, but Gatsha was a very light sleeper. He could hear almost every sound made at night while asleep. One would swear he was a warrior or soldier. He heard the door open and he immediately took out his gun from his drawer. He heard the footsteps get closer and he cocked his gun right there in the darkness, unafraid.

Gatsha: “Ungubani wena (Who are you)? Unbesbindi (You have such nerve).”

Shaka: (laughing) “Uzongenzani? Uzongidubula? (What are you going to do – shoot me)?”

Gatsha felt so annoyed, yet he didn't want to wake Lehumo and ruin their perfect evening. He took his chances by arguing with him in the dark.

Gatsha: “Ufunani (What do you want, Shaka)?”

Shaka: “Relax, man. I just came to see if you did get it on tonight. After all, you’re living my dream.”

Gatsha: “Uyabona ke amasimba wakho azonginyanyisa (Your bullshit is going to annoy me beyond). Is it my fault you never got to be king?”

Shaka: “Yes it is. I mean, uMa should have aborted you when she had the chance.”

That was the bargaining chip for Shaka – his last card on the table. He was hoping to piss Gatsha off and make him stoop to his level, but Gatsha knew that he had the mind of a narcissist.

Gatsha: “I’m giving you five minutes to get the fuck out of my bedroom or else I’ll shoot your fucking balls off.”

Shaka: (chuckling) “As if you ever could do such in the dark.”

Gatsha: “One.”

Shaka: (chuckling) “This is going to be fun.”

Gatsha: “Two.”

Shaka: “Patiently waiting on five – “

Gatsha didn't even count to five nor did he even count to three. He placed a big pillow over Lehumo's head so that she couldn't hear a thing, and pulled the trigger instantly. Of course, it made noise, a lot of it, but not as much as it was going to.

Shaka: (screaming) “Aaaah! Fuck! You shot me, njandini (you dog)!”

Lehumo slightly woke up and tried to switch off the light, but Gatsha told her not to.

Lehumo: "Gatsha, what's happening? I heard a noise."

Shaka: (shouting) Aaaah!"

Gatsha: (calmly) "Mkami (My wife), please, don't switch on the light. I don't want this drunken fool to see you naked. Please."

Lehumo: "Okay."

She was so tired, but she trusted him and managed to fall asleep again, while he dragged Shaka out of his bedroom. Once he got outside his room, he noticed he had shot Shaka in the thigh. No one was there to assist, as everyone had passed out by then.

Gatsha: (Angry) "You dare walk into my bedroom while I'm sleeping with my wife and you thought that I'd let you

go?! Uzonya (You'll shit yourself), Shaka. Uzobona (You'll see)."

King Sfiso heard Shaka shouting as he ran out of his bedroom in his robe. He had left Khensani in his bedroom, soon after they had come back from her house. He saw the blood oozing from Shaka's thigh and got annoyed immediately. He knew that Gatsha was not a violent man, so Shaka must have done something to provoke him.

King Sfiso: (annoyed) "Shaka, yini kodwa (what is it)? Don't you get tired of being the black sheep?"

Shaka: (shouting) "What's the point, Baba (father)?! I was born the black sheep. You should have just let my father raise me!"

It was the second time that Shaka had spoken of not being Sfiso's blood child, so it must have been true.

Gatsha: (shocked) "What is he saying, Baba (father)?"

King Sfiso: “We’ll talk later. Let me get one of the guards to take him to hospital. Go be with your wife.”

Gatsha nodded and turned to his bedroom, while Shaka was screaming and shouting down the stairs.

Shaka: (shouting) “Why ungangibulalanga (didn’t you kill me)?! Ngifisa ungathi nginga no fa (I wish I could just die)!”

Shaka was too drunk to remember what God had said in the Bible about power of the tongue. Proverbs 18:21 – “The tongue has the power of life and death.” In that case, Shaka chose death over life. He was whisked away by his annoyed father and taken to hospital. The following morning, Lehumo felt a bit better, even though the pain was still there. She was woken with breakfast in bed by her dear husband. Unfortunately, they couldn’t sit and relax, they had to get up and prepare themselves for their traditional wedding that day.

Lehumo: “Gatsha

was it Shaka in our bedroom last night?”

Gatsha: “Yes, that idiot was so drunk, he shot himself in the leg. Can you believe it?”

Lehumo: (shocked) “What?”

Gatsha knew it was wrong to lie to his wife, but he didn’t want their first night to be tainted by him shooting his narcissistic brother in the leg.

Gatsha: “I know, but don’t worry, he will be okay. He’ll live.”

Gatsha had woken up extra early to get the blood cleaned up. They prepared for the traditional wedding and everything went smoothly that day, all was well until Shaka found himself walking right back to the royal grounds, with a bottle of whiskey in his hand, a bandage around his thigh, and a knife in his other hand – a machete to speak of. While Lehumo was dancing with her darling husband, with the people of Zululand wishing them well just after sunset, Shaka decided to ruin the perfect weekend.

Shaka: “Ja! Yimani (Wait)! Cut the music, cut!”

Everyone was shocked once again, with the King just fed up over his son’s rude behaviour.

King Sfiso: “That’s enough now, Shaka. You have made your point. I think it is time for you to go to sleep.”

Shaka: (laughing) “You see? You see how you always managed to dismiss me?! You never loved me, wena (you). I should have done this a long time ago.”

Gatsha was a very sharp and quick thinker. He knew his brother was a coward, but he was good at using knives and spears. As Shaka reached for his Machete, he threw it aiming right at King Sfiso, but Gatsha jumped right in front of his father, making sure that it stabs him right in the arm, and he impulsively shot Shaka right in the chest. It happened so fast, that Lehumo was the first to faint out of shock, while the rest of the guests were screaming in shock. Gatsha was bleeding, with a machete stuck right in his arm, a gun out, his brother fell

down instantly and he managed to catch Lehumo as she was about to fall onto the ground.

Just like that, Gatsha took a life and saved another. It would have ended in a rather bloodier affair had King Sfiso been hit by that machete. He would have never survived and it would have hit him right in his chest. Just like that, Shaka managed to at least ruin his brother's wedding, and cause a serious feud between Queen Kuli and her new daughter in law. Queen Kuli was sitting on the balcony of her mother's house and had been in a foul mood ever since she woke up that day. She felt as if something was not right within her soul and felt even worse when she couldn't get hold of Shaka. As she sat there, wondering what Sfiso was doing to Khensani, she saw Queen Nomtha rush towards her.

Queen Nomtha: "Mntwanami (My child), iphone (someone's on the phone)."

She handed her the phone and Queen Kuli felt it in her gut that something was just not right.

Queen Kuli: "Hee... Hello?"

Messenger: "My queen, I have been asked to inform you of your son's death."

Queen Kuli: (nervously) "Which one?"

Messenger: "Shaka."

She immediately dropped the phone onto the floor and let out a loud wail, a wail as if she was a lion, mourning the loss of her cub.

Queen Kuli: (shouting)
"Weeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeh! Yoooooooooooooooooh!"

After one loud and long sob, she wiped her tears as she got up from the ground.

Queen Kuli: "I'm ready. Call Mkhulu and tell him I'll meet him tonight."

“Once you show someone your true colours it is impossible to paint over them.” – Matshona Dhliwayo

That weekend ended in a very terrible, bloody way. But in Matthew 5:38-42, Jesus repudiates that “You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, that you should not resist evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.” For Shaka, turning the other cheek was not something he was prepared to do at that present moment. His beautiful wedding; one he had envisaged ever since he had met Lehumo had been tainted by his envious brother. All he wanted was for his wife to have a wonderful welcome into her new home. For Shaka kept thinking of the verse from Matthew 26:52 – “Then Jesus said to him, Put up again your sword into his place: for all those that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” Shaka lived a life full of hatred, jealousy and greed. Of course one couldn’t blame him fully since he had been influenced by his mother ever since birth. And just like that, the wedding weekend had ended on a sour note, while Shaka’s lifeless body had been taken away and straight to the royal mortuary and Gatsha had taken Lehumo straight to their bedroom after she had fainted. Of course, it filled Gatsha’s

heart with much more dismay and anger that he was taken straight to the family mortuary instead of the government mortuary. He left her there to be attended to by Bree and Neriah and Bonggi while he went to speak to his father. He didn't even mind that Khensani was in the house – in his father's bedroom.

Gatsha: "Baba (Father), may I have a word with you please?"

King Sfiso: "Yes. What is it?"

Gatsha: "Really, Baba (Father)? The royal mortuary? Why?"

King Sfiso: (sigh) "I have many regrets in my life, Gatsha, and one of those is that I never took it upon myself to show Shaka the love he had been craving from me – even though I had known for a while that he was not my son. It pains me that he felt the only resolution was to kill me and when that didn't work out, he died like a nobody, a criminal right on his birth ground. Yes, he was not my son and yes, he was not kind hearted and sane like you, but surely I could do him justice by

burying him with some form of respect, son. I hope you understand.”

Gatsha: (nodding) “I hear you, but that still does not change the fact that he ruined my wedding.”

King Sfiso: “I honestly don’t like dwelling on the negative things, son. Most importantly, you saved my life. You are the reason why I am alive today, and for that I have to thank you properly. I am selling all my land, all my shares and stock to you. Actually, I am giving them all to you – for free.”

Gatsha: (shocked) “Baba (Father)...”

King Sfiso: “Yes, Gatsha. You deserve that much. You have proven your love and loyalty to me and these people way more than once. This is my gift to you.”

Gatsha: “What about you, Baba (Father)? How will you survive?”

King Sfiso: (chuckling) “Did you honestly think that I’ve lived this long without savings and investments? Besides, my heart is with Khensi now and it is high time that I choose me right now. I am going to travel the world with my love. I don’t know when I will be back.”

Gatsha: “Father, what will I do without you?”

King Sfiso: “You were born a King, Gatsha, besides, Noah is here to guide you. He is the most sane person around here.”

Gatsha: (teary) “Thank you for finding me worthy to run this kingdom, Baba (Father).”

King Sfiso: “Technically, you are the rightful and sole heir of this kingdom. I wish you well on your new endeavours and I want you to build a solid legacy for your children.”

Gatsha: (nodding) “When are you leaving?”

King Sfiso: “Tonight. I can’t bury Shaka, so I trust that you’ll take over from here.”

Gatsha: “I’ll do my best, Baba (Father).”

King Sfiso and Gatsha hugged one another as if it was the last time. It actually felt as if King Sfiso was saying goodbye to his son. It was actually the longest hug he had shared with Gatsha. Before he even left for his flight with his Khensani, he had begged Gatsha to sign the papers he had drawn for change of ownership of the shares and all his properties. Gatsha just took it as a sign of his father’s immense gratitude, but unfortunately, the angel of death had visited him a few days before. Meanwhile, Queen Kuli had just about had enough of being sidelined by her own family. She felt that everyone – including Sfiso had owed her a decent life. Then, she didn’t have her allowance anymore and most women from other kingdoms had already began talking about her. She cried once for Shaka and never again. Crying was always a sign of weakness for her hence she made sure Shaka turned out to be a stone rather than a stick. She and her mother made their way to Mkhulu, the King of the dark forces. She made sure that they wore black at all times. It is rather funny how it only took Shaka’s death for Kuli to turn to the dark forces. Shaka was her

son, but she loved him for two reasons; the first was because he was the son of the love of her life and the second reason was that he was her spitting image – in more ways than one. He had the heart of stone, but even stone can be destroyed once hit at the right spot. Shaka’s weakness was Sfiso’s love for Gatsha, it hurt him because he expected to be put on a pedestal just as his mother had done to him all his life. Sadly, he had met his untimely death all because of his mother.

Queen Nomtha: “Are you ready?”

Queen Kuli: “Yes, can we get this over and done with already?”

Queen Nomtha: “Someone’s eager.”

Kuli ignored her mother and walked straight ahead. She had one mission and only one in mind – to make everyone start respecting her and make them pay for treating her like trash. She was under the impression that Shaka was killed because of Lehumo and that she was the reason for all this chaos in her family. They finally made it to Mkhulu’s hut.

Queen Nomtha: “Mkhulu.”

Mkhulu: “Ngikutshele kangaki Nomthandazo ukuthi ungaleti abantu ngingabazi (How many times must I tell you not to bring strangers to my house, Nomthandazo)?”

Queen Nomtha: “Ngiyaxolisa (Sorry), Mkhulu, kodwa (but), she is no stranger.”

Kuli was running out of patience. She had lacked respect for every living thing just like her mother. She was surprised how her mother could bow down to a person called Mkhulu even.

Queen Kuli: “I’m her daughter – I’m no stranger. From my understanding you have been dying to be acquainted with me. Now, are you going to let us in or not? I don’t have all night.”

Mkhulu was impressed with Kuli's fire as he sensed her desperation, but he was concerned by her nasty attitude. A desperate person can do just about anything.

Mkhulu: (chuckling) "Okay, ngenani (come in). Shoes off first."

Kuli took off her shoes before Queen Nomtha and they walked in. Kuli looked around and was unimpressed by the skulls hanging around the walls along with the snake skin and a few body parts that were in some jars, some of them looked like they were filled with blood even. There were some snake skin

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and when she appeared before the so called Mkhulu, she nearly laughed, until she saw a huge python around his neck. He looked like meek prey, as small and short and dark as he was, but he was a rather evil man. He was not the most evil of course, and needed blood – pure blood to go up his rank. Kuli was just an accessory, but if she could hand him who he needed, then he'd be the most powerful sorcerer in Zululand, and possibly the country.

Mkhulu: (smiling) "Greetings, my Queen. To what do I owe the pleasure?"

Queen Kuli: (disgusted) "Are we seriously going to meet in this dump all evening? I mean look at this place."

Mkhulu was so offended, but he had to play it cool. He needed Kuli.

Mkhulu: (chuckling) "Hao, this is my hut, Ntombi (Girl). Unless you have another plan in mind. Can you summon evil spirits?"

Kuli kept quiet and looked at the snake.

Mkhulu: "Exactly. Nomthandanzo, why is she here?"

Queen Nomtha: "She is ready, my lord. She is ready to join us."

Mkhulu: “You do know that in order to join she has to spill some blood, but I can see she is desperate. Her heart is evil enough and I am sure I can make an exception.”

Kuli didn't even start freaking out thinking of whose blood her mother had spilled in order to join the cult.

Queen Nomtha: “Understood, my lord.”

Mkhulu: “Kuli, you do know that there is no turning back from here. Once you are in, the only way out is death or a huge human sacrifice. Agreed?”

Kuli never even bothered to think of the consequences.

Queen Kuli: “Agreed.”

Mkhulu: (smiling) “Well, then. Let's proceed.”

Mkhulu got up from his chair with the snake still around his neck and proceeded to the wall right behind him.

Mkhulu: “Nomthandazo, you know what to do.”

Queen Nomtha nodded, and Kuli got the shock of her life when she saw Mkhulu walk right through the wall and disappear.

Queen Kuli: (shocked) “How? Where?”

Queen Nomtha: “If you want to survive here, you don’t ask questions. Before you know it, you’ll also gain power to walk through a mere keyhole. Now move it.”

Queen Nomtha walked through first, leaving the frantic Kuli. Then, she recalled that her Shaka was gone – the pawn to her game had been ‘killed’ according to her. So, she didn’t really have much of a choice but to join the cult. Before she knew it, she had walked through the wall unharmed. She got the shock of her life when she found herself surrounded by women who had the lower body of snakes. Even her mother’s

legs had turned into a snake. She looked around and saw a few familiar faces, but one that shocked her the most was that of Queen Abigail – who was the queen of Xhosa land. She had promised her that Shaka would marry her son when he became king, but that never happened. They remained good friends, though.

Queen Kuli: (shocked) “Abigail. Ufunani la (What are you doing here)?”

Queen Abigail: (chuckling) “The same thing you are doing here.”

And by that, Kuli had formed an unwanted alliance with Abigail. She knew how badly Abigail wanted to strengthen her kingdom by getting her daughter married to Shaka, and now that Gatsha was married and was king, he would have to be married to her son in order for her kingdom to rise to its full potential.

Mkhulu: “We welcome you, Queen Kuli, queen of Zululand.”

She looked before here and was shocked to hear Mkhulu's voice, but he was then in the form of the very same python he had around his neck. Such things usually scared Kuli, but amazingly, she remained calm throughout.

Mkhulu: "As you can see, members. Queen Kuli has officially joined us. Should we welcome her?"

Queen Abigail decided to be a bit nasty and raised her hand.

Mkhulu: "Yes, Queen Abigail?"

Queen Abigail: "Just a quick question, Mkhulu. Did she sacrifice anyone?"

Mkhulu: (annoyed) "How is that any of your business?"

Queen Abigail: "I was just asking-"

Mkhulu: “Know your place, Abigail. I can have you thrown out of here in a heartbeat.”

Right there and then, Kuli realized she had so much power in her even before agreeing to that whole cult.

Queen Kuli: “I am glad to be one of you, Mkhulu. You won’t be disappointed.”

Mkhulu: “Shall we say our cult praises?”

Everyone: “I am me, but in here we see, a different me. I pledge to be a part of the cult, no matter what, I shall remain one of you. I pledge my life and full resources to you, Mkhulu – in exchange for anything I want in life.”

Kuli was really not sure what that pledge meant, however she agreed.

Mkhulu: “Kuli, do you agree?”

Queen Kuli: “Yes, Mkhulu.”

She felt as if she was in a bit of a daze and before she knew it her own legs turned into that of a snake.

Mkhulu: “We now welcome you, Queen Kuli. We host parties for new members, especially those as elite as you. So, come within three days since you’d be burying your son, Shaka.”

Queen Kuli: (surprised) “Is that all?”

Mkhulu: “I’ll give you things to bathe in. Remember your power will be in effect within three days. It is important to stay focused within that period – otherwise you will start over.”

Queen Kuli: “Sounds easy enough.”

Little did Kuli know that with evil, comes a big price.

Mkhulu: “We are not done. In order to be a full member of this cult, you will have to sleep with a man. Not just any man - a man that is pure.”

Where on earth would she find a man of a pure heart that would be willing to sleep with her?

Mkhulu: “Unfortunately we also choose the man you’ll have to sleep with and we choose Noah Mkhabela.”

How the fuck was she going to get that right, she thought to herself.

“There is no doubt that there is evil in this world, but the light will always conquer the darkness.” – Idowu Koyenikan

Queen Kuli had slowly turned into someone she didn't recognize at all, but that still didn't bother her much. Mkhulu gave her muthi to use on Noah. She was very clueless, so obviously she would fail. She was given three days to complete her mission, if all else failed she would have to spill blood. She felt less guilty as the hours went by. It was the following morning, and preparations for Shaka's funeral had begun. Queen Kuli alongside her mother, tried to make their way to the Royal Palace, but were denied access right before they could even drive through the gate.

Queen Kuli: (annoyed) “Lalela la wena (Listen here), Bongani. I am still you Queen and you will do as I say. Let me in.”

Bongani: “I'm afraid I can't do that, Ndhlovukazi (Queen). I am just following strict orders.”

Queen Kuli: (angered) “Oho, so now that Pedi bitch is the ruling queen here, she has decided to keep me out of my own palace?!”

Bongani: “Actually, it is instructions from the King.”

That fuelled Queen Kuli’s anger even more.

Queen Kuli: (fuming) “How dare he decide to kick me out of my own house?!”

Queen Nomtha: “Kuli, yazi wena awufundi (You never learn, you know).”

Queen Kuli: “Ma, can’t you see what they are doing to me?!”

Queen Nomtha: “Have you forgotten about the powers you have? Don’t be an idiot now.”

Kuli stood there and thought about what her mother had just told her.

Queen Kuli: “What should I do now if I want him to listen to me?”

Queen Nomtha: (chuckling) “Summon your evil spirits and command him to listen to you as you were taught last night. Yekela ukuba ibhari (stop being an idiot).”

Queen Kuli: (whispering) “I summon you dark spirits; make this man listen to me. I demand to be respected.”

She looked at Bongani who looked a bit confused. He frowned and rubbed his head for a little bit.

Queen Kuli: “Bongani, are you going to let me in now?”

Bongani: (smiling) “Of course, Ndhlovukazi (Queen).”

Queen Kuli smiled as she stared at her mother who was smiling back with so much pride. Bongani opened the gate for them as Kuli drove in. She parked and got really annoyed seeing how many people there were. She got out of the car in so much haste and stormed into the house without knocking. Gatsha saw her and immediately became angered.

Queen Kuli: “Sawubona (Hello), Gatsha. Unjani (How are you)?”

Gatsha: (calmly) “Ma, ufunani la (what are you doing here)?”

Queen Kuli: (frowning) “What do you mean? I live here, don’t I?”

Gatsha: (annoyed) “uBaba (Dad) said he does not want you here, especially when you are with her.”

He pointed at Queen Nomtha, who got really annoyed. Kuli decided to do what she was taught to do, but seemingly it backfired.

Queen Kuli: (whispering) “I summon you dark forces and I demand that my son listens to me.”

He stared at Gatsha carefully, but nothing happened. He was not even moved by her little spell, leaving her even more annoyed and frustrated.

Queen Kuli: (fuming) “How dare you decide to keep me away from my son’s funeral?! Where is your father when he is calling all the shots without his presence?!”

Gatsha: “He is somewhere he was supposed to be years ago.”

That really hit Kuli hard as she knew what Gatsha actually meant. It only dawned on her right there and then that he was with a woman she had tried to keep away from him all those years.

Queen Kuli: (teary) “Gatsha, Shaka was my son. It is bad enough you killed him, but at least let me help bury him.”

Gatsha: (annoyed) “It is such comments that make me dislike being your son, Ma. I call the shots now, I am the king of this place and I say to you – it is time for you to leave. I can’t deal with so much drama – it is bad enough my wife and I’s big day was messed up. So, I won’t ask you again. Leave.”

Queen Kuli looked at him and became instantly saddened. She let out a tear, but was not easily moved. Lehumo walked up to Gatsha and stood alongside him. Queen Kuli was immediately overwhelmed with dizziness, as she could finally sense Lehumo’s Godly spirit. She had always known that Lehumo was a prayer warrior, but what she was experiencing was something she had never gone through before. As Lehumo stepped forward, Kuli found herself feeling hot, almost as if her whole body was burning. As her whole body felt like she was literally on fire, she felt herself become sweaty. Her mother saw it and immediately decided to do damage control.

Queen Nomtha: (pulling Kuli) “We’ll come back when you have calmed down, son. I really don’t like this animosity between us.”

Gatsha: “Like I said, you’re not welcome. Leave now.”

Queen Nomtha: "As you wish."

She left immediately, pulling Kuli away who seemed like she was in a bit of a daze. As they walked out, they were met Bongi.

Bongi: (annoyed) "Hmm, Ja (Yes), Kuli. You finally decided to sell your soul to the devil. I'm onto you."

Queen Nomtha: (clicking tongue) "Mxm, suka wena (whatever)."

They rushed out and only once they approached the car, did Kuli start feeling a bit better.

Queen Kuli: (anxious) "What the fuck was that?!"

Queen Nomtha: "That was just how powerful Lehumo is. You have joined forces with evil now; so anyone against it and who

prays more than anything will make you feel like your whole body is on fire.”

Queen Kuli: “But you didn’t feel it?”

Queen Nomtha: “I did, but it was not as intense as your feeling. Hence you have to spill some blood.”

Queen Kuli: (frowning) “But Mkhulu said that I’d have to sleep with Noah.”

Queen Nomtha: “You can try that, but do you see that happening any time soon?”

Queen Kuli: “Well, no, but – “

Queen Nomtha: “There is only one way to find out. Your time is running out, Kuli. Sheshisa (Hurry up).”

They got into the car as Kuli kept staring at her house. She wondered what would become of her if she kept going on with her mother and Mkhulu's idea of life. Meanwhile, Bonggi decided to warn Gatsha and Lehumo about his mother, while Kuli and her mother had plans of her own.

Bonggi: "And then? How did she walk in here?"

Gatsha: (frustrated) "I have no idea. Clearly the guards have started to disrespect me."

Bonggi: (shaking head) "It's not the guard's fault. Lehumo, did you feel anything while Kuli was standing before you?"

Lehumo: "Not really, Ma. I just felt an overwhelmingly heavy feeling. Almost like some sort of darkness I cannot really explain it."

Bonggi: "What about you, Gatsha?"

Gatsha: “I was not really paying attention as I was angered, but she does not look like the Kuli I know.”

Bongi: “Good. I am glad since it will make my job a lot easier. Well, there is no other way to say this

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but please be careful of your mother. She and her mother are just not right. I haven’t been able to sleep ever since Shaka died. There is darkness looming and your mother will cause a lot of chaos for you two.”

Lehumo: (worried) “What do you mean, Ma?”

Bongi: “I have been dreaming of bad things ever since the funeral. I keep dreaming of a wedding – four people getting married to one another, but I cannot see their faces. All I keep getting is an indication that it is indeed a funeral and all four of those people are all related to us.”

While Gatsha and Lehumo were trying to process it all, Raesibe decided to speak up.

Raesibe: (shocked) “Aowa hle (No man). Ke ditaba tje di mpe tjeo (That’s awful news). You can fix it, can’t you Bongi?”

Bongi: (shaking head) “I’m afraid I can’t do anything about it. By the look of things these people will all be saving someone or some people. It does not make sense, but I have been praying and fasting. Hence I have come with some sea salt and candles for you. I’d like to cleanse the house if that’s okay?”

Gatsha: (nodding) “That’s okay, Ma. No offence, but I’d like to consult with the family healer too?”

Bongi: (nodding) “By all means, my child. Do what you can.”

Lehumo stood there deep in thought and actually wondered what Bongi’s premonition actually meant. That was not right and she couldn’t help but feel as if she was the cause of all their problems. Gatsha took her away to their bedroom as he could sense her stressful mood.

Gatsha: “Mkami (My wife), uright (are you okay)?”

Lehumo: (shaking head) “No, Gatsha. I can’t help but feel responsible for all the chaos that has erupted in your family. Your family was just fine before I walked into your life, I mean, our wedding was even tainted and ruined by your brother. I can’t help but feel as if maybe we shouldn’t be together in the first place.”

Gatsha: (saddened) “Mkami (My wife), please don’t be like that. When I said my vows I meant every single word – til death do us part. I know, things look a bit bleak right now, but allow me to just be there for you and be your protector, please.”

Lehumo: (nodding teary) “Okay.”

Gatsha: “Psalm 46:1-3 – “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”

Lehumo: (smiling) “Isaiah 41:10 – “So do not fear, for I am with you, do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Gatsha: (smiling) “Now you see why I fell in love with you.”

Lehumo: (chuckling) “I told you, you still have some big shoes to fill.”

Gatsha: (laughing) “We have our life ahead for that.”

While Bongi was cleansing the royal palace, Gatsha made a call to their family healer and he made his way there within the speed of light. Meanwhile, Kuli and Queen Nomtha made their way to Neriah and Noah’s house. As they were about to enter, they found Neriah and Noah driving out of the yard.

Queen Kuli: (fake smile) “Oh, sanibonani (Hello). Ninjani (how are you)?”

Noah: (unimpressed) “Yebo, sawubona Ndhlovukazi (Yes, hello, Queen).”

Neriah: (annoyed) “How can we help you?”

Queen Kuli: “Hawu (Wow), that is no way to greet your in laws, is it now, Neriah?”

Neriah: (rolling eyes) “I seriously don’t have time for such, Kuli. Shouldn’t you be with your son and my daughter, preparing for your son’s funeral?”

Queen Kuli: (annoyed) “You don’t have to rub it in my face, you know.”

Neriah: “How am I doing that when it is the truth? Now, we are in a serious rush, how can we help you?”

Queen Kuli: “Oh, I thought perhaps we could drink some tea, you know. Besides, I need advice on how to get through to Gatsha.”

Neriah: (chuckling) “You really have time to play, Kuli. Ever since your son got engaged to my daughter, you have been nothing but a pain. Not even once did you see the need to come and drink tea with us or even greet us. And now, suddenly you feel the need to come and drink tea?”

Queen Nomtha: (annoyed) “You need to watch your tone, you’re speaking to royalty.”

Neriah: (chuckling) “The only royalty I bow to is the Lord my God. I will not bow down or watch the way I speak to a mere person who can’t even act like a human being. I am not one of your cult members, Nomthandazo!”

Queen Nomtha didn’t even know that Neriah was bluffing. She had heard rumours about her being a witch, but Queen Nomtha assumed that Neriah knew more than she was supposed to and that was a serious threat.

Queen Nomtha: (frowning) “Excuse me?”

Noah: “Calm down, Neriah.”

Neriah: “Calm down yani (for what), Noah? 2 Thessalonians 2:9 says “The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders.” I can see right through you – the both of you. Now, if you’ll excuse us, we have better things to do with our time.”

Noah stepped on the accelerator, leaving those two standing in absolute annoyance. Kuli had never been spoken to like that and felt seriously disrespected.

Queen Nomtha: “You see what I mean? Are you going to allow a mere maid and a bus driver talk to you like that?”

Queen Kuli: (shaking head) “No. I’ll never allow that.”

Queen Nomtha: “See? I told you Noah would never look your way.”

Queen Kuli: “What did you have in mind?”

Queen Nomtha: “Time for phase two. You need to act like a normal mother in law and apologize to everyone at the house. That’s the only way you’ll get them to drop their guard.”

Queen Kuli: “With Bonggi there? I’ll never get anything done.”

Queen Nomtha: “Even little lambs of Jesus have a weakness. Leave her to me. You focus on the objective – you gave birth to Gatsha. He will feel some sort of pity towards you. Be nice to everyone – Lehumo included and all shall be yours. When you strike, they won’t even expect it and that’s when you are going to be there for them.”

Just like that, Queen Kuli and her mother had plotted an evil plan. It is indeed true what people say; sometimes bad things happen to good people because in the end, the good find it hard to not forgive, while the bad love taking short cuts in life. Of course, their evil deeds always catch up with them – eventually.

“When God takes out the trash, don’t go digging back through it. Trust Him.” – Amaka Imani Nkosazana

The following day had come indeed, and with King Sfiso gone, Gatsha was having a bit of a hard time finalizing everything. He indeed had to follow his father’s rules and just adhere to his one wish – to bury Shaka like the Prince he lived as. Queen Kuli and her mother, drove to the Royal Palace early in the morning and decided to start phase one of their new plan. They knocked like decent people, and found Beatrice at the door.

Beatrice: (frowning) “Sawubona Ndlovukazi (Hello, Queen).”

Of course, Kuli had to brave it all out and fake it til she could make it.

Queen Kuli: (smiling) “Hi, Beatrice. Unjani (How are you)?”

Queen Kuli hardly asked her how she was doing, but she was just used to her being a bitter bitch.

Beatrice: (smiling) “I’m well, thanks, how are you?”

Beatrice, just like some kind-hearted people, always saw the good in others – no matter what they were capable of. She felt as if perhaps Kuli had started to realize her mistakes and was trying to turn a new leaf. That is what kills a lot of people – benefit of the doubt.

Queen Kuli: (smiling) “I’m well, thank you. I know, you were probably told not to let us in, but may you please? I’d like to speak to my son and hopefully redeem myself.”

Beatrice: “Eish, I don’t know if that would be possible. The King – “

Queen Kuli: (interrupting) “Please, Beatrice. Have some mercy. I haven’t even seen my son’s body. I just want to be given a chance to grieve properly. Wouldn’t you want to be given that opportunity had it been your son?”

Beatrice: "I guess so."

Queen Kuli: "I won't be long, I promise."

Beatrice thought about it for a long while, but eventually gave in and let them in.

Queen Kuli: (smiling) "Thank you, you're too kind. God should really bless you, Beatrice."

The serpent was let back into the royal palace just like that. She walked in alongside her mother and found Lehumo in the kitchen, preparing some tea and scones for the guests. Knowing Kuli, she would have already made a nasty comment towards Lehumo, but she was so pretentious, leaving Lehumo in serious doubt.

Queen Kuli: (smiling) "Makoti (Daughter in law)."

Lehumo was so frightened, that she nearly spilled over the tea. She had burnt herself as she had lost focus, while some of it spilled onto her hand.

Queen Kuli: "Oh, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to startle you."

Lehumo: "Eish, it's okay."

Lehumo was still a new wife and didn't want to seem like she was chasing Queen Kuli right out of her house. Being young and married comes with its own challenges.

Queen Kuli: "I know, you are probably very shocked as to why I am so nice to you, but I feel that I should tell you the truth."

She ignored the burning sensation with all her might, since Mkhulu gave her something to smear on herself, so that she wouldn't feel Lehumo's power over hers that much.

Queen Kuli: (sigh) “The truth is, Lehumo. I was so jealous of you. I truly didn’t even want to admit it to myself, until Shaka died.”

Lehumo: (frowning) “Why on earth would you be so jealous of me, Ma? I have nothing.”

Queen Kuli: “You are so beautiful, so smart and you are loved by everyone. I felt as if you were going to outshine me and make a better queen than I ever have been.”

Lehumo was shocked at what she was witnessing. Nonetheless, she didn’t forget Kuli’s harsh and hurtful behaviour towards her, but she felt as if there was some sort of hurt and truth coming from her. She looked at Kuli as a mother who was in pain; who had just lost her child and who was about to lose her husband. She had a bit of doubt and ignored that gut feeling deep in her gut. We all get that feeling when shit hits the fan – when it is about to get rough, but we choose to ignore that feeling that feels like a sudden drop, deep in your gut. She chose to ignore it that day which was a very big mistake. Lehumo walked towards Kuli and held both her hands. She ignored the burning sensation with all her might. It

is absolutely baffling how people would do anything to get what they want.

Lehumo: (teary) “Ma, I have been longing for those words ever since Gatsha and I got together. I didn’t even know what I had done to you, Ma. I felt as if you had natural hate towards me – if there is ever such a thing. I have no doubt in my mind that you would like to start over. If this is your apology, I accept it fully and forgive you. God wouldn’t want me to be angry at my own mother in law.”

That was the moment Kuli and Nomtha knew that they had hooked Lehumo right where they wanted her.

Queen Kuli: (crying) “I am so sorry, Lehumo, mntwana wami (my child). Please forgive me.”

Lehumo found herself hugging her mother in law, with Queen Nomtha smiling at her. She didn’t know she was hugging a serpent. Bongi wondered why Lehumo was taking so long with the tea, as the council members were waiting on her. She

walked in and became astonished at the sight of her hugging the snake.

Bongi: (shouting) “Lehumo, yini indaba uthatha isikathi kanje (Why are you taking so long)/! Weh ma (Oh, my goodness)! Are my eyes deceiving me or am I actually witnessing this?!”

Lehumo broke the hug, while Queen Kuli forced the tears to come out.

Lehumo: “Ma, what do you mean?”

Bongi: “Are you actually hugging the devil’s daughter?!”

As Bongi kept on insulting Kuli, she let the tears run down, and so did Nomtha. Beatrice stood there staring at them, while Raesibe, Brenda, Neriah and Gatsha stormed into the kitchen to see what was happening.

Gatsha: “Is everything okay in here? Kwenzakalani (what’s happening)?”

Lehumo: “Oh

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Queen Kuli had just come to plead for forgiveness.”

Bongi stood there shaking her head in absolute shock, while Raesibe started running her mouth off as usual.

Raesibe: (shouting) “Heh banna (My goodness)! Go tla nyewa mos (It’s about to go down)! Nnoga shi e fetogile (the snake has changed) overnight!”

Lehumo: “Ma...”

Neriah: (annoyed) “I think we should move onto the meeting. The council members are still waiting on us.”

Bongi: “I agree...”

As they were talking, with Gatsha truly annoyed, King Sfiso walked in with Khensani right by his side. Queen Kuli was in the perfect state of shock, and felt as if that was the perfect moment to draw sympathy from those that felt bad for her. King Sfiso on the other hand was rather unimpressed to find Queen Nomtha whom he had banished from his village and his annoying, evil wife in his house, while Kkhensani felt as if she was about to piss herself, but King Sfiso was ready to defend and protect her.

King Sfiso: (annoyed) “Gatsha, kwenzakalani lana (What’s happening here)? I leave for a few days and come back to find these two snakes in my house?!”

Queen Kuli became so bewildered deep within her heart, but felt as if she needed to draw sympathy from everyone who could give her the platform. She decided to kneel down in front of King Sfiso and completely ignore the fact that he had his old love right by his side. King sfiso’s glow was something she hadn’t seen in a long time. She didn’t love him as much as she loved Bheki, but because she was born a greedy person, she couldn’t phathom King Sfiso being happy elsewhere.

Queen Kuli: (kneeling in front of King Sfiso) “I’m so sorry, myeni wami (my husband)! Please, forgive me for my appalling actions!”

King Sfiso really didn’t give a shit as to what was happening in front of him. He knew Kuli long enough to know when she was lying, which astonished Lehumo and Beatrice as they were the only ones sympathizing with Nomtha and Kuli. Nomtha also knelt before him.

Queen Nomtha: “Forgive us, my son. I do not know what came over me when I did all those bad things.”

King Sfiso never let go of the shaken Khensani.

King Sfiso: (annoyed) “Gatsha, we are going to offload our luggage. Please, follow me along with your wife.”

Gatsha: (nodding) “Yes, Baba.”

Lehumo found it decent enough to help Queen Nomtha up, while Beatrice helped Queen Kuli up, leaving Bongi, Neriah, Raesibe and Brenda totally speechless.

Lehumo: “Khululeka (Relax), Ma. All will be sorted out. I’ll make sure that he calms down. I’ll be right back.”

Gatsha: (exasperated) “Lehumo, masihambe (let’s go).”

Lehumo adhered to her husband’s instructions and followed her husband upstairs to King Sfiso’s bedroom, while Kuli tried with all her might to hide the pain she felt as she saw King Sfiso and Khensani walk away together, hand in hand.

Bongi: (annoyed) “What are you playing at, Kulli?”

Queen Kuli: (crying) “I don’t know what you mean, Bongi. I am in mourning.”

Bongi: “I see right through you and I’ll never let you play with my grandchild like that.”

Kuli kept quiet.

Bongi: “Brenda, please help me carry the tray of biscuits and tea to the council members before she poisons us all.”

Neriah just gave both Kuli and Nomtha one look as she left with Raesibe, Brenda and Bongi. Beatrice was left behind with Kuli and Nomtha.

Beatrice: “It’s okay, my queen. Please, sit. I’ll make the both of you some tea.”

Queen Kuli: “Oh, you’re too kind, Beatrice. May God truly bless you.”

Meanwhile, in King Sfiso’s room. He was nothing but unimpressed.

King Sfiso: "Gatsha, I left you in charge of this kingdom because I trust you. What is this nonsense?!"

Gatsha: "Baba (Father), I am just as clueless as you are. Bongani let them in without my permission yesterday. When we asked him why he did what he did, he said that he found it hard to say no to her."

King Sfiso: "I want her gone."

Lehumo: "Permission to speak, my king."

King Sfiso: "As you wish, Lehumo."

Lehumo: "My king, I think it is rather unfair to deny Queen Kuli the opportunity to bury her child with dignity. I know, she is not a very good person, but she does deserve that little bit of kindness from you."

King Sfiso really loved Lehumo and valued her input. He looked at Gatsha who was not very impressed with her suggestion, but valued her input as well.

King Sfiso: “What do you suggest we do? Because I intend on marrying Khensani.”

Lehumo: “Well, she could stay away along with her mother and come in the morning of the funeral. After all the arrangements of the funeral, I feel that it is important to sit her down along with the council members and Khensani and explain the new terms of your marriage. To my understanding, my king, you still love Queen Kuli as the mother of your children, and therefore you can take Kuli as a second wife. I mean no disrespect towards you, Mme Khensani, but I think in order to save your reputation, my king, it is best to make it seem as if you are marrying a second wife. That is if it is okay with you, Mme.”

Khensani: (smiling) “I love your reasoning, Lehumo. I love Sfiso so much and I am happy to be with him once again. I didn’t intend on being a second wife to him, but if that is what I have to do then so be it.”

King Sfiso: "I don't agree to that. I think it is high time I divorce Kuli and make you my only wife."

Lehumo: "That's also an option, my king, but please do it in a very decent way because a woman scorned is another type of problem you wouldn't want to have."

King Sfiso listened attentively to Lehumo, and so did Gatsha. Little did they all know that it was the beginning of many other problems for all of them.

“Evil influence is like a nicotine patch, you cannot help but absorb what sticks to you.” – E.A. Bucchianeri

King Sfiso took Lehumo’s advice gladly, but said that he would speak to Kuli even before the funeral. That made Kuli’s act of revenge even deadlier. He didn’t want to wait any longer, and decided to break the news to Kuli sooner than expected. He walked down the stairs hand in hand with Khensani, while Gatsha had Lehumo by his side. To make matters worse, he didn’t choose to call her aside and speak to her alone, but he chose to announce in front of everyone – the council members included. Queen Kuli was just one of those women who didn’t take embarrassment very lightly. Recalling her mother’s words, she had to stay put and focus on the end goal of all that was happening. She put on a brave face, but even that was not enough to cover and hide the pain in her heart.

King Sfiso: “Kuli, Nomthandazo, join us in the dining area, please.”

Queen Kuli: “Is there something wrong, my king?”

King Sfiso: "You'll find out soon enough."

Queen Kuli sensed the fear in Khensani's eyes, but what she couldn't stomach most was the way King Sfiso was holding Khensani. She slowly walked right behind him, followed by her mother. She found Gatsha and Lehumo sitting already, along with the council members. To make matters worse, Beatrice, Bonggi, Brenda, Noah, Neriah and Raesibe were there. She could handle being embarrassed in front of royal members, but in front of "nobodies", that was the last straw for her. That day, the very last bit of the good she had left in her was stripped away.

King Sfiso: "Greetings, my council. You must all be surprised to see me like this, so I don't want to waste any of your time. I will get straight to it."

They all looked at Sfiso anxiously without interrupting him.

King Sfiso: “As you know, Kuli and I have had our differences for a very long while now. With that said, most of you are probably aware that Shaka was not my son. He was Bheki’s son.”

The council members were shocked, well, they were pretending to be shocked. They all knew and had to act like they had no idea. That hurt Sfiso a little, knowing that he had them in his council for so many years and that not even one of them had the guts to tell him what his wife was doing behind his back. King Sfiso loved dropping bombshells, so he just had to do it once again.

King Sfiso: “Well, you don’t have to pretend to be shocked. Ngiyazi ukuthi beniyazi indaba lena (I know that you all knew about this). uAyanda is also not my child. The only child of my blood is Gatsha.”

They kept quiet and looked down in shame. Kuli also looked down and forced the tears back in.

King Sfiso: “It saddens me that none of you felt the need to be loyal to me about it all. You didn’t even feel the need to come

and address the issue, but you decided to be loyal to her instead. She was not only a cheater, but she resorted to shaming me and embarrassing me in front of my very own council.”

They were all starting to panic as they could smell what was ahead of them. One of them decided to at least try and put out the fire.

Member 1: “Permission to speak, my King. Not all of us knew and besides, we didn’t want to make you feel less of a man. Please, I – “

King Sfiso: (interrupting) “You have had over 30 years to prove your loyalty to me, Zolani. You have failed – all of you. Let me get straight to it. The woman you see right here next to me, is the love of my life. My “wife” Kuli is not only guilty of adultery and lies, but she is also guilty of attempted murder, and murdering my unborn child.”

Kuli felt like she had swallowed her heart right down to her gut at that moment. She couldn’t even look at Sfiso.

King Sfiso: “With that said, I have decided to divorce Kuli and marry the love of my life, Khensani.”

The council members were shocked, with some gasping and some expressing themselves. Kuli on the other hand felt as if she was about to faint right there and then.

King Sfiso: “With that said, I have also decided that Gatsha will appoint his own council members, as you all were not fit to rule alongside of me. The only person I can trust around this table is Noah Mkhabela, the rest of you are fired with immediate effect.”

They were gasping and pleading, but he did not hear them. Kuli took one good look at King Sfiso who was dead serious. She felt there was nothing else she could do, but to try and gain some sympathy from others. She dropped right on that floor, even though she had pretended to faint, Lehumo felt so much pain for her. She immediately let go of Gatsha’s hand and rushed towards her side, leaving Neriah, Raesibe and Bonggi very much dismayed. Beatrice helped Kuli up along with Lehumo and they

took her to one of the spare rooms. Queen Nomtha walked right behind them.

Queen Nomtha: "Beatrice, please get her some water."

Beatrice: "Okay, Ma."

Queen Nomtha: "Lehumo, please give us some space. I don't mean that in a bad way."

Lehumo: (smiling) "Of course."

Lehumo walked out and Queen Nomtha decided to lock the door. Kuli immediately opened her eyes soon afterwards.

Queen Kuli: (annoyed) "Did you see that, Ma weh?! How dare he embarrass me like that?!"

Queen Nomtha: "Well, now that you see he is not interested in you anymore, what are you planning to do about it?"

Queen Kuli: (fuming) “I need him to pay. I can’t even stand that girl. She is the reason why everything is the way it is.”

Queen Nomtha: “Well, you could always get rid of her. She has pure blood and believe me, that will surely make you more powerful.”

Queen Kuli was actually considering killing a person for the first time in her life.

Queen Kuli: “I’ll do it.”

That was music to Nomtha’s ears. It was all she needed to hear. Meanwhile King Sfiso helped Gatsha arrange the funeral. Lehumo did convince King Sfiso to at least allow Kuli to see Shaka’s body, and another one of their mistakes was allowing her to go into the morgue alone with her mother. Kuli got there and saw her son’s body. He looked so bruised from the gunshot, with his chest protruding. She couldn’t help but shed a tear as she had promised herself she would never wail

the way she did upon receiving the news of his passing ever again.

Kuli: (teary) “Shaka, mfana wami (my boy). Bakwenzeni kodwa (What did they ever do to you)? I am so sorry for not raising you the way I should have. Rest assured, Lehumo will pay for this. Your father will pay for this!”

Kuli still refused to believe that Gatsha saved his father by killing his own brother. She was so hell bent on getting rid of Lehumo, that it really got to her head.

Queen Nomtha: “Kuli, we don’t have a lot of time. You know what to do.”

Kuli nodded as she took out the three balls of muthi that Mkhulu gave her. He instructed her to put them in the coffin, and that once Lehumo viewed the body she would go mad and eventually die. Kuli was angering Lehumo’s ancestors, along with Gatsha’s as she was playing with fire. No one should ever tamper with fate or someone’s life.

Kuli: “All shall be well

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Shaka. She will pay for what she did to you.”

They walked out in haste and proceeded to the Kingdom. It was the day before the funeral, and as per custom, Shaka was to be buried in the early hours of the morning – just after sunrise. Everyone in the neighbourhood was excited to be invited to the funeral. It was a big ceremony, so they knew they had to expect a big feast. Family from all over the country had come to cook for them, and help them prepare for the funeral. As instructed, Nomtha and Kuli were not allowed anywhere near the food and had to remain in the guest room they were allocated. At least Nomtha would not tamper with the traditional beer this time. Kuli was shattered, but refused to break. She was more shattered to realize that Khensani had been King Sfiso’s rock instead of her. She had been thinking about it ever since he announced the whole thing to everyone.

Queen Nomtha: “Ucabangani kangaka (What is pondering your mind so much)?”

Queen Kuli: (angered) "I can't help stop thinking of Sfiso and what he did to me."

Queen Nomtha: "Say the word and it will be done."

Queen Kuli: "I'm ready. Do it."

Queen Nomtha nodded and started her usual chant.

Queen Nomtha: "I summon you, dark forces. With the help of Mkhulu, let your will be done. I ask that my daughter get all her heart's desires and move the only obstacle that is stopping everything out of our way. As asked, let it be done, Mkhulu."

Voice: "Your wish is my command, Nomthandazo. Don't forget, everything comes at a price."

Queen Nomtha: "Of course. Do it."

The voice of Mkhulu disappeared, and didn't even scare Kuli. Not even once. Meanwhile downstairs, Shaka's body had just been brought home, and Bongi knew exactly what to do. As the casket was opened, Bongi stopped Lehumo and Gatsha from viewing.

Bongi: "Everyone stop. Gatsha, Lehumo don't you dare view that body – no matter what."

Lehumo: (frowning) "What happened?"

Bongi was about to tell them what happened, when she got a call. She ignored it.

Bongi: "Ba berekile setopo se (The body has been tainted with muthi). Please, don't even go near the body until the funeral."

Gatsha: "Who did that, Ma?"

Bongi was about to answer once again until her phone rang. She looked at it and it was her sister, Alettah. Her sister

never called – they usually texted one another. She knew immediately that something was wrong.

Bongi: “Hello?”

Voice: “Mamkhulu (Auntie), it’s Loreta, Mama just got into an accident here at home.”

Bongi: (frowning) “Accident? What kind? What happened?”

Loretta: “I don’t know. She was sleeping and next thing she fell from the bed and was unconscious.”

Bongi: “Okay, I’ll be right there.”

Everyone looked at her anxiously.

Bongi: (frantic) “My sister just had an accident at her house. I have to go.”

Everyone had forgotten about what she said, but Gatsha and Lehumo didn't go near the body. King Sfiso instructed the men to close the casket and remove it from the living area, while he organised transport for Bongi.

Noah: "Ma, will you be alright?"

King Sfiso: "I'll get someone trustworthy to take her there. Bongani can do that if that is okay with you."

Noah: (nodding) "Thank you, my friend."

Bongi said her goodbyes and immediately left with Bongani. Meanwhile Nomtha and Kuli were happy that Bongi was removed from their sight. They could easily distract everyone without her presence.

Neriah: "Something is not right, Noah. I haven't felt at ease ever since we got here. I just don't trust Kuli and her mother."

King Sfiso: “Khululeka (Relax), Neriah. I have guards watching them. You are safe.”

Neriah could not help but go to her bedroom and pray as she truly felt the anxious feeling not going away. She felt like something was about to go horribly wrong. While Noah went to their bedroom with her, King Sfiso felt it necessary to speak to his son.

King Sfiso: “Gatsha, I need you to know that everything will be okay. You are doing great and you’re bound to make mistakes. You’re still young, but most importantly you are a human being. No matter what, I need you to trust in yourself. You will be a great king for this nation.”

It felt as if Sfiso was saying goodbye once again to his son. Nonetheless, Gatsha really appreciated words of wisdom from his father. Lehumo and Gatsha headed to their bedroom, with him feeling rather bad about everything. They took a shower together, by then she had already been comfortable being naked around him. It had been just over a week, but they were quite intimate. As he washed her back, he felt it was necessary to address everything.

Gatsha: “Mkami (My wife), I know that with everything that is going on, you and I haven’t had the chance to relax and embrace our marriage.”

Lehumo: “It’s okay, Gatsha. I know that things happen. I know that you are trying your best.”

Gatsha: “I promised you a fairytale, and believe me that is exactly what I am going to give you.”

Lehumo turned around and embraced the water dripping on their bare skin.

Lehumo: (smiling) “What do you have up your sleeve, Gatsha?”

Gatsha: (smiling) “You’ll see, Ndhlovukazi (Queen). You’ll see.”

Lehumo smiled and wrapped her arms around her husband. Gatsha gently leaned in and gave Lehumo a

passionate kiss. She would always moan in his mouth, making him want her even more. Lehumo was very surprised how sexual she had become in a very short space of time. She felt his penis rise and become hardened, and she gently rubbed it, making him groan and want her even more. She was so used to receiving oral sex from him, yet she had never tried to do it to him. She had gotten a few tips from Brenda and even from Raesibe, and she felt it was time for her to try and explore. She broke the kiss and went down on her knees, rendering Gatsha speechless.

Gatsha: (softly) “Ntombenhle (Beautiful), you don’t have to do it.”

Lehumo: “I want to.”

He nodded in excitement as he looked down while staring at her. She gently rubbed his penis with one hand, and his balls with her other hand. She felt herself become really aroused as she started putting his tip into her mouth. Gatsha leaned back, with both hands on her head. He gently rubbed her hair, while she was slowly sucking his penis.

Gatsha: (moaning) “Ntombenhle (Beautiful)....”

She felt herself getting seriously interested to see where it would lead her. She had heard that men love blow jobs, so she was confident to see Gatsha enjoying it. As she started sucking more of him, she changed the rhythm and went faster, making Gatsha want more of her. He pulled her up and gently turned her so that her back faced him. He leaned her forward and penetrated her gently. Lehumo felt herself going wild, while they were both moaning and enjoying one another. They had forgotten to start family planning, amidst all the funeral drama. Gatsha eventually came and so did Lehumo. Little did they both know that they had conceived Gatsha’s first seed that night.

Meanwhile Kuli and Nomtha decided it was time for them to start with the next part of their plan. They managed to get the guards to fall asleep, by hypnotizing them. It was really very simple and a lot easier than they thought. They slowly walked downstairs and found the food already prepared for the following morning.

Queen Kuli: "Let's make this one quick. Just put the poison in the traditional beer."

Queen Nomtha: "Don't be an idiot, man Kuli. You cannot have that. Everyone will drink it and they will die. Is that what you want?"

Queen Kuli: "Then what do you propose I do?"

Queen Nomtha: "The ladies love tea, so just before they wake up tomorrow morning, we will have put the poison in the tea already. Relax, leave it all to me."

Queen Kuli: "Sfiso hardly drinks tea, he loves his whiskey especially when he is stressed."

Queen Nomtha: "Problem solved. Put it in his whiskey. And you did say that he occasionally shares with Noah."

Queen Kuli: "Yes."

Queen Nomtha: “Come, we need to get up extra early and get that sorted out.”

Just like that, Nomtha and her daughter had plotted their first murder together. Kuli had no idea how much of a professional Kuli was since she had killed her own husband. The Bible says that already by thinking of the sin, you have already committed the sin.

“Fire needs to burn itself in order to burn anything else, it must carry injury in its core before it gives it to the rest of the world, there lies its weakness – the weakness of evil.” – Lamine Pearlheart

The morning finally came, and as arranged the whole family and guests had to get up at 4am, in order to bury Shaka at 5am. Zululand is a very hot place, so 5am seemed like 11am that side. Of course, everyone was a bit shocked to see Kuli and Nomtha awake so early – right before everyone. What stunned them was that they had made tea and had prepared scones for everyone.

King Sfiso: (annoyed) “Don’t any of you eat that food unless you have a death wish.”

Queen Kuli was frustrated, as if she could sense how King Sfiso could see right through her.

Queen Kuli: “I was just trying to be polite.”

King Sfiso: "Save it. Your time is up."

King Sfiso had behaved so oddly that day. He kept wanting Gatsha and Lehumo next to him at all times.

King Sfiso: "Gatsha, you and Lehumo have to build a better kingdom here. A lot of these people can learn so much from you."

Gatsha: (smiling) "Yebo, Baba."

Noah: "My King, we are going to be late if we don't make it to the graveyard right now."

King Sfiso: (chuckling) "Oh, come on, my dear friend. Surely you can spare me the last drink before we bury Shaka."

Noah: (chuckling) "You're speaking as if it is the last time you're going to see me."

King Sfiso: "You and I will always be together, even in spirit."

Noah didn't seem to take note of Sfiso's words, while Gatsha was a bit sceptical. Lehumo on the other hand, had her mind pondering throughout the entire morning, while Neriah's uneasy feeling hadn't gone away ever since the previous night.

Beatrice: "Neriah, kwenzenjani (what is it)?"

Neriah: "I don't know, Beatrice, but I haven't been feeling okay, spiritually for the past few days. I feel like something bad is about to happen."

Beatrice: "Funerals tend to do that to people. Don't worry too much about it."

King Sfiso: "Gatsha, Lehumo, I pray that the good lord blesses you with healthy children and a happy marriage. I wish you nothing but the best."

Gatsha: “Hawu (Gosh), Baba (Father), you’ve been saying such things as if you are saying goodbye. What’s happening?”

King Sfiso: “Nothing, son. Tomorrow isn’t guaranteed. Look now, even Ayanda has gone AWOL. Pray for her. She might not be my biological child, but I love her.”

Gatsha nodded as they proceeded to leave the house, leaving Queen Kuli and Queen Nomtha very much annoyed.

Queen Kuli: (frustrated) “My plan didn’t work!”

Queen Nomtha: “Leave it all to me. By the end of the day, we’ll be having another funeral.”

Queen Kuli was very frustrated, but chose to trust her mother once again. They proceeded to the funeral grounds. Everyone was there – even the ones who never attend funerals. Perhaps they all had hoped to see the drama unfold once again. Nonetheless

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King Sfiso decided to give Shaka a very dignified funeral – despite all he did to him.

King Sfiso: “Shaka, mfana wami (my son). I haven’t been the best of fathers to you, but what I want you to know is that I forgive you. I ask that you also forgive me for wronging you. You were and will always be my son. Abaphansi ma ba ku amukele ekhaya lakho lokugcina (May the ancestors welcome you to your last resting place). uMoya wakho ma uphumule (May your soul rest). Lala ngoxolo (rest in peace), Mfana wami (my boy).”

As customary, Queen Nozipho started chanting the Ncube clan names, while the rest of the guest ululated. It was a sombre mood, but overall, Shaka was given a dignified send off. When it was time for his body to descend, the coffin refused to go down. The men had to take it out and dig a bit further and bigger, and it finally descended after much work.

Queen Nozipho: (shaking head) “It’s a sign. uMoya ka Shaka awukaphumuli (Shaka’s spirit is not resting). The person responsible for playing God with his life shall suffer dearly.”

Queen Kuli swallowed hard as she remembered Queen Nozipho's words very clearly. Once upon a time she was warned that her life will fall apart in more ways than one. It was too late for her to turn back now, anyway. As they were about to leave, King Sfiso made a weird request.

King Sfiso: "Gatsha, let Bongani drive Noah, Neriah, Khensani and I. You go with your grandmother and your wife. Please take Hosea with you."

Gatsha: (frowning) "Kodwa (But) why, Baba? Is there something wrong?"

King Sfiso: (smiling) "Not at all, son. I think you guys need to keep your grandmother company, that's all."

Gatsha felt there was something odd about his father's request, but he let it go.

Gatsha: "Okay."

King Sfiso: "Remember, I love you, son. Don't ever forget that."

Gatsha smiled as King Sfiso patted his back. King Sfiso walked alongside his love Khensani, with Neriah and Noah hand in hand as they got into the car. Neriah kept looking at Lehumo as if her face wanted to tell her a story. At that particular moment, Lehumo was hit with a very odd feeling in her gut. She and her husband along with little Hosea got into their car. Queen Nozipho got in the front, while Lehumo got into the back with Hosea. Once in, Hosea started crying for no reason, as if something had bitten or hurt him.

Lehumo: “Ngwana o wa hlola (This child is acting funny), Gatsha.”

Nozipho: “It’s a sign.”

Gatsha: “A sign of what?”

Before they knew it, the car that their parents had driven it blew up right in front of them –leaving everyone stunned to the core. Lehumo was so shocked, as she sat still for a moment. Gatsha was stunned, and immediately got out of his car and rushed towards the car, but it was already too late. It was already on fire.

Lehumo: (screaming) “Mama! Papa!

“The joy of seeing another person in pain, frustrated or angry is a delicacy only for the most wicked.” – Robin Sacredfire

Three months later

It had been just three months since Gatsha and Lehumo had lost their loved ones in that tragic accident. Lehumo had been a mess, with Gatsha trying to keep his head above water, while having to reign alone. It was not easy, but he had managed. He had even lost so much weight because his wife had been severely depressed and barely coping. Had it not been for Hosea, she would have given up real quickly. It was a rather dark Christmas and an even darker New Year's for them. Raesibe and Beatrice had been trying to comfort her, and Bongsi also had her own fair share of drama and trouble. She was beyond devastated to lose her son and daughter-in-law in such a tragic way.

Of course, she knew that foul play was at hand and that dark magic was ruling right there, but oddly her dreams refused to reveal who was behind all that. She also just didn't like Queen Kuli and Queen Nomtha, and with Bongsi away, taking care of

her frail sister, it was easy for Queen Kuli to play the pretentiously good mother-in-law. After she had killed four people at once, she had overtaken Queen Abigail by two points and she was a better dark queen than her, motivating Abigail even more to form an alliance with her. Gatsha still never let his guard down around Kuli unlike Lehumo, and just when they thought that things would get easier, their lives were about to take another dark turn.

Gatsha had felt it had been too long since they both had a great time. Yes, they had lost their parents, but that didn't mean that life should have stopped. He found Hosea playing in their bedroom, and heard the shower water running.

Gatsha: (smiling) "Yes, boy-boy. Uphi usisi wakho (Where is your sister)?"

Hosea: "Uyageza (She's taking a bath)."

Gatsha: "Okay, I'll be right back. Behave, okay?"

Hosea: "If you promise to give buy me ice cream then I will."

Gatsha left to the bathroom chuckling. He took off his clothes as he prepared to have an intimate moment with his wife. He slowly walked in and started kissing her shoulders, as he prepared to wash her back. As he held her beautiful breasts, he hadn't given himself time to notice just how much fuller they were.

Lehumo: "Gatsha... Hosea is in the bedroom."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "He won't hear us, Ntombenhle (Beautiful). I just want to spend some time with my wife. I miss you, Ndhlovukazi (Queen)."

Lehumo: "You see me everyday."

Gatsha: (softly) "You know what I mean."

He said that as he breathed out warm air and it hit Lehumo's soft skin. His hand travelled to her clit, and she immediately spread her legs a bit further. The heat of the shower water was doing magic to the both of them. Gatsha felt himself get hot

immediately as his penis rose to the occasion. He knew just how his wife liked it. He slowly turned her around and went right down to her thighs, and started eating out her pussy. Lehumo found herself gasping for air, in between orgasms as she tried not to make even the smallest sound.

Lehumo: (softly) "Gatsha... please, I need you now..."

Gatsha rose up and picked Lehumo up, allowing her to wrap her legs around his waist. As he slowly kissed her, he penetrated her, making them both growl like wild animals. It had been so long since they had actually been intimate, due to all of the drama they had been experiencing, but it felt so good for the both of them to be at home again – in each other's bodies.

Gatsha: "I missed you, Ndhlovukazi (Queen)."

Lehumo: "I missed you too."

Gatsha: "I want to ask you something, and please – don't take it the wrong way."

Lehumo: (frowning) "Okay."

Gatsha: "Why ungathi (does it seem like) you have gained a bit of weight?"

Lehumo: (teary) "Is it a problem for you?"

Gatsha: "No, Mkami (my wife), hayi kanjalo (not like that)."

Lehumo: (teary) "You can say it. I'm fat."

Gatsha suddenly regretted asking that question.

Gatsha: "No, not like that, Sthandwa sami (My love). What I meant was that you look pregnant."

Lehumo: (shocked) “Heh?!”

Gatsha: “Don’t look so surprised. When have I ever heard you say that you were on your period ever since we got married?”

Lehumo stood still right in the shower, ignoring the blinding water. She thought long and hard for a moment and then it dawned on her.

Lehumo: “Shit. Gatsha, I can’t be pregnant.”

Gatsha: (smiling) “It’s not a bad thing, my love.”

Lehumo: “Heh?! I am only doing my third year of Nursing, Gatsha. How will I cope?”

Gatsha: “Have I not said that I would be there for you no matter what? Why does it seem like you have forgotten your vows, Ndhlovukazi (Queen)? You have forgotten to pray.”

Lehumo: (crying) “Because nothing makes sense anymore, Gatsha. Everything is a real mess. My parents are gone and I have to face the world alone.”

Gatsha: “You have me. I am here and will always be here for you, I promise.”

Lehumo stood in the shower, crying in Gatsha’s arms. It must have probably been the nerves that got to her. She really didn’t think she’d fall pregnant the first time she had sex. A million thoughts went through her mind, such as what she would do without her mother present. It was a lot for a 20 year old Queen, but she had no choice but to soldier on. She then remembered a dream she had had a few nights after her mother and father had passed on. Her mother told her not to worry and that she should be happy for that child. She didn’t understand the dream, but at that moment it finally made sense to her. Gatsha would obviously make a great father, but Lehumo had no idea what lay in store for her.

Meanwhile, Queen Kuli and Queen Nomtha were up to no good once more. Ever since Queen Kuli managed to spill some blood, she had become fully aware of her powers, but even

then it was unfortunate for her because she could not touch Lehumo – no matter how hard she tried.

Queen Kuli: “Mkhulu! Mkhulu!”

Mkhulu: “Yini indaba ungirasela kangaka (Why are you shouting at me like that)? I am your master, not one of your servants, Kuli. You seem to forget your place.”

Queen Kuli: “Ngiyaxolisa (I’m sorry), but nawe you need to up your game. What’s this I hear of Lehumo being pregnant?!”

Mkhulu: (chuckling) “That is ridiculous. If she had been pregnant, then I would have seen it. The dark forces haven’t shown me anything.”

Queen Nomtha: “That’s because Lehumo is protected

Mkhulu, and you know it.”

Mkhulu rubbed his head in frustration as he tried to summon evil spirits to show him the Ncube unborn heir, but he couldn't see anything.

Mkhulu: "Dammit! This has never happened before."

Queen Kuli: "You're the leader here, so what now?"

Mkhulu: "You'll have to find out the old fashioned way."

Kuli felt like Mkhulu was seriously wasting her time, and yet Mkhulu also needed the child's blood spilled in order for him to gain even more power. Sorcery was all he knew.

Mkhulu: "Once you find out, bring a piece of her clothing to me – better yet bring her underwear. One she has worn recently."

Queen Kuli felt that she had enough power to start doing these things on her own – along with her mother. She honestly felt like Mkhulu was not doing much to help her.

Queen Kuli: “Mxm, wena (you) Mkhulu. I always have to do the dirty work myself and bring you everything to reap from.”

Mkhulu: (annoyed) “Kuli, it seems as if this new power has gone to your head. Be careful now, ask your mother how many people have tried to overrule me and they were defeated..”

Kuli remained unphazed by it all.

Queen Kuli: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, ungimoshela isikhathi (you’re wasting my time), Mkhulu. By now, everyone should have started respecting me again, but instead Lehumo is the Queen of Zululand. A whole 20 year old! She is even ruling the queen’s society – my society! I have to bow down to a whole child! If I waste another second listening to you then I’ll never get what my heart desires.”

Mkhulu: “Be careful, Kuli. You are becoming too cocky for my liking. I made you and I can take it all away in an instant.”

Queen Kuli: “I’d love to see you try. If I go down, you go down with me.”

She stormed out, leaving Mkhulu huffing in frustration. He knew deep down that Kuli had the possibility of overruling him. He had never been able to sacrifice someone of true purity such as Noah, Neriah and Lehumo. With Kuli having done that, it was only a matter of time before she became the ruler of the underworld. Back at the kingdom, Gatsha was so ecstatic, he made his wife some dinner. He had rushed to the pharmacy nearby before it had closed. He had actually done very well for a 27 year old. He had launched the mall just before his father passed on, and he was already working on a mining venture in Zululand, which was going to create more jobs. He was already on his way to becoming one of the richest kings in the country. There is always two sides to life – the good and the bad. Yes, he was doing well, but a lot more people were envying Lehumo and wanted to have him as their husband – even settling for being a second wife. Also, with fortune came fame. The media was starting to take an interest. He had come back with two pregnancy tests. He rushed into the bedroom excitedly and found his wife sitting on the bed and eating her dinner.

Gatsha: (smiling) "Mkami (My wife), I am back."

Lehumo: "Hey."

Gatsha: "Are you done eating?"

Lehumo: "Ah, what is the point? I cannot stomach the smell of lamb now – let alone eat it."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "It's okay. My father always used to say that uMa had severe morning sickness when she was pregnant with me. Hopefully, you'll get better at it."

Lehumo: "I guess so."

Gatsha: "Come, I got you some pregnancy tests. Are you ready?"

Lehumo: "Ngiyasaba (I'm scared), Gatsha. What if it turns out negative and you become disappointed?"

Gatsha: “We’re still young, baby. It won’t be the end of the world. Now, please do me the honours and take the tests, ngiyakucela sthandwa sami (Please, my love).”

Lehumo smiled as she took the tests from Gatsha, and he followed her to the bathroom.

Lehumo: (puzzled) “Really, Gatsha? You’re going to watch me pee?”

Gatsha: “Hawu (Wow), Ntombenhle (Beautiful). I’ve seen you fart and you’re still beautiful when you do that.”

Lehumo: (embarrassed) “Stop it.”

Gatsha chuckled as he watched her urinate on the sticks. She flushed and washed her hands, as they took the pregnancy tests back to the bedroom and went to sit on the bed. Gatsha made Lehumo lay her head on his chest and made her listen to his heartbeat.

Gatsha: "I can't wait to show you that I meant every word of those vows, Lehumo Ncube. You are my world and I will forever be deeply scarred for what you and I had to go through. I know that life will never be the same again, but I am here for you. I know, you're young and my intention was never to make you pregnant at this age, but everything happens for a reason. Job 1:21 The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; praised be the name of the Lord." I believe that with loss comes blessings. This is our chance to be happy, Sthandwa sami (My love). No one will ever touch you for as long as I am alive. They say talk is cheap, but you know I am a man of action."

Lehumo smiled as she wiped a tear off her face. After about ten minutes, Gatsha looked at the tests, while Lehumo looked at him anxiously.

Lehumo: "And?"

Gatsha: (smiling) "You're indeed pregnant, my love!"

He spun her around while she just smiled with tears flowing down her face. Gatsha kissed her passionately, with tears of joy falling down endlessly. He then got down on his knees, and kissed her tummy.

Gatsha: (clan praises) “Mzilankatha, Nhlansi, Gabadeli, Zibindlela, Zikhali zeMkhonto. Nina abaphansi (my great ancestors), Nina ningiphe intombi enhle kanje (you have given me such a beautiful woman), Nimthandele mina (you chose her for me), Manje nisiphe isipho esihle kanjena (Now you have chosen to give us such a beautiful gift). I will forever honour you for this. Ngiyabonga (Thank you). Baba (father), I won't let you down. MaNcube (Mrs. Ncube), thank you so much for choosing me. Ngiyakuthanda yezwa (I love you, okay)?”

Lehumo: (smiling) “I love you too.”

“The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays.” – Soren Kiekergaard

The following day had come, and while Lehumo and Gatsha were having a peaceful morning together in bed, they were puzzled by Queen Kuli walking into their bedroom with some breakfast after knocking briefly.

Queen Kuli: (smiling) “Good morning, Sunshine. I hope you two are ready to have yourselves a scrumptious meal.”

Gatsha: (annoyed) “Kuli, don’t you know how to knock? Since when do you enter our bedroom without knocking anyway?”

Queen Kuli: “Oh, Gatsha, mfana wami (my son). Ngiyaxolisa (I’m sorry). I am just too excited.”

Lehumo had just grown soft towards her mother in law, so she wasn’t that puzzled.

Gatsha: “Ma, next time knock. We’re having our moment.”

Queen Kuli: “Okay, sorry. Let me just leave you with this breakfast.”

Kuli intentionally put the breakfast tray on the bed, right in front of the two of them and Lehumo immediately covered her nose. That was an indication to Kuli that the queen was indeed pregnant.

Queen Kuli: “Is there something wrong?”

Gatsha: “No.”

Gatsha was of course trying to be apprehensive and careful, but Lehumo was just craving that motherly love from Queen Kuli. It was understandable seeing as she had just lost her parents at a very young age. Although she knew just what Kuli was capable of, she had hope that the woman had turned a new leaf.

Lehumo: “Oh, not at all, Ma. It’s just that, we’re pregnant.”

Kuli dug deep in her gut to fake her smile.

Queen Kuli: (smiling) “Oh, congratulations, bantwana bami (My children). I am so excited! I am finally going to be a grandmother.”

She then decided to reveal the best trick she had ever tried – her fake tears.

Queen Kuli: (crying) “I know, I haven’t been the best person in the world, but your father would be so proud today. He had always wanted a grand daughter.”

She was trying her utmost best to soften the both of them and it worked – more on Lehumo than on Gatsha.

Queen Kuli: “I also know, Lehumo, your parents would have been very proud to see the woman you have become.”

Lehumo started becoming teary, while Gatsha's face remained hardened.

Queen Kuli: "I'll leave you to it. I promise, I'll be sure to knock next time."

She walked out swiftly and found Queen Nomtha waiting for her right outside the bedroom door.

Queen Nomtha: "And?"

Queen Kuli: (annoyed) "She's most definitely pregnant. She told me straight up. You should have seen the pathetic look on her face. I now know what to do."

Queen Nomtha: "Are you sure you want to go against Mkhulu?"

Queen Kuli: "Why not? I don't need him anymore. I can get things done my way."

They walked down to proceed to their evil deeds, while Gatsha remained displeased about his wife's trusting ways.

Gatsha: "Sthandwa sami (My love), you know how I feel about my mother, right?"

Lehumo: "I'm very sorry. I didn't mean to go against you. It's just that... she's been so nice to me."

Gatsha: "Even Peter and Judas betrayed Jesus once upon a time. I'm begging you, do not be too trusting towards people. Especially now that you're pregnant."

Lehumo: "I hear you. I'm sorry. I will be a lot more careful from now on. I promise."

Gatsha got Lehumo ready and they went to the doctor. He confirmed that she was indeed 13 weeks pregnant. They were both in such shock as they didn't even realize that she could have been pregnant for that long by then. Nonetheless, they were both excited, and Gatsha was of course more excited than

her. Upon arrival at the Royal Palace, they were surprised to find Queen Nozipho and Bongi there. They hadn't seen Bongi in weeks and she looked rather frail as she had lost quite a bit of weight. Grief is something else; it just creeps up on you like a thief in the night and we all grieve differently. Noah being the only child, it was not very easy for Bongi to heal from his death.

Gatsha: (smiling) "Hawu (Wow), Mam'Bongi, Gogo (Granny). What a nice surprise."

When those two were around at the same time, it meant that trouble was on the rise.

Bongi: (smiling) "Hello, my children. Ninjani (How are you)?"

Gatsha: "We're better than great. Is my mother home?"

Queen Nozipho: (shaking head) "No, she left with her mother to who knows where. Why are they living here? Didn't Sfiso banish them?"

Lehumo: “Yes, ma, he did, but doesn’t the Bible say that everyone deserves a second chance?”

Queen Nozipho: (shaking head) “Lehumo, Mntwana wami (My child), I know that deep in that head of yours you have a brain that works. Uzolimala (You’ll get hurt badly). You cannot be telling the whole world that you’re pregnant.”

Bongi: “I agree.”

Gatsha: “Finally, someone sees what I see.”

Lehumo started being emotional again

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blame it on the hormones. Bonggi took it upon herself to be realistic.

Bongi: “Lehumo, my child. We are not ganging up on you or anything like that, but you have to remember what your mom taught you. Remember what your father taught you – not to

trust easily. You have been lacking in prayer and faith, Nana (child) and it will backfire badly.”

Lehumo: (worried) “What do you mean?”

Bongi couldn’t bring it upon herself to tell Lehumo about her dream. She really couldn’t tell her.

Bongi: (faint smile) “Nothing major. Just please, don’t forget to pray and light a candle in your bedroom at least twice a week.”

Gatsha and Lehumo nodded as they decided to have a great catch up session with Queen Nozipho and Bongi.

Bongi: “I also have another main reason as to why I am here.”

Lehumo: “Is everything okay?”

Bongi: “Everything is alright. I am rather concerned about Hosea.”

Gatsha: (puzzled) "Hosea is fine, Ma."

Lehumo: "We've been taking good care of him."

Bongi: "I know that. That is not my concern. My problem is that Beatrice has decided to retire."

Gatsha and Lehumo were so gutted, but they couldn't exactly blame her. She had been working in the palace for years and it was time for her to have her own life outside of the palace.

Bongi: "She can't take care of Hosea anymore and Raesibe can't be here 24/7. Which is why I have decided to take him so that he can come live with me."

Lehumo: "But Ma, I-"

Bongi: (interrupting) "You're still young, Lehumo. We all cannot expect you to become a parent to your brother when

you two just got married. I am still alive and I can take care of him. I am not taking him away from you, but I am giving you a chance to have your own life, while giving him an equal chance. This kingdom has too much going on, so it is best he lives with me. I am alone, Lehumo, so he will keep me on my toes.”

Lehumo was rather saddened, but what Bongi said made a lot of sense.

Lehumo: “Okay.”

Bongi: “Thank you, my child. He will come visit any time and you know you’re always welcome. Just do me a favour – keep an eye on Kuli.”

Even after that many attempts, Lehumo still couldn’t see what they were talking about. Later that evening, she and her husband retreated to their bedroom. They had said goodbye to Hosea, as he had left with Bongi. Queen Nozipho decided to stay a little bit longer. After their shower together, they got into bed and Gatsha decided to spin his surprise to her.

Gatsha: (smiling) “Ntombenhle (Beautiful), I have been waiting for my birthday to do this, kodwa ke (but then), what better way to celebrate our news than this?”

He handed her an envelope. She took a good look at him and then at the envelope.

Gatsha: “Open it.”

She opened it, with Gatsha looking at her in suspense.

Lehumo: (shocked) “Gatsha...”

Gatsha: (smiling) “Yes, my love. I am taking you to Greece for our honeymoon. It was supposed to have been mixed with our wedding anniversary, but I just couldn’t wait that long.”

Lehumo: (teary) “Gatsha, how can we afford all this?”

Gatsha: "I have been rather busy, my love. I can't wait to show you what I have achieved for us. When I promised you the world, I meant it."

Lehumo: (smiling) "Thank you, Baby. I love it."

Gatsha: (smiling) "Baby?"

Lehumo: (blushing) "Hayi (No), man. You just want me to blush."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "I love it, Ndhlovukazi (Queen)."

He kissed her forehead, and they went down onto the floor to pray and got back into bed and drifted off to sleep in each other's arms.

Meanwhile Queen Kuli and Queen Nomtha had gotten up to no good. They got out of their bedrooms and headed to the kitchen. Kuli took out a silver cup and began stirring some muthi in it, while her mother began chanting.

Queen Nomtha: “I summon you all, dark forces. I ask you to come down and make this muthi do its job. I need you to make Lehumo get a miscarriage, I want to sacrifice that child and I want the power of a sorceress for my daughter! Make her the most powerful sorceress in the world!”

They say that when you appear at the right place but the wrong time, you are setting yourself up for disaster. As they were busy in their black cloaks, they heard a cup break behind them. They got startled as no one was supposed to see them at that time of the night.

Queen Kuli: “Raesibe! Ufunani la (What are you doing here)?”

For once, Raesibe was speechless. She was even shaking so badly, she could have easily wet herself.

Raesibe: (panicky) “I... ne ke (I was)... I wanted some tea, but I can always come back.”

She was about to turn around and head back to her bedroom, but Kuli felt it was the perfect opportunity to do some clean up.

Queen Kuli: “Raesibe, now you can see what I am capable of. My question is; what are you going to do about it?”

Raesibe: (scared) “Don’t worry. I’ll be gone first thing in the morning.”

Queen Kuli: “And?”

Raesibe: “And I won’t tell anyone.”

Queen Kuli: “Good, because if you do, I’ll kill you without thinking twice. You have overstayed your welcome. Goodbye.”

“It is an evil fate to fall into the hands of a persecutor who was once persecuted.” – Bangambiki Habyarimana

Gatsha couldn't wait to take his wife on holiday and show her what he has achieved so far. He got up early in the morning, packed all their bags and woke her up. The pregnancy had made her such a deep sleeper.

Gatsha: “Wake up, my love. Let's go take a shower, we have a long week ahead of us.”

Lehumo: “Eish, aowa (No), Gatsha. What now?”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “We're going to Belgium, baby. Did you forget?”

Lehumo: “Today?”

Gatsha: “Duh. Let's get moving.”

As much as she didn't feel like getting up, she did it anyway and they both got into the shower and did their business. She was surprised to see that Gatsha had already packed their bags, but knowing her husband, he was rather full of surprises.

Lehumo: "O pakile dilo ka moka (Did you pack everything)?"

Gatsha: "Everything, baby. If there is anything missing, I'll buy for you when we get there. Now, let's go."

She was about to pick up her back, but Gatsha wouldn't let her.

Gatsha: "That's my job, Sthandwa sami (My love). Your job is to simply look beautiful."

Lehumo chuckled on her way out. Unusually, they found Queen Kuli and Queen Nomtha sitting on the couch, drinking tea.

Queen Kuli: (fake smile) “Hawu (Wow), my kids. Where are you headed?”

Gatsha: (firmly) “We’re going somewhere.”

Even after she had been warned a few times, she still went against it all.

Lehumo: “We’re going on our honeymoon. In Belgium.”

Gatsha tried hiding his annoyance from her as he didn’t want to fight with her in front of those two. Queen kuli was rather more annoyed than ever.

Queen Kuli: (surprised) “Heh (Huh)?! Belgium? Hehe, Gatsha! Kusho ukuthi se uyenza imali mos wena (This means you’re actually making serious money, hey)? Even more than your father ever made. I never even went out of this country. Wena (you), Lehumo, you have barely been married for half a year and already you’re going to Belgium. I want what you’re using on my son.”

She and Queen Nomtha started laughing out loud, but Gatsha and Lehumo didn't get the joke. In fact, Gatsha was offended more than anything.

Gatsha: "Utheni (What did you just say)?"

Queen Kuli realized she had hit a nerve. She could never control Gatsha like she did Shaka.

Queen Kuli: "Oh, son, I didn't mean it like that. Benginodlala nje (I was just joking)."

Gatsha: "I'd appreciate it if you play with people your age. Lehumo is not your friend, and you lost the right to be her mother-in-law the moment I brought her here. I don't appreciate this fake attitude of yours towards her, so please do me a favour and stop it. It's not cute at all. I want the two of you gone by the time we come back."

Gatsha pulled Lehumo alongside him before Kuli could even answer anything. He slammed the door behind him and breathed out loud. He had to speak up before they even got to the car.

Gatsha: (annoyed) "Lehumo, when will you ever listen?"

Lehumo: "Excuse me?"

Gatsha: "You're constantly told not to trust my mother, yet you keep on being nice to her. Why do you never listen?"

Lehumo: (offended) "Gatsha, blame me for being nice to your mother. Tomorrow you'll be turning against me if I ever become nasty towards her."

Gatsha: (deep sigh) "Lehumo, I'm not angry at you and I'd never turn against you. Clearly you don't know my mom. Have you forgotten everything she has done to you?"

Lehumo: "No, but I – "

Gatsha: (interrupting) “No buts. Learn to listen, learn to observe then you’ll see who your enemies really are.”

Lehumo: “But Gatsha you make it sound so easy.”

Gatsha: “It is. You have got me, you don’t need her. Pay attention and then all will be fine.”

Lehumo nodded as tears began forming.

Gatsha: “No, please don’t cry. I promised you the world, remember?”

He kissed her gently on the lips and wiped her tears off.

Gatsha: “Let’s go.”

They both left the house and proceeded to the car. The driver took off with them as they headed to their next location. Meanwhile Queen Kuli and Queen Nomtha had just begun their next phase of their tragic plan.

Queen Nomtha: "Are you ready?"

Queen Kuli: "You don't have to ask twice."

They headed to Lehumo and Gatsha's bedroom and didn't even have to look very far. They found their laundry basket with their dirty laundry in it.

Queen Nomtha: (excited) "This is it."

Queen Kuli took Lehumo's piece of underwear and wasted no time. Even though she felt a bit heavy and that burning sensation came back again as soon as she entered the bedroom, she still had the audacity to steal her underwear. She quickly left with her mother and went to her

bedroom. Right there and then, she cast a spell on Lehumo's unborn baby, and onto Lehumo as well.

Queen Kuli: "I summon you dark sources, I ask you to let me have what I need to have. Sacrifice this unborn lamb to me and let me have the power I deserve! Let her also have no ability to fall pregnant again!"

They say good things happen to good people, of which is true to some extent. How many people have been praying and doing the right stuff according to them, yet they still get fucked over? At times it is not because you do the right thing, but it is because you think you are doing the right thing. How do you know if you are indeed praying right or for the right thing? At times you pray for something, but God does not give it to you because it is not yet time or you're not meant to have that. Lehumo was about to find out the hard way as to what happens when you become too trusting. They proceeded to a lodge Lehumo had never seen before. "Lehumo Lodge".

Lehumo: "Gatsha, what is this?"

Gatsha: (smiling) "My love, I promised you the world and I meant every word. This right here, is our very first lodge. Well, it is yours."

Lehumo: (shocked) "What do you mean?"

Gatsha: "I mean, you're the owner of this lodge. The title deed is in your name."

Lehumo: (teary) "Gatsha, you didn't have to do this."

Gatsha: "I had to. You are my love, Lehumo. Come, you're wasting time. You can come any time to see it."

He took her all the way to the back, which looked like a huge plot. There, they were met with a jet with "Lehumo" painted on it. That was enough to send her straight into a ball of tears.

Lehumo: (crying) "Gatsha..."

Gatsha: “Lehumo, I have been saying that I owe you the world. No wife of mine will go to bed hungry while I am alive, no child of mine will be deprived his father’s hard work. I love your personality and your loving kindness. I wish that you bestow that along with your beauty and intelligence upon our children. I pray each and every evening that God blesses us with the best. You are not what words can describe, for you are a clear depiction that God’s grace is beautiful and forever merciful. I want to see you cry tears of joy from now on, and no more of pain. I love you so much, Lehumo.”

Lehumo: “I love you too, my King.”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “This baby is going to turn you into a cry baby, Nkosiyami (My goodness).”

Lehumo: (chuckling) “Stop it.”

They got into the jet, and the pilot offered them some food and drinks. Lehumo was so proud of her husband, he managed to achieve so much in a very short space. Who knew what he had

achieved in years to come? Since she couldn't drink anymore, she was offered a virgin cocktail

with great food without lamb and eggs of course. She had never flown before, but with Gatsha by her side, everything seemed just too great. She had that weird feeling in the pit of her gut again, but dismissed it as flying jitters. It is always hard for a person to have fun while feeling like something just is not right. The more you ignore it, the more uneasy it makes you feel. She loved taking pictures with her husband in the air, overlooking the clouds and all the views she could spot. After falling asleep in the jet bedroom, she was woken up. An 11 hour flight is no child's play.

Gatsha: "Wake up, love. Sesifikile (We have arrived)."

It was probably about 8am in Belgium, and the place looked so beautiful. Almost every building looked like a monument of some sort. They finally arrived at one of Belgium's most prestigious hotels – The Steigenberger Wiltcher's, which had a Roman feeling to it. Almost everything was covered in marble and the reception was really warm and awesome – even after everyone had a long flight. The staff was very welcoming – all except for this particular girl at reception.

Receptionist: (Smiling) “Good morning, Mr. Ncube. How are you today?”

Gatsha hated disrespect and he could smell it from a mile away. He hated it even more seeing his wife uncomfortable.

Gatsha: (firmly) “Hello, Gina, isn’t it?”

Gina: (smiling) “Yes, yes, sir.”

Gatsha: “Well, Gina, I can’t say it is nice to meet you simply because you cannot be a receptionist at such a prestigious hotel and greet me only when you can clearly see that I have a woman around my arm. Not just any woman may I add, my beautiful wife.”

Gina: “Oh, I am so sorry, I didn’t mean it like that.”

Gatsha: “Of course you didn’t. I came here with my wife for our Honeymoon, so unless you have something worse to offer other than your first approach, I suggest you tell us now so that we can find ourselves another hotel.”

Gina felt offended, but most importantly she couldn’t lose her job for being rude to the King of Zululand.

Gina: “My apologies, Mr. Ncube. It won’t happen again.”

Gatsha got even more annoyed when Gina still didn’t acknowledge his wife’s presence after that.

Gatsha: “I still didn’t hear you apologize to my wife for being a complete chancer. I am sure you will get boys your age who will be interested in you, but as for me – I’m not one of them.”

Gina: “I didn’t mean it as such, I – “

Gatsha: “My wife and I had a very long flight. May you check us in right away, please.”

Gina noticed Gatsha was not one to be messed around with, and the manager came around as he noticed they had been standing there for more than usual.

Manager: "Is everything okay here?"

Gatsha: "I don't know, sir. Why don't you ask Gina here. Is everything okay here, Gina?"

Gina: (trembling) "Ye.. yes. Everything is just fine, sir. Your room is number 105, presidential suite as promised."

Gatsha: "Thank you, Gina. Oh, Manager, next time, please ensure that your employees have some manners."

With that said he walked towards the lift with Lehumo by his side.

Lehumo: "Gatsha, did you have to be so rude?"

Gatsha: “The sooner you learn to be tougher, Lehumo, the better. Life owes you nothing and neither do people, but the least they owe you is to return the same kindness you gave them. If not, then you have to be rude.”

Lehumo still felt as if Gatsha was harsh towards Gina despite clearly experiencing Gina’s disrespect. They got to their suite and it was too beautiful. Top floor, the view was exquisite, but being jet lagged, they just had to take a nap. Lehumo immediately got on the bed and dozed off. During the nap she took, she had a strange dream of her mother speaking to her. Oddly, Neriah could not be seen in the dream, it was as if she was in some sort of darkness and couldn’t get through to Lehumo.

Neriah: “Lehumo! Lehumo! Ngwanaka tsoga hle (Wake up my child)! Tsoga o rapele (Wake up and pray). Kotsi e tseleng (Danger is coming).”

Lehumo: “Mama? O ra bjang (What do you mean)?”

Neriah: “Rapela, ngwanaka (Pray, my child). That is the only way you will ever win this war. Danger is looming, but know that you can and will overcome it if you don’t lose your faith. The devil is much closer to you than you think. Isaiah 48:22 – “There is no rest for the wicked.”

Lehumo found herself frightened from the dream as she woke up drenched in sweat. She found Gatsha sound asleep next to her and didn’t want to bother him. She felt a strange cramping feeling in her abdomen, but decided not to wake him up. She was about to pray, until her phone rang. She had a weird feeling that told her not to answer the phone, but the goodness in her decided to answer it.

Lehumo: “Hello, Ma.”

Queen Kuli: “Hello, Lehumo! Ni hambe njani (How was your trip)?”

Lehumo: “Oh, it was okay, thank you.”

Queen Kuli: “And the baby? I hope you didn’t get too frightened on the flight. You have to take it easy always.”

The moment Kuli started asking about the baby, the cramps became worse.

Lehumo: “Oh, it was a good flight. I have to go ma, we’ll talk some other time.”

Queen Kuli: “Okay, keep w-“

Lehumo hung up before Kuli could even send her regards. Her cramps became worse and Lehumo immediately knelt down and prayed.

Lehumo: “Oh, Modimo yo a makatsang (My God of miracles), please protect my child, oh God. I ask you to please let this child live. If not, then take me instead. I do not want to lose this child. I pray and ask this in Jesus’ mighty name. Amen.”

Lehumo had tried bargaining with God, and even that is not enough. For when fate is written down, it cannot really be changed.

“The devil did not need to work at all when people were so willing to do his dirty work for him.”

There is a verse from Proverbs 28:26 which says, “Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.” At times when we are ridden with guilt, grief, sadness, anger and a whole lot of other dissatisfying emotions, we tend to forget to lean on God. Yes, it is not easy to lean on Him and ask Him for help when you are not in the right space; you know, when your mind is running amock with evil thoughts of what you can do to those that hurt you, or when you are simply feeling defeated; you have been praying but nothing works out. You have remained trusting and faithful in the Lord and yet things just go sideways – as you see it. When God said; “In His time, in His time. He makes all things beautiful, in His time.” – Ecclesiastes 3:11, He meant every word. At times we do pray, but not for the right guidance. Next time instead of praying for a car, write down all you wish to do and have and pray about it. Then, ask God if those are the right things that He wishes you to have and if not, may He give you a sign. Any sign. When the time is right, He will provide. A lot of people on this earth are just living, roaming around because they lack a way forward in life.

They do not know whether they are going or staying and that is because we always demand from God instead of asking what His plans are for us. When you pray for a car, six months down the line you do not get it, what have you done to ensure that you could have a car? Did you save up? Did you ensure that you have a good credit record? Do not sit and wait upon the Lord to give you things. If you want a husband, go out to functions, parties, weddings, funerals and churches, to ensure that you do find a potential husband. Go on dating sites if you have to. A lot of the time, they say bad things happen to good people, but I beg to differ. Bad things happen to good people because once you are a good person, you mistake being too trusting as being good. You do not speak up when people do you wrong – even when that pain deep in your gut had been warning you endlessly.

Lehumo's cramping had subsided, but had left her with a bit of discomfort. She managed to get up and enjoy the view in front of them. She found herself melting when Gatsha woke up and the first thing he did was wrap his arms around her and inhale her dazzling scent.

Gatsha: "Mkami (My wife)."

Lehumo: (smiling) "My husband."

Gatsha: "Injani le view (How is this view)? Do you like it?"

Lehumo: "I love it so much, I wish I could stay here."

Gatsha: "That can be arranged. You just say the word."

Lehumo: (chuckling) "Don't say that, Gatsha. You know very well we have a life back in Zululand. We can't leave everything and move to Belgium."

Gatsha: "Hawu (Goodness), we can do whatever we want. The world is our oyster, sthandwa sami (my love)."

Lehumo chuckled along with Gatsha but her face changed slightly as she held her tummy over Gatsha's arms on her belly.

Gatsha: (frowning) “Yini indaba (What is wrong)? Is it the baby?”

Lehumo: “I’m fine. Don’t worry about it.”

Gatsha: “Lehumo, you know how I feel about lies.”

Lehumo: (sigh) “I’ve been having weird cramps for a while now.”

Gatsha: (frowning) “The doctor did say that is normal, but are you bleeding?”

Lehumo: (shaking head) “No.”

Gatsha: “Let me order us some breakfast and if you still don’t feel good after that, I am taking you to the hospital.”

Lehumo: “Gatsha, o rata drama (you are dramatic).”

Gatsha: "I'd rather be dramatic than lose you and my baby."

That statement warmed Lehumo's heart, but a small part of hers wondered, what Gatsha would do if she lost the baby. Gatsha ordered them some food and while they waited, she asked him.

Lehumo: "Gatsha, what would you do if I lost this baby?"

Gatsha: "Do you remember what we said when we got married?"

Lehumo: "What exactly?"

Gatsha: "I becomes we. If we lose this baby, then it is not the end of the world. Yes, it would be really painful, but I believe that we'd get through it. My job would be to protect you from any more harm, to love and support you in all ways. We should not focus on the bad stuff, my love. God gave us this gift because He knew that we were worthy enough. If He

chooses to take the baby away from us, then He'll have his reasons."

Lehumo: (crying) "It's just that... I had a dream just now about my mom."

Gatsha: "What did she say?"

Lehumo: "She said I should pray really hard and that there is no rest for the wicked."

Gatsha: "Well, she is right indeed. Come, let's pray. You'll feel a lot more at ease afterwards."

Lehumo nodded and wiped off her tears. They prayed together and she felt a bit relieved after that. Their food came and she indulged in the delicious breakfast, hardly leaving any for Gatsha. They had a good time and she forgot that she had had pains a while ago. If only Lehumo had acted a lot swifter, perhaps things would have changed long ago, but unfortunately for her, danger was looming – it was doom or

die. While the danger was lurking, Queen Kuli was trying even harder to get rid of Lehumo. She had messed up a few things in the house, with Queen Nozipho gone for a meeting with some royal members in the area. She had gone to scout a whole new council for Gatsha and an advisor. With her gone, Kuli took it upon herself to do magic in the house – especially in Lehumo and Gatsha’s bedroom. Little did she also know that what she was doing was adding to her long list of offences against the word of God. Lehumo’s ancestors as well as Gatsha’s were protecting her, even though Kuli was trying against all odds to kill her child.

Lehumo and Gatsha took a long shower, with some love making in the process and headed out for some sight seeing. They went all the way from Grand Place in Brussels, to Canals and Belfry of Bruges and ended off to the Battlefields of Flanders. They had even heard that they had to try all the famous food, from Belgian Fries, Grey Shrimp Croquettes to Belgian Waffles and Belgian Chocolates. While looking at some monuments, they spotted a few memorable items to take home with them. Before they knew it

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Lehumo had taken over a million pictures. Of course, Gatsha had to be in more than half of them. It was a spectacular day

for them and she was overcome by tiredness, so they headed back to the hotel. Gatsha was such a traveller and didn't want them to sleep without having a great end to their day, so he had booked them both a spa treatment – full body. From hot stone therapy, to a whole 90 minute full body massage and full on facial.

Lehumo: "Gatsha, you didn't have to."

Gatsha: "I keep telling you I have to live up to my promise to you, Ntombenhle (Beautiful). Without you, life just wouldn't make sense. Now, come. It is high time my baby got pampered."

Lehumo: (frowning) "By your baby, are you referring to me or the one in my tummy?"

Gatsha: (chuckling) "I am referring to the one in your tummy, love. Of course, you'll always be my baby, but I prefer calling you more mature names like Ntombenhe (Beautiful), Sthandwa (Love), Ndhlovukazi (Queen), uyabona (you see)?"

Lehumo: (clicking tongue) “Mxm.”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “I still love you, more especially when you’re mad. I know I’m about to have a good time before we sleep.”

Lehumo felt so embarrassed, more especially since she had broken out of her sex shell and became quite an animal in bed. She was then able to dominate a lot more, role play and was a little bit into bondage. Gatsha loved how free spirited she became in bed, more especially when she had a bit of alcohol in her system. They had a really great massage, and ended the day off with a great dinner, and some really amazing sex. Lehumo was yet again disturbed by her dream, when she dreamt of her mother doing the very same thing – warning her in her dream. She immediately woke up and had cramps yet again. She ignored them by praying and couldn’t manage sleeping afterwards. She was rather amazed that Gatsha could sleep the whole night through, as he was a very light sleeper. He could probably hear a needle drop on the floor while sleeping. After her prayer, Kuli called. She had an urge to answer, but managed to ignore it. Six missed calls later, she still ignored it and only went back to sleep around 5am.

It was day 2 of their trip in Belgium, they were obviously a bit tired, but Gatsha took her out shopping all day. They took everything from jewellery to clothing to shoes and added a little bit of something for the baby. He just couldn't help it even though Lehumo was a bit sceptical of buying something as she was told it was bad omen to buy clothes for an unborn baby.

Lehumo: "You do know that it is bad luck to buy an unborn baby clothes, right?"

Gatsha: "I believe in God and my ancestors, love. How can I live my life based on old folk's tales? Where would the fun be in that?"

Lehumo: "I'm just saying, I think we should just be a bit more careful."

Gatsha: "Sthandwa sami (My love), we are careful, but that does not mean we cannot celebrate our lovely creation. Leave it all to God, please."

She nodded and decided to ignore the weird feeling in her gut once again. The day ended off on a good note, but came early morning. She had the very same dream of her mother warning her yet again, but this time it was a bit different.

Neriah: “Lehumo, ngwanaka (my child). It is time to wake up now. I tried, your father tried – we all tried, but it is best for Bahumi to join us this side. There is too much danger for him that side, we can’t let her have him.”

Lehumo: “Mama, what are you talking about?”

Neriah: “All is well, my child. Danger is lurking, but you’ll be fine. You’ll have another child again, but the drama has only just begun. Stay strong, nwanaka (my child). I can’t stay long, I have to go ensure that Bahumi is welcomed by us and not the dark forces.”

Lehumo: (crying) “Mama...”

Neriah: “Lebitso la ngwana ke (The child’s name is) Bahumi.”

Lehumo didn’t realize that her mother had left her and she was screaming and shouting in her sleep.

Lehumo: “Mama... mama!”

Gatsha: “Lehumo, Sthandwa sami (My love), wake up!”

Lehumo woke up from her dream, drenched in sweat.

Lehumo: (breathing heavily) “Gatsha... My mother... the baby... she spoke of evil... oh, God, my baby...”

Gatsha: “Slow down, what are you talking about?”

She was about to explain the dream to him, until she felt something warm come out of her down there.

Lehumo: (frightened) “Gatsha... what’s happening to me?”

She immediately got up and felt a big lump come out of her.

Lehumo: (crying) “Please tell me you don’t see blood.”

Gatsha saw a lot of blood on her pants, and a huge ball-like substance drop from out of her. He knew that his worst fear had been confirmed, but his main goal was to ensure her safety.

Gatsha: (teary) “Sthandwa sami (My love)...”

Lehumo: (crying) “Gatsha!”

Gatsha: “Please, don’t look down.”

When someone tells you that, it is as if your brain immediately tells you to do the opposite. She looked down indeed, and saw the small, undeveloped fetus on the floor in his little sack.

Lehumo: (crying) "No, no, no! Gatsha, no! I refuse."

Gatsha: "Sthandwa sami (My love)."

Lehumo let out a loud wail and screamed.

Lehumo: (crying) "My baby!"

“Laws of nature do not make exceptions for nice people. A bullet has no conscience; neither does a malignant tumour or an automobile gone out of control. That is why good people get sick and get hurt as much as anyone.” – Harold S. Kushner

We all deal with pain differently; some cry until they can't any more while some don't cry at all and explode one day when all has been exposed and it becomes too much. Some isolate everyone from their world until they heal. Gatsha rushed Lehumo to the hospital. Along the way, she had become mute. Gatsha just held her hand while trying to stop the tears from falling. He knew his wife was in serious anguish, and what hurt him most is the inability to stop it. They had finally arrived at the Emergency room, and the doctor took one look at her and knew that the baby was gone. He had examined her and all.

Doctor: “I'm afraid it's bad news.

Those four words are always enough to send someone into an emotional coma.

Gatsha: "Just say it, Doc."

Doctor: "I'm afraid you had a spontaneous miscarriage."

Lehumo's mind went into immediate shut down.

Gatsha: "What caused it?"

Doctor: "Well in most cases, it just happens. We don't even have a reason for the cause thereof."

Gatsha: (softly) "Thank you, Doc."

Lehumo: (agitated) "Do you have to give it such a wonderful name?"

Doctor: "Excuse me?"

Lehumo: “Spontaneous? Really, Doctor, Spontaneous?! I lost my baby and you call that fucking spontaneous?!”

Gatsha was a bit shocked, but he really understood where she was coming from – a place full of hurt, anger and immediate grief.

Doctor: “I’ll give you two some time.”

Gatsha just nodded and the doctor left.

Gatsha: “Sthandwa sami (My love), please, take it easy, ngiyakucela (I’m begging you).”

Lehumo went mute on Gatsha, which made him fear the worst.

Gatsha: (teary) “I know, you are hurting just as much as I do. We cannot compare the pain, but we are still young and we will have more children, baby.”

Lehumo: “How can you be calm at a time like this?”

Gatsha: “I’m not calm, I’m trying to be strong for the both of us. If I crumble, what will happen to you?”

Lehumo felt that, really and just cried. She wallowed in his arms and they cried together. Just like that, they had lost their first child – a child they hadn’t had a chance to enjoy the news of for a deserved time. Such is life; it is very, very unpredictable. Sometimes you experience moments that are immensely painful – and sometimes you experience incredibly beautiful moments. If life was smooth sailing 24/7, without any challenges – what would be of us? Would we still get up in the morning and look forward to the day? Would we still set goals and have dreams we’d like to achieve? Would we still have the drive to compete and force ourselves out of horrible situations? God was no fool when he created heaven and earth and all His people. Life was supposed to be nice and dramaless, but of course, the devil just had to ruin it all with his idea of challenges.

A few days later...

Gatsha and Lehumo had to go back home, as they no longer had any reason to celebrate. Their honeymoon was ruined just as much as their wedding was. Lehumo couldn't help but start wondering if indeed she was meant to be Gatsha's. They indeed had to rush home as Queen Nozipho told them of a ceremony they had to do to cleanse the both of them – especially Lehumo, otherwise bad luck would follow them. Gatsha had felt as if he had lost weight instantly in just a few days. He had tried to get Lehumo to eat or even just breathe a word to him, but it was as if she had just gone mute. He felt hopeless; he hated being of no use – especially to his wife. So, he decided to call the one person who would be able to make Lehumo reason. Even when they landed, she would just keep quiet and allow him to hold her and do whatever he wanted. As soon as they got into the Royal Palace; everything felt weird and seemingly different to the both of them. It was as if there was an unusual aura in the house. Brenda appeared from the stairs with bloodshot eyes.

Brenda: (teary) “Oh, my friend.”

Lehumo just rushed towards Brenda and wailed in her arms. Gatsha couldn't help but feel a tad bit envious. He was

the one who was supposed to be comforting his wife like that. His heart dropped to the pit of his stomach.

Gatsha: "I'll go make you guys something to eat."

Brenda: (softly) "Thank you."

While Brenda went upstairs with Lehumo, Kuli appeared out of nowhere, trying to act like the comforting mother, but Queen Nozipho stopped her in her tracks.

Queen Kuli: "Oh, Mfana wami (my boy)."

She tried hugging him, but he didn't allow her.

Queen Kuli: "I'm sorry. I know, you must still be angry at me."

Gatsha: "Must everything be about you?"

He was making some sandwiches with juice for his wife and her best friend.

Queen Kuli: "I didn't mean it like that, Gatsha. You know it."

Gatsha: "Do I?"

Kuli thought that her magic had worked and that her son would see nothing wrong with her deeds, but he was the same old Gatsha. She was confused, as she genuinely thought that her muthi would work in her favour

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but to no avail – leaving her even more stressed than before.

Gatsha: "Don't you have anywhere else to be? Like away from this kingdom?"

She stared into Gatsha's eyes, but he was dead serious. She realized she had no stone left to turn, but rather another trick up her sleeve.

Queen Kuli: "You're still grieving, Gatsha. I'll leave you to it."

She left leaving Gatsha irritable, and found Queen Nozipho along the way.

Queen Nozipho: "Yah (Yes), Mthakathi ndini (You witch)."

Queen Kuli: "Ag, Nozipho, ufunani (what do you want)?"

Queen Nozipho: "You really think that I am afraid of you, neh (don't you)?"

Queen Kuli: "Why else haven't you killed me yet? Better yet, why didn't you stop me in my tracks when I killed your precious great grandson?"

She thought Queen Nozipho would get angered, but she was just like Sfiso, calm like nothing else.

Queen Nozipho: (chuckling) “You really think that I did it out of fear of you?”

Queen Kuli: (worried) “What else would it be? You’re standing here while your son and annoying granddaughter in law are weeping over a child I killed.”

Queen Nozipho: (laughing) “You honestly think that you took him away?”

Queen Kuli’s smirk slowly faded from her face as she stared at her in silence.

Queen Nozipho: “The ancestors took her before you could even get to him.”

Queen Kuli: (worried) “You’re lying.”

Queen Nozipho: “Okay. If you say so, but if you must know, Kuli, you’re a very small fish in a big pond full of piranha’s, very holy piranhas.”

Kuli remained speechless.

Queen Nozipho: “You see, Neriah and Noah, along with Sfiso are protecting those two like nothing else. Sure, you are going to try your evil deeds on them, but it will all come back striking you twice as hard. You will have no one to turn to.”

Queen Kuli: “Still, you’ll be gone very soon all thanks to your cancer.”

Queen Nozipho: “I’d rather die full of the Lord’s grace than live to suffer like you. Your little stunt that you pulled has cost you so much already. I’ll die and so will your mother. I’ll be in heaven, but your evil mother will be burning in flames for all eternity.”

Queen Kuli: (panicky) “You’re bluffing.”

Queen Nozipho: “I don’t see your sidekick anywhere, do you?”

Queen Kuli started worrying. She hadn't seen her mother ever since the night before."

Queen Nozipho: "You have angered the Ncube ancestors, you little shit. I can't wait to see you suffer from the other side."

She left her standing there deep in thought. She quickly got out of her mini trance and rushed to her mother's bedroom. Meanwhile, Nozipho had planned her last goodbye to her grandson.

Queen Nozipho: "Gatsha, how are you holding up?"

Gatsha: (sifh) "Honestly, not very good, Gogo (Granny)."

Queen Nozipho: "It gets worse before it gets better."

Gatsha: "They all say that."

Queen Nozipho: "That's because it is true. Look at me."

She held his warm, innocent face with her old, wisdom-ridden hands. She stared straight in his eyes and saw everything – all the past, present and future pain and it hurt her even more than the physical pain of the cancer eating her up alive from the inside. She had not told anyone, as she didn't want them to stress or resort to chemotherapy. She wanted to die in peace, with Gatha and Lehumo by her side.

Queen Nozipho: "Listen to me, Gatsha. I don't have much time yet, but I just want you to know that you will do really well. A really tough storm is coming, but always remember the purity of your love for Lehumo. Never forget to live in the moment, and strive for happiness. I will always love you, my child."

Gatsha: "Why does it seem like you're saying goodbye?"

Queen Nozipho: "That's because I am. I am saying goodnight. Be there for your wife, she will come by."

She kissed his forehead and started chanting clan names.

Queen Nozipho: “Your son is alright. He will be well taken care of by the ancestors. Remember this; Bongi is the only one allowed to cleanse your wife.”

With that said, she left him standing there. Isn't it funny how warnings come at the least unexpected time? It's almost as if God tries to test our patience and stretches it really, really thin.

“Nothing seems to tempt fate more than mentioning the possibility of something bad happening.” – Dondald G. Firesmith

One week later....

It had been a week since Queen Nozipho was laid to rest. She unexpectedly never woke up the following morning after her brief goodbye to Gatsha. Funny enough poor Lehumo had dreamt of Queen Nozipho that evening, telling her that all is well and she had gained another great ancestor who would fight her battles for her. It took some time, but Lehumo was slowly learning to get back on her feet. She had to go back to school anyways, so she didn't hesitate to do so. That put her mind at ease a little bit, because she had kept busy. Her marriage was not really strained to say the least, but she and Gatsha were having a bit of trouble reconnecting again – even though he was genuinely trying to get things back to normal between him and his wife. Kuli of course had something to do with all the doom and gloom in the Royal Palace. With Beatrice gone to retire, Raesibe fleeing for her safety and with Bonggi raising Hosea, it was just a bit too lonely for Lehumo.

Upon trying so hard to please her evil mother-in-law, Kuli just became worse. What was even more alarming was that Kuli played nice whenever Gatsha was around and was rather horrible towards Lehumo whenever they were alone. She was still surprised to see Lehumo hadn't even complained to Gatsha about her nasty behaviour towards her – not even once. A bit of good news; Kuli's evil ways were indeed catching up with her, though. The very same day that Queen Nozipho passed on, so did Queen Nomtha. Both in the very same palace. A few of the people of Zululand called it “insanely disturbing” while some claimed that they were cursed. Life for the young King and Queen was starting to be a bit tough, without normal elders to guide them. Gatsha had to choose a royal council, who was supposed to be elected and made known to the people of Zululand.

It was tough, as he didn't really have many people to choose from, so he chose the least expected person – King Duduzile Dambuza; King of Enande who also happened to be the husband of Kuli's arch nemesis – Queen Abigail Dambuza. This very same king was the father of Gatsha's best friend, so it sort of made sense to make him one of the council members and his personal advisor. Of course, much like Sfiso, King Duduzile

married a woman who was rather evil, vain and completely unsatisfied with 99% of everything. She was the typical beauty queen, with long nails, long lashes, long weaves ranging from Peruvian to Brazilian, and even wore long heels. She never missed any occasion and was as lazy as a sloth. She could never lift a single finger to do anything in her house. Her husband, unlike King Sfiso, loved her dearly and would do just about anything for her. Much like everyone – he was also oblivious to her extra-curricular activities. Of course, this was Queen Abigail's plan to get her own little space in the Royal Kingdom, as Kuli's plans failed dismally. She was demoted by Mkhulu for failing to deliver the royal heir's soul to him, and for also being disrespectful. Lehumo was minding her business with her best friend at the hospital cafeteria, where she was doing her practicals.

Brenda: "Chomi (friend), you barely touched your food. It's been half an hour now. What is it?"

Lehumo: "Nothing. I don't know what you mean."

Brenda: "Spit it out."

Lehumo: (deep sigh) "I don't know, my friend. I just haven't been myself these past few weeks."

Brenda: "It's normal to feel that way, but also you're contributing to your misery."

Lehumo: (surprised) "Excuse me?"

Brenda: "Hear me out, please."

Lehumo took a deep sigh without breathing a word.

Brenda: "You have the best husband in the world; a husband who adores you, who literally has been trying everything to please you and make you smile again – yet you just keep pushing him away. All you ever do is cry, I am not blaming you, but Lehumo, there is still life after mourning. Haven't you for a second thought about his feelings? That he might be in pain just as much as you? He is probably broken now that you're also pushing him away. I mean, come on friend, have you even

noticed that he hasn't shaved his beard in like two weeks and that he has lost a few kilos?"

Lehumo sunk in her chair while processing Brenda's words. She knew deep down that Brenda was right and as usual, the truth was a bitter pill to swallow.

Brenda: "Do you want him to find solace in another woman? Make another woman pregnant?"

Lehumo: (teary) "No, of course not."

Brenda: "Then get up and be the Lehumo he married – the goddess he fell in love with. You have no idea just how many of these bitches actually want to be you. If he had to walk through that door right now, they would leave patients to die and just drool over your man. Notice the small things, babe. He adores you. You can still try again, you're still young."

She let the tears fall but quickly wiped them off. She knew that Brenda was right – totally right. Just as she was about to respond, she saw a few of the nurses and some of the students staring behind her. They started drooling and aweing from wherever they were. She knew that it was Gatsha by his scent. His cologne could wake up the whole hospital and probably bring bed-ridden patients back to life.

Gatsha: “Ntombenhle (Beautiful).”

She slowly turned around and saw her beautiful beau standing before her; dressed in a gorgeous black Italian suit. He did look a bit thinner, but at least he managed to shave his beard and get a new haircut. He had a bunch of Sunflowers in his hand that time instead of lilies or roses. Yep, that was Gatsha – he had his ways and he refused to be predictable. His smile melted her heart and she knew that she had to pull up her socks. She knew that she had been neglecting her husband and that she had been mourning for too long. Of course, the pain will never go away, but as Revelation 21:4 says – “He will wipe every tear from their eyes.

There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” She knew that new beginnings always await, as she recalled the verse from 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 – “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen

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since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” That’s the beauty of life; yes, she may have lost her precious unborn Sfiso, but she knew that he was blessed to be an angel and cared for by the ancestors. They named him after his grandfathers; Sfiso Noah Ncube. It is customary in the African tradition to name your children – even if you lost them during a miscarriage or still born.

Lehumo: (teary) “Gatsha...”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “Hawu (Goodness), I barely said a word and you’re already crying. Kumele ngize lana emsebenzini wakho ngemihla ke (I should come to your workplace more often).”

Lehumo: (blushing) "What are you doing here?"

Gatsha: "I came to give my beautiful wife a bunch of flowers and to take you out."

Lehumo turned to look at Brenda.

Brenda: "Hayi (No), don't look at me. This time, I know nothing."

She looked back at Gatsha and smiled as he gently wiped off her tears.

Gatsha: "Manje uthini, Mkami (So, what do you say, my wife)? Siyodla ilunch noma cha (Are we going to eat lunch or not)?"

Lehumo: "I'm still on my lunch break, Gatsha. You'll get me into trouble."

Gatsha: "I already spoke to your manager who was more than delighted to let the queen go and have lunch with her husband."

Lehumo: "I don't want people to think I'm getting special favours just because I am the Queen."

Brenda: (rolling e yes) "Ai, Party pooper. Hamba (Go)."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "You are the queen, though aren't you?"

Lehumo: "Gatsha bathing (my goodness)."

Gatsha: "I will build you your own hospital if they have a problem. Now come."

He lifted his arm a little bit and handed her the flowers. She took her bag and held his arm as they both walked out together.

Gatsha: "See you soon, Bee."

Brenda: (smiling) "Like wise."

Lehumo had been so consumed by grief that she had forgotten the stares people always give them. They no longer stared much, though since she actually became queen. Of course, majority of them would have killed to be in her position. As they walked out, she noticed a big car that was covered with a car cover and a big red bow.

Lehummo: (frowning) "And this?"

Gatsha: (smiling) "Come on. Let me hold your flowers while you unwrap your gift."

Lehumo felt her heart pacing at an abnormal rate, while she felt herself trembling. People were taking videos and pictures of them, while some of the Hospital staff walked out to watch the latest on the King and Queen. She walked towards the car, trembling with both excitement and fear at the same time. She

unwrapped the car and came across a beautiful, blue Jaguar E-Pace. It had an envelope addressed to her. She gave Gatsha her famous look.

Gatsha: (smiling) “Vula, hao (Open it, goodness).”

She opened it and it read; “My beautiful Ntombenhle (Beautiful girl), the world is our oyster. May this new baby take you on magical rides. With love, your husband.”

That was Lehumo’s very first car and she was in total shock. She felt herself become overjoyed immediately as she jumped onto Gatsha and gave him a very long kiss and hug.

Lehumo: “You didn’t have to, you know.”

Gatsha: “I can buy you a car every day of the week if you’re going to kiss me like that.”

Lehumo heard everyone clapping and screaming. She hated attention and her husband knew that. She also noticed Bee

standing there with her phone taking a video. She winked at Lehumo and that was an indication that she was in on that. How she always managed to keep secrets from her like that was astounding because Brenda was very talkative.

Gatsha: "Shall we get out of here?"

Lehumo: "Yes, please."

Gatsha handed her the keys.

Gatsha: "Come, it's time for you to drive your baby."

She got into the car and loved the smell immediately. The leather interior was a bonus for her. The fact that he also got it so personalized was just amazing. The number plate was already personalized to "Ndhlovukazi", and as soon as she started the car, the voice automated tape greeted her every time. "Hello, Ndhlovukazi. Where would you like to go?"

Lehumo: (puzzled) "Hao (Goodness), Gatsha. Did you have to?"

Gatsha: “When I married you, I promised you the world, didn’t I?”

Lehumo: (blushing) “Where are we going?”

Gatsha: (speaking to the automated system) “Jaguar, take us to *****.”

Automated system: “Your wish is my command, Ndhlovukazi.”

The system immediately switched on the GPS to the unknown address. Lehumo had no idea where they were going, but somehow she just never got used to her husband’s many ways of surprising her.

Lehumo: “Am I always supposed to ask it where to take me?”

Gatsha: “Not really, but I prefer it if you did. That way I can track you.”

Lehumo: (puzzled) "Gatsha!"

Gatsha: "Relax, Sthandwa sami (My love). Not like that, but we are very prominent now so I won't take any chances. I wouldn't want anyone to hurt you."

That made Lehumo ask herself; how rich were they exactly? She had become such a good driver all thanks to her teacher Gatsha. They arrived at a very tall building; probably the tallest in Zululand. He had done amazing things ever since he became King. She didn't really know how he did it, but Gatsha had a way of getting things done. It was as if it was in his DNA. Lehumo became stunned when she noticed the name on the building "Noah's Ark".

Lehumo: (looking at Gatsha) "What is this, Gatsha?"

Gatsha: (smiling) "Park right there, I'll tell you just now."

She felt herself tremble a bit. That was Lehumo – whenever she was happy she would cry and tremble; whenever she was shocked or sad – she'd do the same. She was a bit too soft for everyone's liking – but was a huge bomb when angry. She parked the car and Gatsha still had the decency to get out of his side and open the door for her. He held her by her hand and walked with her. She was amazed by the beauty of the building – it was so modernly built and had such elegant style to it. The walls were all so natural; painted with dark grey and every floor had already been furnished.

They headed straight to the top floor; where Gatsha's office was. It was the biggest of them all of course and the only one on the floor, with a receptionist desk just opposite his door. His whole office was covered in glass walls – with dark oak inside. The walls could get covered with electric blinds at the push of a button. Everything was neat of course. He even had a resting place behind another door – which had a bed to sleep on. Gatsha opened the sliding glass door just behind his desk and Lehumo couldn't help but cry. They were met with a man dressed in a suit; a beautiful romantic scene lay before her – a blanket on the ground with pillows to sit on; lots of food and lots of champagne. Gatsha thanked the man as he left the two of them alone.

Lehumo: "Are you going to tell me what's going on?"

Gatsha: (smiling) "Turn around."

She did as she was told, cautiously. Gatsha made her face the view from the top floor. It was a beautiful sight and she could even see the sun rather far from the building. He held her from behind and breathed into her ear.

Gatsha: "Close your eyes and tell me how you feel right now."

Lehumo: "What do you mean?"

Gatsha: "Be honest and tell me how you feel standing right here with your eyes closed."

Lehumo: (deep sigh) "I feel vulnerable, but safe. For some odd reason this place makes me feel serene."

Gatsha: “That’s exactly how I felt when I first stepped onto the ground, before building this place.”

Lehumo turned around as she could no longer take the suspense.

Gatsha: “This, my dear wife, is our new company – named after your father.”

Lehumo couldn’t stop the tears.

Gatsha wiped them away and took out his tablet. He showed her his next surprise.

Gatsha: “This right here is our new venture – our very own bursary scheme named after my father – The Sfiso foundation. And this, this right here, is your very own hospital that will be built starting from tomorrow.”

Lehumo looked at the 3D design of the hospital and noticed the name – “Neriah Mkhabela Hospital.”

Lehumo: (crying) “Gatsha...”

Gatsha: “I promised you the world, my wife, and I always keep my promise.”

“When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it – always.” – Mahatma Gandhi

Grief and fear are so horrible; they can make you lose yourself so quickly and easily and also for a very long time. Lehumo had forgotten for a while just how much she had to be grateful for. Just when she thought that she had had enough of her day, Gatsha played a song – Isiginci by Mduduzi ft. Big Zulu.

Gatsha: (stretching his hand) “May I have this dance?”

Lehumo smiled as she gladly handed Gatsha her hand and they slow danced to the song.

Lehumo: “Why do you love me so much, Gatsha?”

Gatsha: “I have over a million reasons, but I can choose the best one right now – because you deserve being loved.”

Lehumo couldn't believe that she had actually bagged a man like Gatsha – though they had been married for quite some time by then. They danced to the song until it was finished and they ate their special meal – from starters to main course and dessert – Lehumo's favourite. They had actually enjoyed their own time alone; away from the drama and people. It felt so good for her to be in her husband's company without being in sorrow. After their meals and a few drinks, they were a bit tipsy – she more than Gatsha.

Gatsha: "I think it is time we headed home. I'll drive."

Lehumo: (frowning) "Am I that drunk?"

Gatsha: (smiling) "I like spoiling you – come."

They had their own fun after kissing one another knowing that they couldn't have sex yet, but Gatsha had always been a gentleman. She gave him the keys and they got into the car and headed home. Little did they know that Queen Kuli just never gave up. As soon as they entered the yard, they saw a

car that was rather different to the usual cars that frequented the palace.

Lehumo: “Whose car is that?”

Gatsha: “I don’t know, but I don’t like this. Come, let’s go.”

He had already opened her door for her. They were so excited and full of happiness – until they walked into the house and their facial expressions changed from happy to horrid.

Gatsha: (irritated) “Kuli, what’s going on?”

Queen kuli: (smiling) “Oh, Gatsha, mfana wami (my boy), you remember Alice, Abigail’s daughter, don’t you?”

There was Kuli at it again. She had gone back to being the dismissive, evil mother in law who completely ignored her daughter-in-law’s presence every chance she got. Gatsha was a very observant man and he hated repeating himself. Lehumo

on the other hand was rather wounded by Kuli's dismissive insolence, but she tried hard not to show it.

Gatsha: (infuriated) "Kuli, you should know by now what kind of man I am. I earnestly hate repeating myself and right now, I detest your atrocious attitude towards my wife. How many times do I have to tell you to treat her kindly?"

Queen Kuli realized just how much Gatsha still loved Lehumo – despite all her evil nonsense.

Queen Kuli: (softly) "I am so sorry for being rude to you, Lehumo. Gatsha, it will never happen again."

Gatsha: "It had better not. Remember – I am doing you a favour by letting you stay here. You are of no use to anyone."

Queen Kuli felt really hurt by her son's rejection, but that still was not enough to stop her from doing what she had planned to do.

Queen Kuli: "I know, I'm really sorry."

Gatsha gently pulled Lehumo away to him as they left her standing there with the stunned Alice.

Queen Kuli: (frowning) "Aren't you going to say hi to Alice?"

Gatsha was seemingly annoyed and couldn't hide it any longer. He stopped and turned while he still had Lehumo's hand in his.

Gatsha: "I don't care much for uninvited guests. The next time you feel the need to introduce me to young, unambitious girls, I suggest you inform me before hand."

He left them both standing there flabbergasted as he proceeded to his bedroom with his wife.

Alice: (annoyed) "I thought you said he didn't love her?"

Queen Kuli: “He doesn’t. It’s just that he does not know it yet.”

Alice: “She must have used some potion on him or something. I mean, no man has ever rejected me. They fall for me instantly just by looking at me.”

Queen Kuli was deeply annoyed by Alice, but she had to hide it. Alice was her best and rather only choice in her devious plan to get Gatsha to leave Lehumo. She hated having no control over Gatsha as she had over Shaka. With Shaka as King, she knew that he would have danced to her tune – along with any bimbo he could have chosen to marry. With Gatsha, it was just another story – what you saw is really what you got with him and Lehumo was not that easily manipulated. She wanted to get along with her mother-in-law, badly, but after the miscarriage she had started seeing quite a lot of red flags from Kuli. That along with Brenda’s advice made her realize that she needed to be careful as she had been living with a serpent in her own house. Alice was beautiful yes, with beautiful, dark skin, huge hips and very large buttocks. Much like her mother, she had an hour glass figure, but was a plus sized lady. She was just as vain as her mother.

Queen Kuli: "Gatsha is not your usual, typical guys. He will love you, give him time."

Alice: "Time is not on my side! I should tell my mom. She'd do a better job at this."

Queen Kuli: (irritated) "Your bloody mom is not the boss of me. Be careful what you do or say to me, ntombazanyana (girly). Ngingakucisha (I can eliminate you) in the blink of an eye. Keep testing me."

Kuli was so serious. She had grown tired of Alice's spoiled and flippant nature.

Alice: "I'm sorry."

Meanwhile in Gatsha and Lehumo's bedroom, they were still reeling from the day they had. Gatsha had run them a bath and they both got in, with Lehumo sitting in between Gatsha's legs.

Gatsha: “Ucabangani kangaka, mkami (What are you thinking of, my wife)?”

Lehumo: (sigh) “I’m just thinking of today. I had such a beautiful day, Gatsha. Thank you so much.”

Gatsha: (smiling) “It’s my job to make you happy

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Sthandwa sami (My love).”

They finished taking their bath and headed to the bedroom. Gatsha lotioned Lehumo and she did him. He was always so filled with the need for intimacy, he didn’t need to have intercourse to be intimate.

Gatsha: (frowning) “Manje (And now)? Why ungathi uba muncu (Why do you look so sour)?”

Lehumo: “It’s just that... I feel so bad when we had such a good day and I can’t even fulfil my wifely duties.”

Gatsha seemed rather disappointed by Lehumo's statement.

Gatsha: "Who said that it is your wifely duties to have intercourse with me every single night?"

Lehumo: (embarrassed) "Well, I mean Brenda and Mam'Raesibe told me that married men need to have sex every day or else a woman wouldn't be performing her duties."

Gatsha: (disappointed) "Lehumo, any man who expects his wife to sleep with him even when she is not okay is really disturbed and a poor excuse of a man. Your wifely duties are to love me, be faithful to me and make me happy. In order to make me happy you have to be happy. You lost our baby a little less than two weeks ago. What kind of an animal would I be if I expect you to be intimate with me right now? I'm not most married men – my name is Gatsha Ncube, keeper of Lehumo Ncube's heart. In order to make me happy you have to be happy. You lost our baby a little less than two weeks ago. What kind of an animal would I be if I expect you to be intimate with me right now? I'm not most married men – my name is Gatsha Ncube,

keeper of Lehumo Ncube's heart. I take so much pride in that title – even more than that of a King.”

Lehumo felt like crying, but she refused to cry. She truly knew at that moment that she was really blessed. They prayed even though something just felt a bit weird in their bedroom, but managed to sleep. Upon falling asleep, Lehumo found herself having yet another dream about her mother.

Neriah: “Lehumo, ngwanake go thoma neng o sa tshepe Modimo (since when don't you trust God)?”

Lehumo: “O ra bjang, Mama (What do you mean)?”

Neriah: “You are starting to lack faith, my baby. Remember what I always said to you – the devil feels most at home in a doubtful spirit. You need to pray, my child. The road is about to get bumpier, but with great faith and trust in God reaps many benefits. I have been saying you should not trust her – you know who I am talking about. Your instincts are right – they always are. That weird, stabbing feeling you get in your gut everytime you see her means you should not trust

her. Your father asked me to tell you that the child's name is Likhwezi."

She found herself drenched in sweat as she woke up from her disturbing dream.

Gatsha: (worried) "What is it? Are you okay? You're sweating."

Lehumo: (breathing heavily) "Oh, I... I just had a bad dream."

Gatsha: "I'll go make you a cup of warm cocoa. It will calm you down then you can tell me all about your dream."

Lehumo: "No, no need to stress yourself. Can we pray instead?"

Gatsha: (smiling) "My wife is back."

He kissed her forehead – despite all the sweat and they knelt down and prayed. They lay it all to God. Lehumo hadn't

prayed in a long time; Gatsha was always the one who led their prayer sessions. She had been so wrapped up with what she had lost and completely forgot that she had a lot to be thankful for.

Lehumo: “Modimo Ntate yo a rategang (Our loving God), I thank you so much for all you have given me. Mostly, I thank you for the amazing people around me; my wonderful best friend; my amazing parents in heaven and of course, the best husband in the world. I do not know, lord why you see me worthy of your mercy and grace, but there surely must a reason why you have kept me going until now. I know, I haven’t been very diligent in prayer and being thankful, but all that is about to change. I thank you for allowing my parents to still speak to me from the other side. I know that you have bigger and better plans for me. I ask that you help me get stronger in all ways – physically; emotionally and spiritually. I ask that you look after me and all those I love, oh, lord. I ask that you bless my enemies with kindness and a forgiving heart, for I do not know what I have done to wrong them. Deuteronomy 28:7 – 17 says; “God will defeat your enemies who attack you. They’ll come at you on one road and run away on seven roads. God will order a blessing on your barns and workplaces; he’ll bless you in the land that God, your God, is giving you. God will form you as a people holy to him, just as he promised you, if you keep the commandments of God, your God, and live the way he has

shown you. All the people's on Earth will see you living under the Name of God and hold you in respectful awe.

God will lavish you good things: children from your womn, offspring from your animals, and crops from your land, the land that God promised your ancestors that he would give you. God will throw open the doors of his sky vaults and bless the work you take in hand. You will lend to many nations but you yourself won't have to take out a loan. God will make you the head, not the tail; you'll always be the top dog, never the bottom dog, as you obediently listen to and diligently keep the commands of God, your God, that I am commanding you today. Don't swerve an inch to the right or left from the words that I command you today by going off following and worshipping other gods. Here's what will happen if you don't obediently listen to the voice of God, your God, and diligently keep all commandments and guidelines that I'm commanding you today. All these curses will come down hard on you: God's curse in the city, God's curse in the country; God's curse on your basket and bread bowl." Forgiveness instills peace in a person, just as Luke 23:24 says; "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." Help me forgive those who trespass against me. Strengthen my marriage and my heart, oh, Lord. I ask this in Jesus name. Amen."

“Poverty can’t make you miserable, only a bad character and a weak spirit can do that.” – John Taylor Gatto

It had been a few days since Kuli tried to pull off her fruitless stunt, and ever since then she had to bite her tongue whenever Gatsha was around. She was basically on his last nerve – so one wrong move and it meant she was out. She didn’t have her sidekick mother by her side anymore and Mkhulu’s patience towards her had grown thin. She had gone to him to try and plead with him to give her her powers back.

Queen Kuli: “Sawubona (Greetings), Mkhulu,”

Mkhulu: (sigh) “Ja (Yes), Kuli. Ufunani (What do you want)?”

Queen Kuli: “Hawu (Goodness), since when do you ask members what they want whenever we come see you?”

Mkhulu: “I don’t have all day, you know.”

Queen Kuli: "Fine. I want my powers back."

Mkhulu: "Angizwa (Excuse me)?"

Even in desperate times, Kuli forgot her manners.

Queen Kuli: "I need my powers back, please."

Mkhulu: (chuckling) "Is this the former Queen of Zululand begging for mercy?"

Queen Kuli: (frowning) "I am still a queen."

Mhulu: "Well, keep telling yourself that. I can't give you any powers. You are of no use. You have not done anything fruitful besides killing those four. And even so, their souls retreated back to their ancestors and were not captured by us."

Queen Kuli: "Please, I'm desperate here. How do you expect me to get you Lehumo if you don't give me any powers?"

Mkhulu: “The same way you always managed before me. Now, if there is nothing else – I have business to attend to.”

Queen Kuli was shocked that not even Mkhulu had time for her anymore. It felt as if things just weren't going her way. She had become so desperate. Seeing Lehumo living an even better life than she ever did frustrated her to the core. Knowing that her daughter was about to graduate from University and she couldn't even throw her the party of the century like she had planned hurt her even more. She walked back into the royal palace annoyed more than anything. She found Lehumo dressed up about to leave.

Lehumo: (smiling) “Hello, Ma.”

Queen Kuli: (irritated) “Mxm. Uyaphi ke wena (Where are you going)?”

Lehumo: “If you must know I am going to do some last minute shopping for tomorrow morning's party. Gatsha is announcing the new council to the public, remember?”

Queen Kuli: “How could I forget? I was a queen long before you were even born. You’re not even Zulu, so you won’t know our customs.”

She had gone back to being the evil, dismissive Kuli, but what surprised her was that Lehumo was not even offended at all. She kept smiling at her – irritating her even more.

Lehumo: (smiling) “Okay then. Have a good day.”

Queen Kuli: “Are you trying to trap me wena Lehumo?”

Lehumo: “Excuse me, Ma?”

Queen Kuli: “How come you’re not offended or crying after I just insulted you?”

Lehumo: (smiling) “Well, because I know that we all go through something. I know you’re not yourself today. You should probably rest a bit.”

She left Kuli standing right there, overcome with shock. As soon as Lehumo closed the door behind her, she took a deep sigh and refused to cry. For even she knew 1 Corinthians 15:33 very well; “Do not be deceived: “bad company ruins good morals.” Ever since she had gone back to praying alongside her husband, things were really good. She refused to be a victim of circumstances any longer and decided to rule alongside her husband. The people of Zululand loved her so much and respected her for being completely different to Kuli – she had more compassion and kindness and of course – respect. She didn’t even tell Kuli, but she was actually on her way to a nearby orphanage. She had spoken to Gatsha and wanted to be more involved in charity and community work. Gatsha was more than happy to let her do something she had a passion for. She had gone past Brenda’s place since they were both off work that Friday. She hooted a few times before Brenda came out of the house.

Brenda: “Ah-ah, man, chomi (friend). Why would you hoot so much?”

Lehumo: “Akere (because) you were supposed to be ready ages ago. When will you ever be on time?”

Brenda: “The day of my funeral. How are you?”

Lehumo: (shaking head) “I’m okay, I guess.”

Brenda: “Spit it out.”

Lehumo: (sigh) “It’s just that Kuli. She has a tendency of making me look bad, man.”

Brenda: “You’re too soft. Put her in her place.”

Lehumo: “She’ll make me look bad in front of Gatsha.”

Brenda: “Gatsha chose you and he would do it all over again. Besides, he is not married to his mom but to you.”

Lehumo knew that Brenda had a point.

Brenda: “So, has Plastic Alice made an appearance at the royal palace ever since?”

Lehumo: “No, I just have a bad feeling about her.”

Brenda: “Obviously horny Kuli wants to hook her up with your man.”

Lehumo: “I can only hope I never see her again, but with Abigail being King Dambuza’s wife, she might be present at our functions a lot more than usual.”

Brenda: “Relax, I’ll make sure those two don’t step on your toes.”

Lehumo’s day was about to get a bit ruined. As soon as she parked her car, she was expected by the orphanage and a few

of the other queens and chief's wives wanted to surprise her by lending support. She stepped out and walked in, and there she was.

Queen Abigail: (smiling) "Hello, Lehumo. Long time, no see."

Queen Abigail hugged and kissed Lehumo British style, which caught Lehumo off guard.

Brenda: (frowning) "Queen Lehumo."

Queen Abigail: (chuckling) "Of course, my mistake. Queen Lehumo. You must be Brenda, the best friend. They didn't lie when they said you're beautiful."

Brenda: "They forgot to mention temperamental."

Queen Abigail thought Brenda was joking, but she could sense her hostility just by looking her in the eye.

Lehumo: "What are you doing here?"

Queen Abigail: “Oh, we just came to surprise you by lending you some support, that’s all.”

Lehumo looked around and noticed that the décor was not what she had written on paper and the other queens really looked displeased. Alice was also there, playing with her phone and her long, hideous nails.

Lehumo: “What’s this? What happened to my décor and everything I had asked to be put up?”

Queen Abigail: “Oh, honey. I asked the people of this orphanage to remove it and replace with my ideas. I hope you don’t mind, I mean I am a bit more glamorous. I can teach you a thing or two, you know.”

Lehumo was so pissed, she failed to hide her emotions that time.

Brenda: (clapping hands) “Hehe! Ya neh!”

Lehumo: (fuming) "Excuse me?"

Queen Abigail: "Is there a problem?"

Lehumo: (Breathing heavily) "Where is the manager of this place?"

Queen Abigail: "I'll call him for you. Simon, woza la (come here)."

She snapped her fingers as if she was calling her servant, which annoyed Lehumo even more. Simon even looked like he didn't want to be near Abigail.

Lehumo: (smiling) "Hi, Simon. How are you?"

Simon: (slight smile) "I'm well, thanks, how are you, my queen?"

Lehumo: "I'm very well, thank you. May you please tell me what happened to my décor? You know, the one I picked for today's function?"

Simon: "Oh, uhm – "

Queen Abigail: (interrupted) "But I thought I just told you that I told him to remove – "

Lehumo: (annoyed) "I was talking to Simon."

Queen Abigail knew right there and then that Lehumo was not one to mess with.

Simon: "Oh, Ndhlovukazi (Queen), I had told Miss Abigail here that you had requested your own décor and special theme for the children, but she insisted, practically forced me and my team to remove it and replace with hers."

Lehumo: "Where are the things?"

Simon: "We packed them away into the store room."

Lehumo: "Do we still have time to decorate everything?"

Simon: "Yes, Ndhlovukazi (Queen). As long as I get an extra pair of hands or two to help set up then it won't be a problem."

Lehumo: "It's okay, I'll help you. Thank you for your honesty, Simon. Next time, please do call me if someone else gives you instructions."

Simon: (nodding) "Yes, my queen."

She turned to look at Abigail.

Lehumo: (smiling) "Abigail, queen of Enande, isn't it?"

Queen Abigail: (softly) "Yes."

Lehumo: “Well, how do you do things there? Do you let other people overrule your decisions without even asking? Or do they just do whatever they want? I mean, there are some rules in your kingdom, are there not?”

Queen Abigail: “I was only trying to help – “

Lehumo: (interrupting) “Funny thing is, I can’t recall you and I ever meeting formally. You don’t even address me with my royal title despite knowing very well that I am the queen of this place. You walked in here with half of the women I don’t even know and you made the ones I know and have formed friendships with completely uneasy. That is a sign of disrespect. If you ever want a relationship or to be on good terms with me

then you have to learn some basic forms of mannerisms. Do not ever do what you did today ever again, do I make myself clear?”

Queen Abigail: (softly) “Crystal.”

Lehumo: “Now if you’ll excuse me, I have a job to do.”

She left Abigail standing there and went to greet her fellow Queens. They were quite impressed that she managed to put Abigail in her place. No one had ever done that before. Lehumo stunned everyone – including Brenda.

Brenda: “Nice to meet you, Abbie.”

She chuckled and walked away from her. Lehumo put on her apron, and the fellow queens did the same. They had even forgot that they were draped in expensive cloth – from Versace to Dolce and of course, they had been wearing high inch heels. They loved Lehumo because she didn’t mind getting dirty and she remained humble. Queen Abigail sat next to her daughter, irritated beyond while watching Lehumo and the fellow queens fix up what she had initially planned. Lehumo was so happy after a half and hour. She had planned a party for all the children and the house mother. She also had plans of her own – such as revamping and extending the orphanage, hiring more staff and increasing security – also making sure that they all get a chance to go to school. The children all came and hugged her of which she didn’t mind at all. The small babies

were taken care of, and the other queens had so much fun. Brenda had the time of her life dishing up for the children and the media, and was stunned when she was approached by Siya, Abigail's son and also King Gatsha's best friend. She had seen him a few times, but never took note of him until that day. He was dressed in a beautiful suit and smelled like a million dollars. He was just as handsome as Gatsha.

Siya: (smiling) "Ngingakusiza nga loku (Can I help you with that)?"

Brenda: (blushing) "Of course, but your suit might get stained."

Siya: "It's just a suit. I'd rather stain it than watch a beautiful woman sweat to death."

Brenda: (chuckling) "You look so familiar."

Siya: "Ouch, I thought you'd recognize me by now., Brenda."

Brenda: (blushing) “You even know my name? Wait, aren’t you Gatsha’s best friend? Siya, right?”

Siya: “Well, that consoles me a little bit. Yes, that is me.”

Brenda: “I’m sorry. I hardly notice people when I am around Lehumo, you know.”

Siya: “I get you.”

Queen Abigail noticed the spark between them immediately and became irritated.

Queen Abigail: “Siya, don’t you have work to do?”

Siya: “Ma, ngi busy (I’m busy). I’m talking to my future wife, where are your manners?”

Queen Abigail couldn’t hide her frustration as she exhaled in annoyance and walked away.

Brenda: "What's her deal?"

Siya: "She never likes anyone I date. Don't mind her, she wasn't my father's first choice either."

Brenda: (laughing) "Straight talker. I like that, but we're not dating."

Siya: "Yes, but we will if you go out on a date with me."

Brenda: "I will agree if you ask nicely."

Siya couldn't help himself as he slowly leaned in and gave Brenda soft and sultry kiss.

Siya: "Is that nice enough?"

Brenda: (blushing) "It's a small step, but you're getting there."

Siya: (chuckling) "I'll see you later."

Brenda: "You don't have my number."

Siya: "Just expect my call."

Brenda smiled at Siya as he winked at her and walked towards the reporters.

Lehumo found Brenda staring at Siya and smiled. She was too busy to notice them kissing.

Lehumo: (smiling) "Bee, you're drooling."

Brenda: "Eish, chomi (friend). I think I have found the one. He happens to be Abbie's son. What a bonus."

Lehumo: (laughing) "I know you're going to make her life hell."

Brenda: "You can bet your life on it."

As they laughed, one of the journalists came and asked to interview them briefly.

Reporter: "Excuse me, Queen Ncube. Do you mind if we take a picture of the both of you and ask you a few questions?"

Lehumo: (smiling) "Of course."

Lehumo wrapped her arm around Brenda's waist and smiled for the camera.

Reporter: "How does it feel being the youngest queen in the country?"

Lehumo: "It's got nothing to do with age, really. It is not easy but I have all the support I need."

Reporter: “Rumour has it that your husband might marry a second wife. Is this true?”

Lehumo: “Well, you started the sentence by ‘rumour has it’ so you of all people should know that it is just a rumour. Surely, people will still talk and say things about my husband and I. that does not necessarily mean they are all true.”

Reporter: (smiling) “Of course. Brenda, word has it you and Siyamthanda Dambuza are an item. How true is this?”

Brenda: “Well, you should learn to believe everything you hear about me, because I am not the type to justify myself to anyone – including the media.”

Reporter: “I’ll take that as a ykes.”

Brenda: “Like I said, believe everything.”

Reporter: “Thank you for your time.”

She smiled and left and Siya walked back to them.

Siya: "Lehumo, I haven't seen you today. Are you well?"

They hugged.

Lehumo: (smiling) "I'm alright. How are you?"

Siya: "I'm much better now that I have found my future wife."

Brenda: (chuckling) "Speaking of wife, what's this about that dumb reporter asking stupid questions?"

Siya: "They always ask stupid questions. It is their job. What did she ask you?"

Brenda: "She firstly asked if it is true that Gatsha is marrying a second wife and asked if you and I are dating."

Siya: (laughing) "What did you say?"

Brenda: "I'll tell you if you tell me where they got the second wife story from."

Siya: "I honestly don't know, but I can bet you my mom and Alice have something to do with that. Now about you and I?"

Brenda: "I'll tell you on our date."

Siya: "Well then, no need for me to call. Shall I pick you up at 7?"

Brenda: (smiling) "7 it is."

Siya: "See you soon, ladies."

Lehumo: “Bye. Bee, this whole second wife thing doesn’t sit well with me.”

Brenda: “It’s just a story, let your husband deal with the two bitches.”

Lehumo let it go as she just took it as one of those things. As she was about to leave the orphanage with Brenda, she got a call from Gatsha.

Lehumo: (smiling) “Sthandwa sami (My love).”

Gatsha: “Hehe, Nhlovukazi (Queen). Wa jabula kangaka (You’re so happy). Yini indaba (What is it)?”

Lehumo: (chuckling) “I had a good day all thanks to you.”

Gatsha: “I did nothing but simply did my part as your husband. Are you on your way back?”

Lehumo: “Yes, and guess what? Siya asked Brenda out on a date.”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “Ai, finally. I’ll see you when you come home. Drive safely.”

Lehumo: “Okay, I love you.”

Gatsha: “I love you too.”

She hung up and Brenda gave her a stare.

Lehumo: “What?”

Brenda: “Hmm. Go monate go ba lena ne (it’s so nice being you, hey).”

Lehumo: “You and Siya will be like this very soon.”

They both laughed as they headed home. They don't even know what happened to Abigail and Alice, but she knew that she had to see them the following day at the ceremony. She finally arrived home and found her husband wearing an apron and already waiting for her.

Gatsha: (smiling) "You are back, finally."

He kissed her and they hugged.

Lehumo: (smiling) "Hey."

Gatsha: "Please, sit."

He had cooked a delicious meal specially for the two of them and had taken out a bottle of fine wine which was one of the gifts he had gotten at their wedding.

Lehumo: "What is all this?"

Gatsha: “This is to show you just how much I love you and how proud I am of your very first venture. We are celebrating our marriage, life, love and new beginnings.”

Lehumo: “I love that.”

Gatsha: “All this, Sthandwa sami (My love) is powered by God.”

Lehumo: “I couldn’t agree more.”

They blessed the food and dug in.

Lehumo: (moaning) “Mmm, my love. This steak is cooked beautifully. Ufake ini (What did you use)?”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “That is my secret recipe. I’ll tell you one day.”

Lehumo: “Oho.”

Gatsha: "So, how was your day?"

Lehumo: (sigh) "You won't believe this. I arrived there with Bee only to find Abigail had already begun calling the shots. She had completely changed my décor and everything else, G. She wasn't even invited."

Gatsha: (frowning) "That woman needs to know her place. I'll sort her out."

Lehumo: "No need. I put her in her place, don't worry. But that wasn't the cherry on the cake."

Gatsha: "What happened?"

Lehumo: "One of the reporters asked me if you were going to take a second wife."

Gatsha: "Where on earth did they hear that nonsense?"

Lehumo: (shrugging shoulders) “Beats me, but Siya said it must have been his mother. Speaking of Siya, he is having a date with Brenda tonight.”

Gatsha: “It’s about damn time. He has been eyeing Bee for a long while now.”

Lehumo: “Hawu (Gosh), why didn’t you tell me?”

Gatsha: “I didn’t want to ruin his plans, baby. Let’s hope they get to have a fruitful life together.”

They enjoyed their dinner and had a very good time together. Their life had slowly started coming together; Gatsha’s business had started on a very good note, while Lehumo was nearly done with her nursing degree, and had started her own charity foundation with the orphanage. Meanwhile, Gatsha was almost done building her the hospital he promised her and the Sfiso foundation was already registered. He had plans – big plans and the mall was also generating a very hefty income for them. Slowly, they were taking over the country without even realizing it. Queen Kuli was still bitter, and the more money Gatsha and Lehumo made – the more bitter she became. For Isaiah 48:22 reminds us of that; “There is no peace, says the Lord, for the wicked.” For Isaiah 57:20 says, “But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud.”

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“A problem is a chance for you to do your best.” – Duke Ellington

Nine years later....

It had been nine years since Lehumo and Gatsha had started their business ventures. They were doing so well on the financial side of life. Their marriage had grown stronger than before and so did their love for one another. They were swimming in money, with so much going on in their lives and doing so much for the community – they remained the heart and soul of Zululand. Everyone loved them and of course, Lehumo being a nurse at her own hospital “Neriah Mkhabela Hospital”, everyone knew who she was and she took pride in her work. She had finally graduated and made her parents proud, but something was just lacking. She had such a deep void in her heart that she needed to fill but just couldn’t for some odd reason. As the days went by, her yearning for a child increased along with the time. Her being 30 by then and Gatsha being 35, it was just a matter of time that everyone started asking annoying questions such as “when are you having a baby?”

Even Brenda had been married by then and had twin boys. Yes, she and Siya got married just after two months of dating. Queen Abigial was furious, but Brenda keeps her on her toes. Unfortunately for Lehumo, her story would resemble that of Sarah in the Bible. Little did she know that her mother-in-law had long cast a spell on her ten years ago. It was their wedding anniversary, and of course Gatsha had planned a weekend getaway for them at one of their lodges. They had arrived and got into their robes immediately after their bath. Gatsha had gone downstairs to get them some snacks and a bottle of wine. Lehumo had found herself staring at the open field and the animals that were roaming around until Gatsha had given her a glass of wine.

Lehumo: "Thank you."

Gatsha: "What is it?"

Lehumo: "Nothing, I'm just admiring the view."

Gatsha: "Talk to me, Ndhlovukazi (Queen)."

Lehumo: (sigh) "I am just thinking, Gatsha. Does God hate us so much that he does not want to bless us with a child?"

Gatsha: "Lehumo, how many times must I tell you not to be discouraged? We're still young. We'll get our own baby, come on now."

Lehumo: "I know, but I mean what are the odds that I'll be able to fall pregnant? I mean I'm 30 already turning 31 this year. Is there something wrong with me?"

Gatsha: "You know the doctor said that we're both fine and very much fertile. I know deep in my heart that God does not hate either of us. He loves us in fact. Look at all we have achieved."

Lehumo: (sigh) "I worry, G. I mean, we have so much success but we can't have a baby. Just one, nje (though). Do you know how many people keep asking me if I am even fertile? I know what they are saying behind my back. Your mom and sister too."

Gatsha: "I didn't marry them for a reason. Even if we both die without offspring I will gladly be fine with it. I love you and that is all that matters. I truly feel that our blessings are not very far from us. We will be blessed soon. Don't you remember Psalm 37:4? "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." Once you lack faith and start getting overwhelmed with doubt and fear, the devil enters. Don't do that to yourself, Sthandwa sami (my love). Let us enjoy this weekend, without any stress, please."

Lehumo nodded as she tried to ignore her pain and feelings of doubt. Meanwhile back in Zululand, Queen Kuli had gotten up to no good indeed and this time she had Ayanda, her daughter as her side kick.

Queen Kuli: "Ayanda, mntwana wami (my child), bring me a bottle of wine and a glass, please."

Ayanda: "I'll do that if you let me drink some too."

Queen Kuli: “You can drink as much as you want. Those two have a whole collection in the wine cellar downstairs.”

Ayanda: “okay. Ngiyabuya (I’ll be right back).”

She went downstairs and took one of the best bottles from the cellar and went back up.

Queen Kuli: (chuckling) “You took one of Gatsha’s favourite bottles, Ayanda. Uzokuthuka (he’ll yell at you).”

Ayanda: “Let him, ok’salayo (at the end of the day), he won’t kill me.”

Queen Kuli: “He won’t but Lehumo can.”

Ayamda: “Mxm, loyo (that one). How come you can’t get rid of her for once, Ma?”

Queen Kuli: “Because that bitch prays, my baby. At least she’ll have no children until the day she dies.”

Ayanda: “I thought by now Gatsha would have grown tired of her fruitless womb.”

Queen Kuli: “He will, very soon. You just watch this space. I have a good idea.”

While Kuli had planned her evil plan

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she had been going to numerous sangomas just to try all she could on Lehumo and Gatsha. She had sprinkled so much muthi in the royal palace, that it would cause a bit of chaos in the house. As Lehumo and Gatsha came back two days later from their anniversary celebration, they had found a very similar scene unravel before them. Lehumo and Gatsha walked in hand in hand as usual, and found the council members sitting in the lounge. That scene was a lot similar to the one Kuli pulled the day Sfiso announced his divorce from her. Of course, Gatsha and Lehumo were simply displeased.

Gatsha: (frowning) “What the fuck is this?”

Queen Kuli: “Gatsha, please calm down.”

Gatsha: “It seems as if you just don’t learn, Ma. You just don’t ever learn. How dare you do this again?”

King Dambuza: “Gatsha, my boy, please relax. This is not an intention to disrespect you, my king. We just came here to talk.”

He looked around and there she was – Alice. She had a very long weave on and sat next to her mother. Something just looked off with that situation.

Gatsha: “Ni funani la (What do you want here)? Because I don’t recall myself nor my wife calling you here for a meeting.”

King Dambuza: “Your mother called us here for an urgent meeting of which I agree with. Please, hear me out.”

Gatsha: "You have ten seconds before I lose my temper."

King Dambuza: (nodding) "She had called us here and asked that you perhaps consider marrying a second wife."

Lehumo's heart sunk deep into the pit of her stomach, while Gatsha's veins were protruding right from his face.

Gatsha: "Heh (What)?!"

Queen Kuli: "You can still do it as it is our culture. I mean, what if you die and leave no offspring? Who will then run this kingdom?"

Gatsha: "I suppose you even have the perfect candidate, don't you?"

King Dambuza: "We were thinking you could marry Alice. I mean, she would only join your marriage as a means to grow

your family. If she bears you a child, that child would be given to you Lehumo, to raise.”

Alice: (Angered) “Angeke (Never)!”

King Dambuza: (sternly) “Thula (Quiet)!”

Gatsha: “With all due respect, King Dambuza, kodwa ni yangi nyela (you are bullshitting me). Niyang’nyela straight (You are seriously bullshitting me)!”

King Dambuza: “We didn’t mean to disrespect you, Gatsha.”

Gatsha: “Here is a thought, you all have ten seconds to leave my house before I panel beat all of you. You have some fucking nerve walking into my house and having a meeting without me and without my consent even. How dare you decide on our fate without consulting us first? King Dambuza, as my advisor, I expected more from you. You have disappointed me and if you want to keep being my advisor, I suggest you get the fuck out of my house.”

Gatsha was spitting fire. He never swore in Lehumo's presence, but that made him so angry.

King Dambuza: (nodding) Of course, my king. Once again, I do apologize. He got everyone to get up and leave."

Gatsha: "That includes you and Ayanda, Kuli."

Queen Kuli: "Kodwa (But), Gatsha."

Gatsha: "Don't make me raise my hand on you."

She and Ayanda quickly rushed out as they saw him become livid. He was still breathing fire after they had left and had been shaking out of anger.

Lehumo: "Calm down, please. I'll get you a glass of cognac."

Gatsha: “How dare they?!”

Lehumo: “It’s not right, but they kind of do have a point, G.”

Gatsha: (frowning) “Askies (Excuse me)?”

Lehumo: “I mean, think about it, baby. What if we do actually die? Who will be left to run this kingdom?”

Gatsha: “I’ll appoint someone in my will. I am not marrying another woman – especially not that plastic bimbo.”

Lehumo nodded as she poured Gatsha a drink. She knew deep down that those people had a point – well, according to her. Gatsha didn’t even want to hear anything about that, but that was all Lehumo could think about. She was so consumed by fear and pressure, that she didn’t realize she was making a very big mistake by considering allowing a snake into her marriage.

“The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them.” – Ernest Hemingway

A few days after Kuli’s pathetic stunt, Gatsha was annoyed, but happy to be by his wife’s side. It was a rainy morning, and Lehumo just couldn’t get the whole second wife thing out of her mind. Gatsha got out of bed to make them both some breakfast, while she chose to sit on the patio and watch the rain. He came back with a tray filled with a greasy breakfast and a cup of coffee.

Gatsha: “Here you go, Sthandwa sami (My love).”

Lehumo: (Faint smile) “Thank you, love.”

They blessed the food and started eating.

Lehumo: “Gatsha, I have something I would like to talk to you about.”

Gatsha: "I'm all ears."

Lehumo: "Don't you think that the council was right? Perhaps you should take a second wife."

Gatsha immediately lost his appetite as soon as Lehumo told him that.

Gatsha: (irritated) "I think I have just lost my appetite."

Lehumo: "Please, hear me out."

Gatsha: "No, you hear me out, Lehumo. I am your husband and yours alone. I made a vow and I am sticking to it."

Lehumo: "Kodwa (But) Gatsha, what if we just never get to conceive? I mean what if we just never get to that point? What if I die? Or you die? There are so many factors to consider."

Gatsha: "I am not having this conversation with you right now."

He never walked out on his wife during a conversation – ever, but that day he just couldn't sit there and listen to her saying all those things. He stood up and looked at her.

Gatsha: “Had you actually believed in God you wouldn't be suggesting this nonsense to me. Take some time today and go read your Bible. Proverbs 3:5-6 is for you.”

He walked out leaving her sitting outside on the patio with tears in her eyes. She took out her phone and looked for the verse. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Lehumo knew very much that her husband loved her, but she was terrified. She was consumed with fear and she knew that all would work out, but she had doubts. She felt as if she would be holding Gatsha back. She didn't want to be the reason he woke up miserable and childless one day. She couldn't phathom sharing her husband, but at that point she felt she had no other choice. She wondered a million times where she went wrong; why she had to struggle for the one thing she badly wanted. She had cared for so many babies at her

orphanage and raised them. They helped a lot with the void she had in her heart. Even Brenda's twin boys helped her a little bit, but at the end of the day, she had to go back to her house that was not filled with the candid, innocent laughter of children. She found herself staring at the rain for almost two hours. The tears kept flowing down her cheeks as she just didn't have any strength left in her. Gatsha knew when his wife was in a bad state – he always knew. He took a shower and hoped that she would have gone back to her senses, but she was in an even worse state. He took a fleece blanket and threw it on her as he caressed her.

Lehumo: (crying) "I'm so sorry, G. I'm sorry I can't give you children."

Gatsha: (sigh) "Stop it, Lehumo. Stop doing this to yourself. You are torturing yourself over something we have no control over. Have you ever heard me complain in the last ten years? Have you ever heard me blame you for not being able to conceive?"

Lehumo shook her head reluctantly.

Gatsha: “Then why the sudden behaviour? I thought we were fine. Kids are not a deal breaker. We can always adopt if nothing ever works out.”

Lehumo: “Do you know how hard I had to work for your people to accept me? Do you honestly think that they would let an adopted child rule this kingdom once we’re both dead?”

Gatsha: “I don’t care. The law will be speaking for that child. If a child is what you want this badly – then we can explore other options, like surrogacy and IVF. I just don’t want you ever mentioning the chance to have a second wife.”

Lehumo: “Okay, but promise me that if IVF does not work, then you will consider marrying a second wife.”

Gatsha: “If that’s what it takes to make you keep quiet about this then fine.”

Lehumo: “Promise me. I need to hear you say it.”

Gatsha: "I promise."

She knew that her husband was not one to just break a promise. He always kept his word, but just like any other human, he could change his mind. Lehumo decided to let the whole thing die down, but she had a small plan of her own. Queen Kuli was staying with Queen Abigail and her family, of course Brenda was driving them all crazy. It was a good thing she and Siya were living in their own house, otherwise it would have been a blood bath already. Gatsha had been avoiding her calls for the past few days and peace was illuminating in the royal palace.

Gatsha: "By the way, I received a call from Nelisiwe. She said she would like to do a four page spread plus interview with us."

Lehumo: "I'm not very good with interviews, baby."

Gatsha: "You're a natural. Ukhuluma njani (What are you even saying)?"

Lehumo: "You know what I mean. When does she want to do it?"

Gatsha: "She said tomorrow, but I said I'll ask my wife first."

Lehummo: "Kodwa (But), G. What will she say when you keep saying that?"

Gatsha: "I don't care. I run everything through you, she must know."

Lehummo: (chuckling) "Okay then. We can do it."

Gatsha: "Only if you're sure."

Lehumo: "I am."

Gatsha: "Okay. Let me stop by the office. I have a few things to do then I'll be back."

Lehumo: "Okay."

He kissed her and left, while she decided to take a bath and call the person who least expected her call.

Alice: "Hello?"

Lehumo: "Hi, Alice. It's Lehumo."

Alice: (stunned) "Oh, Hi Lehumo."

Lehumo: "Listen can we meet up for lunch today?"

Alice: "Sure, what time?"

Lehumo: "How about in 10 minutes? I can pick you up."

What Lehumo didn't realize was that Alice had Kuli right beside her along with her mother Abigail. That was the perfect time to orchestrate the perfect plan to finally get rid of her. But, what Kuli and Abigail didn't realize was that even though Lehumo was a little too naïve at times, her ancestors were working overtime to protect their own.

Alice: "Sure, I'll be waiting."

Lehumo: "Thanks."

She hung up and packed her hand bag and proceeded outside, but as she got to the car she realized her car keys were not with her. She had her bag in one hand and her phone in the other. She quickly ran back upstairs to fetch her keys. She realized the tv was still on, so she put her phone on the bedside table and switched off the tv. Being a little too preoccupied than usual, she forgot her phone on the bedside table. She got into her car, said her prayers and asked her warriors for protection and proceeded to drive out. She noticed that odd feeling again in the pit of her stomach, she took it as nerves and chose to ignore it yet again. At times, no matter how strong you are spiritually, danger just calls your

name – hence accidents happen all the time even to the best of people. As she was driving, Kuli and Abigail set out the perfect plan to eliminate Lehumo once and for all.

Kuli: “You know what this means, right?”

Alice: “What?”

Abigail: “This is your chance to finally be Mrs. Ncube – queen of Zululand.”

Alice: “How?”

Kuli:” “Waze w aba slow ngempela (You’re truly slow). Ufuze uMa wakho (You take after your mother).”

Alice: (annoyed) “Unganginyeli wena (Don’t piss me off), Kuli. Had you done it first time we wouldn’t be here.”

Kuli was too excited for words that she ignored Abigail's rude remarks.

Kuli: "You need to throw some of this in her car and she will have an accident on her way back home."

Abigail: "Hopefully she'll die and never bother us again."

Alice: "What did she do to you now?"

Abigail: "Ag, man focus Alice! Do you want to be Gatsha's wife or not?"

Alice: "I guess so."

Abigail: "That's equivalent to a yes."

Kuli: "I can't wait to start consoling Gatsha. She killed Shaka, this is pay back time."

Abigail: “You know very well she didn’t kill him. Your rat of a son took after his father.”

Kuli: “Ngizokukhahlela wa nya (I’ll fuck you up)!”

Alice: “Can you two focus, please! I don’t have a very good feeling about this. I don’t even know if I even want to be Gatsha’s wife.”

Abigail: “You’ll be fine. You’ll basically be the richest queen in the country. Just make her lose focus for a while and sprinkle all of it in the car – all of it.”

Alice truly didn’t feel like being part in any of that. She had failed to keep a boyfriend throughout the years because her mother firmly believes that she belongs with Gatsha. Women who do evil things tend to destroy their children’s future and mess up their lives by sacrificing them for more power and money. She nodded hesitantly. Lehumo was outside within minutes and as she was about to call, she had noticed that she didn’t have her phone with her

so she hooted instead. Alice grabbed her bag, but her mother stopped her.

Abigail: "Remember, sprinkle all of it."

Alice nodded with fear inside of her. She tried hiding it and she was a pretty bad liar. Whenever she was anxious she would sweat a lot. She saw Lehumo and waved back as she smiled at her. Honestly, she was just a spoiled brat and didn't really hate Lehumo. She just envied her and wanted the life she had – all because of her mother and Kuli who had planted the idea into her head.

Lehumo: "Hi. How are you?"

Alice: "I'm okay, how are you?"

Lehumo: "I'm fine thanks, are you ready to go?"

Alice: (nervously) "Sure."

Lehumo: (chuckling) “You look so nervous, don’t worry. I won’t bite.”

As she proceeded to drive, she started a candid conversation with Alice. She was in total shock at her level of calmness towards her. She had never given herself the chance to vibe with Alice to begin with.

Lehumo: “What would you like to eat? I am sure you would love to eat anything as long as you don’t have to eat carbs or use your fingers with those nails, hey. I don’t know how you do it, though. I have gained quite a few dress sizes, my hips are wider but you – you just remain the same size.”

Alice: (laughing) “Really? I didn’t notice. You really don’t look too bad yourself, though. And to be honest, I wish I had your figure.”

Lehumo: “Come on, an hour glass figure like yours and your beautiful melanin skin tone. I don’t know why you keep hiding it behind all that make up.”

It was the very first time that Alice had gotten a genuine heartfelt compliment from anyone. All her friends were fake and lived for Instagram. She felt herself soften up and immediately regretted her decision to be part of that devious plan against Lehumo. Meanwhile, Bongi had become frantic. She was sitting on her porch, watching Hosea play soccer with his friends as she suddenly had a vision of Lehumo. She frantically took out her phone and tried calling her, but it rang unanswered. She called Brenda and asked her when last she saw Lehumo, but it had been days. She felt increasingly anxious and had no choice, but to alert Gatsha. She called him as well, but it went straight to voicemail. She knew that whatever was about to happen to her granddaughter, was meant to happen and nothing and no one could stop it. She quickly hurried to her bedroom, lit a candle and knelt down.

Bongi: “Oh, Badimo le Modimo w aka (My ancestors and my God), ke kopa le tshireletse ngwana yo wa ka (Please protect my grandchild). Ngiyanicela (I beg of you), ba ka Mkhabela (The Mkhabela’s), Ba ka Ncube (The Ncube’s), Ba ka Moloji (The Moloji’s). Khanyisani indlela yakhe (Please light her way). Amen.”

She did all she could even though she was very much aware that danger was looming. Lehumo and Alice got to the mall and headed over to Kream restaurant. They ordered themselves some cocktails and started sipping while waiting for the food. Alice felt a bit better after a few sips.

Lehumo: "You must probably be asking yourself why I called you here."

Alice: (nodding) "Yes."

Lehumo: "I am sure you were told of my fertility issues."

Alice nodded as she listened attentively. She felt her heart break into pieces when she saw Lehumo cry. She couldn't believe that the whole Queen of Zululand was so vulnerable right in front of her.

Lehumo: "I don't know if you know, but a few months after Gatsha and I got married, I had a miscarriage. We were on our honeymoon and I started bleeding without pain, without

warning. Can you believe it? Ever since then, we have been unable to conceive. I know, my mother in law and a few of the Ncube family just despise me. They actually hate me and simply tolerate me. So, I have been thinking. What would happen should I really not be able to conceive and I die or Gatsha dies? We'd have no offspring. It breaks my heart and I cannot imagine sharing him and I cannot imagine him being left with the pain of having no children. Which is why I would like you to be his second wife."

Alice was too shocked to respond for a few seconds.

Lehumo: "That's of course if you're okay with it."

Alice: "Uhhh, yes, I don't have a problem with it, but to be honest I don't think you should be agreeing to this if you are really uncomfortable about it."

Lehumo: "I don't have a choice, honestly."

Alice: "Does your husband agree to this?"

Lehumo: “No, but he will come around. So, what do you say?”

Alice: (reluctant) “I don’t know...”

Lehumo: “I don’t know much about polygamy and sister wives, but I am willing to learn. I just want to make myself happy. It is better for me to do this now myself before he finds someone else himself.”

Alice couldn’t help but feel sorry for her, more than anything she felt so much guilt. She couldn’t bring herself to be an accomplice to murder. Alice was not very innocent; she was easily influenced and very vain, but evil was not her strong point.

Alice: “Do you mind excusing me? I need the toilet.”

Lehumo: “Of course.”

Alice got up hastily and rushed to the rest room. She locked herself in one of the cubicles and took out the little black sachet. She was about to throw it into the toilet when her phone rang unexpectedly. She jumped a bit with her heart pounding mercilessly. She stared at her screen and it was Abigail.

Alice: (nervously) "Mom."

Abigail: "Ungalinge ushinshe umnqondo, uyezwa (Don't you dare change your mind, do you hear me)?"

Alice: (Panicked) "Ma, uthini (what are you saying)?"

Abigail: "I can see you are already panicking. Don't flush that thing down the toilet if you still want to be my daughter."

She hung up and Alice sat in that cubicle, panicking. She knew she just had to do something before she faced the wrath of her mother. She put the muthi back into her bag and walked out. She thought of an excuse to give Lehumo.

Lehumo: (smiling) "There you are. I thought you had run out on me."

Alice: (nervous) "Oh, sorry. I think I must have eaten something that does not agree with me. Perhaps I should go home."

Lehumo: "It must have been the prawns. They seemed a bit offish. Come, I'll take you home."

Alice and Lehumo walked out and she knew she had to think of a distraction. Luckily for her, one of the children walked up to her to ask for a picture of her.

Lehumo: "Oh, I'd love to, but my friend is in a hurry."

Alice: (smiling) "It's okay, I'll wait for you in the car."

Lehumo gave her the keys while she posed for a few pictures with the child. Alice sprinkled some of the muthi in the back of

the car as she promised, and looked ahead. Lehumo came back a few minutes later to a rather sweaty Alice.

Lehumo: “Are you sure you don’t need the doctor or anything? You look really unwell.”

Alice: “I’ll be okay. I just think I need to lie down for a moment.”

Lehumo: “Alright then.”

While she was driving, the anxious feeling grew for Bonggi where she was. She tried calling Gatsha again and luckily that time he answered.

Gatsha: “Ma, kunjani (how are you)? Sorry, my phone’s battery was dead.”

Bonggi: “Get hold of Lehumo. She’s in danger.”

Gatsha didn't hesitate and called his wife's phone but it just rang unanswered. It was very unusual for her not to answer her phone. He logged into her car tracker and it showed that the car was at a stand still not moving. He immediately called the tracking company.

Operator: "Mr. Zulu speaking, how may I be of your assistance?"

Gatsha: "Please tell me the exact status of my wife's car with the number plate Queen Ncube."

Operator: "The car just got into an accident at corner Lizwi street and Phumlani Avenue. Medics are on their way as we speak, sir."

“The Top 15 things money can’t buy: Time, Happiness, Inner Peace, Integrity, Love, Character, Manners, Health, Respect, Morals, Trust, Patience, Class, Common Sense, Dignity.” – Roy T. Bennet

Gatsha felt his heart drop to the pit of his stomach as if someone literally dropped it. He could barely hear what the operator was saying, but he managed to get into his car. Before he drove off, he took a deep breath and started praying – completely ignoring the operator on call.

Operator: “Hello? Mr. Ncube, sir?”

Gatsha: “Father God, I come before you as your child. I may not be one of your most loyal servants, but I do try to be a good person. I try to be a godly husband, I did do my best by honouring my parents. I do not ask for much, oh, lord. I am just asking that you please protect my wife, oh, lord. Wrap her in your arms and wash her with the blood of the lamb, make her whole. Please help us get through this phase in our lives. No matter what happens – just please let her be okay. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

Little did he know that the operator was also praying with him.

Operator: "hello? Mr. Ncube, Sir?"

Gatsha: (teary) "Yes, I am still here."

Operator: "I just prayed with you, sir. I believe Mrs. Ncube is a very lucky woman to have you as a husband."

Gatsha: "I am actually the lucky one here."

Operator: "I have just received a call from the medics, they are taking her to Neria Mkhabela hospital."

Gatsha: "Thank you, I really appreciate it."

Operator: "I can stay on the line with you as there is so much traffic. You will most probably get there within thirty minutes. Why don't you indulge in this moment by telling me how you met your wife. Tell me all about her."

Gatsha didn't once feel annoyed. He felt the warmth and sincerity of the operator from over the phone.

Gatsha: "Where do I even start? I didn't catch your name."

Operator: "Oh, it's wiseman, Mr. Ncube."

Gatsha: "Well, Wiseman, your parents really went all out with that name because it seems to have followed you. Please, call me Gatsha."

Wiseman: "Very well, Gatsha."

Gatsha went on to tell Wiseman how they met. It was a rather beautiful story for him to hear and along the way there were laughs and tears from both sides. Before Gatsha knew it

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he had found himself a new companion in Wiseman.

Gatsha: “Wiseman, I have arrived at the hospital. Before I go, tell me something, what is your main goal in life? I mean, job wise?”

Wiseman: “I would like to be an engineer, sir. I have always had that dream, but even with 7 distinctions I still couldn’t get funding.”

Gatsha: “You have my details on your system. Give me a call some time tomorrow. I think God purposely made you connect that call. I am about to make your dreams come true.”

Wiseman: (smiling) “I’ll do so, sir. Don’t worry, it is well with your wife. She is safe,”

They said their goodbyes as he walked out and headed into the hospital entrance. Meanwhile, while Gatsha was about to see in which state his wife was in, Abigail and Kuli were feeling the wrath of the ancestors. Abigail and Kuli were celebrating their victory a little prematurely.

Abigail: “I am so happy, Kuli. Let me go get us a bottle of bubbly to celebrate.”

Kuli: (chuckling) “By this time next week, I’ll be consoling my son at his wife’s funeral.”

They both laughed as Abigail hurried to the kitchen to get the alcohol and two glasses. Meanwhile as Kuli was doting in her “success”, she got the shock of her life when she saw Sfiso alongside Khensani, Neriah alongside Noah right in front of her. At the far right, it was Queen Nozipho.

Queen Nozipho: “I warned you, Kuli. I warned you.”

She nearly dropped to the floor when she saw their spirits right in front of her. They weren’t even smiling at her.

Kuli: (shocked) “Wha... What is this?! This can’t be real.”

Neriah: “Oh, I am sure if you can transform into a snake, then you surely can believe that this is real.”

Noah: “We warned you, Kuli. You touched my daughter and tried to take her son from her, but now you have gone too far.”

Abigail walked right in and dropped the bottle immediately on the floor.

Abigail: (scared) “What’s happening here? Kuli, what is this? What the fuck is this?!”

Sfiso: “You don’t stop, little witch. You keep pestering my daughter in law and now it is high time you two felt our wrath.”

Abigail: “Oh, please don’t kill me. It was all her plan.”

Queen Nozipho: “Save it. You two don’t know when to quit. You two will now learn what it feels like to lose over and over.”

They slowly disappeared, leaving those two drained and scared.

Kuli: “Wait! What do you mean?!”

Gatsha was about to find out what was meant by God will fight your battles. He found the doctor who was attending both Lehumo and Abigail. He had no idea that Lehumo was with Abigail a few hours before then.

Gatsha: “Hi, Doctor. My name is Gatsha Ncube, I am Lehumo’s husband.”

Doctor: “Oh, good. Well, Mr. Ncube, you are very lucky. She is in a much better state than the other one.”

Gatsha: (frowning) “What other one?”

Doctor: “She was found with another young woman named Abigail. Her C5 is fractured so basically she will be wheelchair bound for life. It would be a miracle if she ever walks again.”

Gatsha: “And my wife?”

Doctor: “Well, the steering wheel ruptured one of her ovaries, and as a result, we have had to operate and now she has one fallopian tube.”

Gatsha breathed out a sigh of relief, he just wasn’t interested in much more.

Doctor: “Don’t worry, she will be able to conceive even after this.”

Gatsha: “Thank you, doctor. Can I go see her?”

Doctor: “Give us a few minutes to set her up in her room. I’ll call you in just now.”

Gatsha was about to call Bongi and update her when he received a text message from the frantic Kuli. “Ayanda just passed on. Please tell your wife to stop killing my children, please.”

“None of us knows what might happen even the next minute, yet still we go forward. Because we trust. Because we have Faith.” – Paulo Coelho

How many people have been wronged in this life time – yet no matter what they forgive because ultimately that is what we’re all taught from birth? Besides being a mechanism of personal freedom and magnitude of moving forward, we all have a weakness. It is always nice and extremely easy to judge a person from the exterior; it is always easy to look at a rich person or a big, beautiful house and envy that. It is always easy to say a person is stupid, unless you literally run a mile or two in his or her shoes. So many people get blamed and crucified for forgiving. Ultimately, karma deals with a person in its own way. The universe has its own way of being on your side. Yet James 3:18 tells us “Peacemakers who sow in peace reap harvest of righteousness.” While Job 4:8 says, “As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.”

In a way Lehumo was looking for trouble, just like most of us in this world. She was trying something in order to save her

husband from shame and regret. While many thought her act was pure stupidity; a lot didn't actually realize it was an act of love. At times love makes you incredibly selfish and it takes the other party for you to realize it. Gatsha was just incredibly relieved to hear of his wife's condition – despite her having only one fallopian tube left. He couldn't care less whether Ayanda was alive or dead, as they never really cared about him nor Lehumo, but only about his money. He needed assurance that his wife was okay. A few minutes after he received the message, the doctor called him to go through and see his wife. He found Lehumo looking as beautiful as ever – despite her swollen, red eyes. Gatsha immediately held her hand, but Lehumo pulled away.

Gatsha: (teary) “Sthandwa sami (My love), I thought I had lost you. I am so glad you're okay. Uzizwa njani (how do you feel)?”

Lehumo: (softly) “O batla eng mo (What do you want), Gatsha?”

Gatsha: (surprised) “Heh (Huh)?”

Lehumo: “When will you realize that you and I are just not meant to be? I mean we’re like water and oil. Every time when we are really happy something bad happens. I am tired of that.”

Gatsha: (teary) “What are you saying?”

Lehumo: “I’m saying maybe it’s best you and I call it quits. This marriage was cursed right from the beginning.”

Gatsha was really perplexed, but he didn’t want to listen to a word she said.

Gatsha: (calmly) “My father always taught me that a heartbroken or angry person is a dangerous person, so one should never try to engage in a conversation with them as they can say the most damaging words at that time. I’ll go get you something to drink since you just got out of surgery.”

Lehumo: (frustrated) “Ga o theeletje (You’re not listening), Gatsha! Had you just agreed to marry Alice, this wouldn’t have happened!”

Gatsha turned around in shock.

Gatsha: (shocked) “Angezwa (Excuse me)? What were you doing with Alice in your car anyway?”

Lehumo: “I took her out for lunch to persuade her to be your second wife.”

Gatsha felt himself fume from his gut like never before. He had always remained calm whenever he got mad at his wife, but that day, he was beyond livid.

Gatsha: (angered) “Uthini (What did you just say), Lehumo?! Yazi uyanginyela (You’re shitting me right now)! You lost your tube and your ovaries were crushed because you tried inviting the devil into our marriage?! How could you be so selfish?! How many times was I supposed to repeat that I love

you and you only?! I don't give a fuck whether you're able to have children or not! Don't you get it?! Don't you fucking get it?! I love you and I want to be with you and only you!"

That was the very first time in ten years that Gatsha had raised his voice to his wife. She was quite shocked, and so was Brenda who was standing right at the door unbeknownst to the both of them.

Brenda: "Is everything okay here?"

Gatsha turned around and forced the threatening tears back. He was so angry that he was shaking. He knew that he needed a moment to cool down before he had said something hurtful to his wife.

Gatsha: (softly) "Yes, talk some sense into your friend."

With that said, he left. As soon as he banged the door behind him, Lehumo found herself bursting into austere tears as Brenda hugged her.

Brenda: "It's okay, mngani (friend). What happened? Why was Alice in your car?"

Lehumo: (crying) "I invited her over for lunch and I had asked her to be Gatsha's second wife. Friend, I swear, I only had one cocktail to drink. I was driving and talking and the next thing a truck just came out of nowhere. I hit the brakes, but nothing happened. The next thing I saw paramedics all over, telling me that I'm going to be fine, but I needed surgery. Now, I lost my fallopian tube because of this! Gatsha will never forgive me, friend. Do you see why I just have to leave him so that he can finally be blessed with true love and happiness?"

Brenda was not very sympathetic that day.

Brenda: "Lehumo, are you actually listening to yourself right now? Why would you invite that girl out for lunch when you know very well that Abigail is not good news? I keep telling you that your heart will land you in trouble one day. At times, you fail to think."

Lehumo: (crying) “How can you judge me right now, Bee? You have kids – I don’t.”

Brenda: “That’s the thing. Why compare yourself with others? Why pray when you lack faith? I mean, you ask God for children and then you turn around and do this? Abigail and Kuli most probably did something to you to cause the accident. How many times must I tell you that Gatsha loves you. He really adores you. Kids will come when the time is right – when the Lord says so. Isaiah 60:22 – “When the time is right, I the Lord will make it happen.” Don’t you ever learn from your Bible, Lehumo? You are playing a dangerous game and I don’t want to see you lose a good man over this.”

Lehumo: “You just don’t get it, do you, Bee? It’s nice and easy for you to say what you’re telling me because you have children. You never struggled nor had a miscarriage. Your pregnancy was a breeze and you barely have to fight for anything. Everything comes to you in a silver platter.”

Brenda: “You’re lucky I love you and for that, I won’t take the bullshit you’re telling me to heart. I just want you to heal. I’ll see you some other time.”

She walked towards the door and looked back at her.

Brenda: "I'll pray for you."

She left as Lehumo wallowed in her own tears. Brenda walked out and found Gatsha literally sobbing in Siya's arms. It pained Brenda so much to see Gatsha, such a strong warrior hurt and cry like a baby all because of his wife's doings. Yes, bad things happen, but in life, we need to learn that at times our choices cause our misery.

Gatsha: (sobbing) "How is she?"

Brenda: "She'll be okay. She is a real mess. I think she is depressed. Ask the doctor to book her for a therapy session or something. Hang in there, you'll be fine – the both of you."

Gatsha: "She wants to leave me, Bee. I cannot let that happen. What am I going to do?"

Brenda: "You're going to get her the help she needs and be there for her as always. And most importantly, you're going to keep praying for her like you always do. Hang in there."

She hugged Gatsha and he knew that Bee was absolutely right.

Gatsha: "Thank you, Bee."

Brenda: "Call me if you need anything."

Gatsha nodded as they both said goodbye. He went to the canteen to buy some few things to eat and frozen yoghurt and juice for his wife. Upon going back to Lehumo's room

he found himself going to Alice's room. He found her sobbing, laying in her bed as she kept touching her legs, most probably trying to see if they still worked. She found Gatsha standing in front of the door, staring at her.

Alice: (annoyed) "What do you want?"

Gatsha: “Nothing. I just came to ask you a few questions.”

Alice: (crying) “Well, don’t you think your wife has done enough damage?!”

Gatsha took one good look at her and headed straight to her face. He stared her right in the eye, with his bewildered, bloodshot eyes.

Gatsha: “What really happened? I mean, surely you saw something before the car crashed, you know.”

Alice: (looking down) “I don’t know what happened. All I remember is her failing to break and heading straight to that truck.”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “My wife says she took you out for lunch. You know, I can take a look at all the security cameras of where you were and perhaps, I’ll be able to pick up what actually happened. If I do find out that you did have something to do with the accident, something like – I don’t know,

tampering with the brakes, using witchcraft or something like that, I will personally hurt you more than you are hurt right now. I'll make you a quadriplegic instead of a paraplegic. Imagine a beaut like you failing to even use your arms, all because of one silly mistake. It would be such a shame."

He was about to leave until she stopped him by her delirious confession.

Alice: "I didn't mean to do it!"

He turned around and stared at her, mercilessly.

Alice: "They forced me to do it. I begged them both not to do it. I seriously told them that it is not the time and I genuinely told them that I had a bad feeling about it, but my mom threatened me and told me that if I don't do it, I'll be disowned."

Gatsha: “Well, such a pity. You lost your ability to walk and my wife has lost half of her ability to ever carry a child all because you feared being disowned. If I were you, I’d kill myself before I can get to you. It would be a miracle if you make it out of this hospital alive tonight.”

Gatsha found himself being overwhelmed with so much anger – one of the most dangerous emotions one can ever have. Like his father once told him, “An angry man is a dangerous man.” He went back to his wife’s ward and put the frozen yoghurt and water next to her. He tried eating, but he found himself at a loss of appetite. He lay on the couch across her bed and said nothing to her. He ignored her, but was simply there for her. He thought of his mother and Abigail of just how cruel they could be. He thought of his wife’s ignorance and genuine impatience that had caused them the third greatest loss in their lives. They lost their baby, then they lost their parents and now, they had lost half the chance of conceiving. He was actually angry at his wife, but even out of love, he still refused to show her how angry he was. He watched her dose off and slept on the couch. Midnight struck and he found himself kneeling right next to her and holding her hand. She was a bit frightened, and was very adamant about

them ending their marriage. She attempted to remove her hand from his, but he held her hand firmly and started praying.

Gatsha: “Father God, I humble myself before you. I come before you as your child, as Lehumo’s husband – her grief-ridden husband. I am so saddened, oh lord. So many emotions are going through my mind. I am hurt, but mostly I am bewildered. I am so angry, Lord. I am not angry at you, for I know that everything happens in your time. I am angry at this woman – this woman whom I love so much. I am angry at myself for loving her more than I love myself. I am angry that she chose to go against my words and failed to heed my warnings. I am angry that instead of her allowing me to console and comfort her, she chose to tell me nonsense. I refuse to divorce, for I made a vow before you and all my ancestors. I made a promise to her til death to us part. That is what I promised, lord, and so shall it be.

If she won’t accept it, then it is actually better for you to take me. End my life right here and then because there is simply no life without my Queen. I ask that you be with the both of us throughout this difficult time. Prayer is a form of healing, and I am asking you to heal me, heal the both of us. Bless us with our heart’s desires when the time is right, oh lord. For you say I

Galatians 6:9 “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.” I have done and am still doing good by loving and supporting my wife, oh lord. For you say in Ecclesiastes 3:1 – “There is an appointed time for everything, and there is a time for every event under heaven.” Help this impatient wife of mine whom I love so much understand that verse.

Even if we become parents at 50, we will still have had the chance. For you say to us in Ecclesiastes 3:17, “I said to myself, “God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man; for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.” Help her not grow weary of what we’re currently facing – for you will deal with those who have caused this pain upon us. Galatians 4:2 says to us, “But he is under guardians and managers until the date is set by the father.” Just as we await Christ’s return, help her realize how short life is. For you have only lend this life of the flesh to us and it is our duty to enjoy it until the time has been set for us to return to dust. Help my wife realize how much I love her. I thank you for this life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

“True love is usually the most inconvenient kind.” – Kiera Cass

“The course of true love never did run smooth.” – William Shakespeare

As the days went by, Lehumo grew more depressed. She had listened to Gatsha pray right beside her every night without fail, but it was as if he was talking to a brick wall. With him banishing his mother from his palace along with Abigail, King Dambuza had to pay for Ayanda’s burial. As the King of Zululand, Gatsha forbade them to bury her on royal grounds. Just as Gatsha had grown angry, Alice had felt the walls closing in on her and drank poison as soon as she found herself being wheeled into the house. She had left a rather gut-wrenching letter to both her parents, and while King Dambuza had no idea of his wife’s evil deeds, he banished both her and Kuli from his palace as well. They were both homeless, and had to find a way to survive. They were also banished from their maiden homes due to practising witchcraft. Like so many people roaming here on earth, others stay evil til they die. Even after losing practically everything, they still had the craving for vengeance against their enemy – Lehumo.

Lehumo had finally gone home, and Gatsha had to hire someone to look after Lehumo. Brenda had been checking on her on a daily basis – even though she had been pushing everyone away. Gatsha got up and went to work and came back to sit right next to his wife. She didn't say anything to him, but he just embraced the silence. He was okay and knowing that she was healthy right next to him was enough for him. What Gatsha did was what most people do – he hired a young nurse to look after Lehumo. He didn't trust her on her own and he thought that she would harm herself in some way. Lehumo also made one of the biggest mistakes of her life; she started slowly befriending the nurse and confided in her.

Her name was Gwen – short for Gwendelyn. She was a 21 year old Nursing student who needed the extra money to pay off her fees. What Gatsha and Lehumo didn't know about Gwen was that she was actually a distant royal family member of the Dambuza family. She was a distant cousin of Siya – making her royalty either way. She was also one of the many women who wanted to be Lehumo. Weeks went by and there was simply no intimacy between Lehumo and Gatsha. She had been listening to Gwen who told her to follow her heart and make things

worse between her and her husband in order for him to leave her so that he could be happy with another woman.

What frustrated Gwen a lot was that Gatsha didn't notice her wearing short, skimpy clothing or whenever she tried seducing him. Well, Gatsha like most men was a human being with needs. Lehumo had refused to sleep with him or even allowed him to touch her, and he like most men grew rather horny. He found himself coming home late one evening, as Gwen had prepared him a nice meal. Lehumo had even stopped cooking for him as his wife. Gwen was wide awake – she smelled of lavender and looked like a real beaut made from butter. She had been wearing a pair of shorts that were exposing her big bums and a crop top exposing her voluptuous breasts.

Gwen: (smiling) “Good evening, Mr. Gatsha. I prepared food for you.”

Gatsha had been stumbling a bit, much to Gwen's dismay. He had been drinking a little bit.

Gatsha: (slurry) “Thank you, Glen.”

He always called her Glen instead of Gwen – that’s just how he never took notice of her.

Gwen: “It’s Gwen. My name is Gwen – short for Gwendelyn.”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “Sorry, Gwendelyn. I’ll call you Gwendy. Gwendy. It suits you.”

He dropped on the chair in the kitchen.

Gatsha: “What am I having tonight, Gwendy?”

Gwen: “I made you some lasagne, Mr. Gatsha.”

Gatsha: (laughing) “You know, my wife used to love making it for me once upon a time.”

Gwen smiled nervously.

Gatsha: (singing) “Ku khal’isiginci sakho enhlizweni yami.... Do you know that song, Gwendy?”

Gwen: (shaking head) “No, sir.”

Gatsha: “That’s my wife and I’s favourite song. It reminds me of how happy we once were.”

Gwen: “Well, some things are meant to stay in the past, sir.”

Gatsha: (frowning) “The past?! Never. My wife and I still very much love each other. I know she still loves me. She is just in pain. Pain. That’s a motherfucker.”

Gwen had waited too long for that moment. She knew that he was drunk and it wouldn’t even be the same as if he were sober. She was a virgin, so Gatsha would be her first.

Gwen: “Well, I can make you feel that happiness, if you just let me.”

Gatsha’s drunken self looked up and was met with big Double DD breasts staring him in the face. He became numb as he swallowed hard. Gwen wasted no time and kissed Gatsha like she was a pro. He found himself responding to the kiss and his manhood responding gladly by rising. He quickly shoved her off him after a mere few seconds. Gatsha got up and instantly regretted doing that.

Gatsha: “This was a mistake. You should pack your bags and leave here first thing tomorrow. You’re fired.”

He left and went to his bedroom. He walked in and found Lehumo sleeping. That was the very first time he nearly cheated on his wife ever since they were married. He took a shower and lay next to her, in a spooning position.

Gatsha: “I love you so much, Lehumo. I am so afraid that you are destroying us, our beautiful union. I don’t know but I am so scared of what I might do.”

With that said he dozed off, leaving Lehumo wonder what had become of her. She got up the following morning and felt like shit. She had an eye-opening dream the night before. She dreamt her mother warning her and telling her to start taking care of her husband again. She took a shower and actually shaved her vagina after weeks of leaving it as a bush. She knew Gatsha had been drinking as he smelled like booze and was snoring even. She felt it was time for change and time to actually put in an effort and wrong her ways with her husband. She headed downstairs and found Gwen had packed her bags already.

Lehumo: (shocked) "And then? Where are you off to?"

Gwen: "Oh

my father called me back home. My mom is very ill."

She tried reading Lehumo's facial expression to see if Gatsha had told her about the previous night, but Lehumo seemed too happy.

Lehumo: “Oh, I’m so sorry. I can drop you off at the station if you want me to.”

Gwen: “No, that won’t be necessary. You have done so much for me.”

Lehumo: (smiling) “Well then, the least I can do is send you some money. How will you take care of your ill mother without any income?”

Gwen: “That really won’t be necessary, Mrs. Lehumo, really.”

Lehumo being the kind person she had always been took out her phone from her pocket and sent her R50 000 straight to her bank account. That was a lot considering that she had been earning R10 000 monthly for basically doing nothing as Lehumo refused to be touched.

Gwen: “Mrs. Lehumo, you don’t have to.”

Lehumo: “Hey, you have turned out to be a good friend.”

She hugged her and ordered Bongani to take her to the station. Gwen as a normal person should have been sincere that day, but she became even more determined to get Gatsha. Little did everyone know – including her own family that she had been conniving with the least expected witches. While Gwen left to meet her accomplices, Lehumo prepared a meal fit for a king for her husband. She had stopped taking antidepressants for a while and was slowly going back to normal. She added mimosas to the meal and took the tray up to her bedroom. Gatsha was still out of it – that is how much he had had to drink.

Lehumo: “Wakey – wakey.”

Gatsha: “Yoh, inhloko yami (my head).”

Lehumo: (chuckling) “You did have a lot to drink, really. Sit up and take this pill.”

Gatsha looked at Lehumo and he was beyond shocked. He even felt as if his hangover was gone in an instant. She had put make-up on, curled her hair and had worn one of his favourite

dresses on her. She wanted to cry looking at how frail he had become – he had lost so much weight and barely shaved.

Gatsha: (surprised) “Mkami (My wife), is that you?”

Lehumo: (chuckling) “Yes, it is me.”

Gatsha: “Yoh (Wow), I don’t believe it. Yini indaba umuhle so namhlanje (Why do you look so pretty today)?”

Lehumo: “It’s because I owe you an apology – a huge one. I have been such an ass lately and I don’t deserve your love, Gatsha.”

Gatsha was finally happy to see that his wife was back. He didn’t care about much else. He held her chin.

Gatsha: “Sthandwa sami (My love), all I am happy for is that you’re back. You’re finally back and we can get our lives on track again.”

Lehumo: "I'm so sorry."

Gatsha: "Shhh, just promise me one thing."

Lehumo: "Anything."

Gatsha: "No more second wife stories."

Lehumo: "I promise."

Gatsha smiled broadly ear to ear as he passionately kissed his wife for the first time ever since the accident. Lehumo's body responded and so did his. She felt instantly wet as she could feel his manhood poking her down there. They both became enwrapped in the moment as their clothes fell off one by one. It felt like that very night they made love on the roof top of his building. It felt so serene around them – so calm. She felt his love all over again as she moaned in his ear. Him, passionately staring her in the eyes as he thrust in and out of her like a man making love to his guitar. She was the snares of that guitar, her

body was the magic potion to his. He found himself enjoying every minute as he found himself entering his home. It was no longer forbidden for him to make love to her, and from that day on, she vowed to do better - to be better. Gatsha had forgotten about the previous night, though he felt so guilty he wanted to tell her, but the moment was just not right. They had just found themselves back together again. Meanwhile, Gwen had grown angry at Gatsha for firing her, and even angrier at Lehumo for wanting to try again with him. She went to the flat she had been renting for her two accomplices ever since that fateful day that she had been called to join the devious plan against Queen Lehumo Ncube. She knocked hysterically on the door.

Voice: “Ngiyeza (I’m coming)!”

As soon as the door opened, Gwen started cussing and swearing.

Gwen: (fuming) “Yazini (You know), you were right! Ungidina kabi isfebe lesana (That whore annoys me so much)!”

Kuli: “Manje (And now)? What’s with the bags wena (you)?”

Gwen: "I got fired."

Abigail: "Uyenzeni (What did you do)?"

Gwen: "Nothing! I followed your instructions. I waited for the perfect moment. I tried seducing him last night when he was too drunk, but he quickly came back to his senses and shoved me off."

Kuli: "Ja, neh. Which means the potion she has been feeding him iyasebenza moer toe (is working overtime)."

Gwen: "To be honest, I don't think she has fed him anything. I mean, she had been pushing him away for so many weeks, but he just never gave up. That's real love. She gave me 50 grand so I'll just take that and cut my losses from this plan."

Abigail: "Heh (Huh)?! Ungazosibedela lana wena (Don't fuck with us). You said you were willing to do anything, right? Where

do you think Kuli and I will live if you leave everything?
Uyahlanya (You're crazy)."

Gwen: "There's nothing to do."

Kuli: "Leave that to me – I'm a master at these kind of situations. I know exactly what to do to get him to marry you – out of obligation this time."

“Faithless is he that says farewell when the road darkens.” –
J.R.R. Tolkien

A few months passed and Lehumo had been doing great. She and Gatsha had been attending therapy at least once a week and she had returned back to work. Everything was back to normal again – far better than normal, actually. They had been praying together and of course, the media had taken a keen interest in their lives. Lehumo was not much of a limelight person, but Gatsha was very much used to interviews and cameras wherever they went. They had been seeking other options that would enable them to conceive and one of their best options to try was IVF (Invitro Fertilisation). Lehumo was just older than 30, while Gatsha was heading to his forties, but the doctor was very confident that they would be able to conceive after a few attempts.

Hosea was about thirteen by then and he and Bonggi had come over to celebrate Christmas at the Royal Palace. It was rather empty, but much more peaceful when Kuli was around. Of course, Brenda had become a more familiar visitor there as her husband, Siya, Gatsha’s best friend had taken over the advisor

role from King Dambuza. He had felt really embarrassed and ashamed of what his wife and Kuli had done to the Queen of Zululand, so in turn he felt it was rather best to resign as the advisor to Gatsha. He was also mentally distraught ever since Alice committed suicide, so he was just not fit enough to continue with his role anymore. Lehumo on the other hand, was a bit relieved that she would never have to see Abigail ever again.

Lehumo had become such a pro in the kitchen, that she would always make her famous lamb shank recipe for Christmas. It had become their own Christmas tradition, topping the meal off with all kinds of meat. That was the only time apart from other functions where they would eat so much food. She would also make raspberry cake, chocolate mousse and of course her mother's all time favourite – malva pudding. She was a giver and a sharer, just like her parents, so she would give all the employees a plate along with the desserts and also some food parcels along with a nice fat bonus at the end of the year. Gatsha trusted her so much with their money, that he never found any reason to doubt her. She was very good with money, which was a good thing for him. She had scored him some big time investors in his Sifiso foundation as well as his

company and for the Hospital. She and Brenda were busy cooking, while Bongi had just come over with Hosea.

Gatsha: (smiling) “Sawubona (Hello), Mam’ Bongi. Long time no see. You have indeed become a stranger.”

Bongi: (chuckling) “Hayi (No), suka wena (don’t be so silly). I’m old and I like my own space.”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “Look at you Hosea. Since when have you become so tall? You’re even taller than me.”

Hosea: (chuckling) “Haibo (wow), Buthi (Brother). I have to be tall, how else would I get all the beautiful girls?”

Gatsha chuckled as he went to greet his sister in the kitchen.

Hosea: “Sanibonani (Hello). Sis (Sister) Bee. You don’t age, neh (do you)?”

Brenda: (laughing) “Your brother has become such a charmer, Lehumo.”

Lehumo: (firmly) “Ke tla go phyatla (I’ll smack you), Hosea.”

Hosea: (chuckling) “It’s just a compliment, hao (Goodness).”

Lehumo: “You can stop with that and show me your report first.”

Hosea: (smiling) “You’ll be very pleased. And by that I mean you have to buy me the latest xbox as promised.”

He handed her the report and she and Brenda perused through his quarterly marks and their smiles broadened with each one. Hosea had taken after his father, he was very smart and very good at Mathematics.

Lehumo: “Well, at least you’ll know that I didn’t buy that xbox in vain. I was about to take it back when Gogo told me how you have been busy with girls.”

Hosea: “Ah, Sisi (sis), you can’t blame me. Blame God for giving me such good genes. Can I go test it out?”

Lehumo: “Fine, but you have to be back here for dinner.”

Hosea smiled as he hugged them both and thanked Lehumo. He took Brenda’s twins with him to the game room, while Bonggi, Siya, Brenda, Lehumo and Gatsha were left alone. It was a bit too early to eat, so they had some snacks and a few drinks.

Bonggi: “How has it been going, Lehumo?”

Lehumo: “Couldn’t be better, Ma. I am more than great.”

Bonggi: (nodding) “That’s good. I am just a bit worried, my baby. I’ve been having this worrisome dream. The same dream for the past week. I tried praying about it first, but it keeps reappearing.”

Lehumo: (frowning) “What kind of dream?”

Bongi: “I fear you’ll have a very unpleasant enemy joining your family.”

Gatsha: “I am sure it will blow over, ma. I mean, we are prayer warriors. Forever and always.”

Bongi: “I am very happy to hear that, but this person is going to ruin everything. You just have to hang in there, especially you Lehumo.”

Lehumo didn’t seem to think much of Bongi’s premonition, as they just wanted to enjoy Christmas together as a happy family again. They enjoyed their meal and had a pleasant day. The next few days were filled with laughter, happiness and much food and drinks galore. Lehumo couldn’t remember the last time she had been that happy, but as the Sesotho saying goes “Lethabo le tla le selo” meaning happiness is usually shortlived. As they were preparing themselves for a great New year’s eve braai, Bongani came running hysterically towards them.

Bongani: (breathing heavily) “Ngiyaxolisa unkuniphazamisa Ndhlovukazi (Apologies to disturb you, my Queen), kodwa (but) there is someone here to see you.”

Lehumo: (frowning) “Hawu (Goodness)

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Bongani, weza ugijima kangaka (why were you running like this)?”

Bongi: “Because m’am, he did say that if you and the king do not open up in one minute, he would break down the gate.”

Gatsha was unimpressed with such drama.

Gatsha: “Ubani loyo (Who is that)?”

Bongani: “It is King Dambuza himself. He is very unhappy and came with his rude and even more unhappy brother, along with his daughter, her brothers, her mother and other relatives.”

It seemed as if drama was following Gatsha and Lehumo everywhere they went.

Gatsha: "Let them in, Bongani."

Bongani: "As you wish, my king."

Within less than a minute, commotion started. They drove in with three Quants, carrying an overload of passengers. They all stormed out looking really unhappy, throwing insults while the women were shouting.

Woman: "Ngazile (I knew it)! I just knew it! The king is a paedophile!"

King Dambuza: "Had I known I would never have trusted him with your son, Bafo (Brother)."

Gatsha and Lehumo were instantly annoyed as they saw a whole group of people. Oddly, King Dambuza was standing right next to Gwen, and right next to her was a very short and chubby woman who looked like her and a man who looked just like King Dambuza.

Gatsha: "Can I help you?"

They started shouting again simultaneously, but Gatsha knew how to handle such.

Gatsha: "I swear, if you shout and scream at us again, I will have no choice but to have you removed from my property. Asihloniphaneni (let's respect each other), ngiyanicela (please)."

King Dambuza knew very well what Gatsha meant. He knew just how Gatsha dealt with rude people especially those on his turf.

King Dambuza: "Relaxani (relax), let me speak. Gatsha, we have come to speak to you."

Gatsha: "You could have called instead of ranting and raving in my yard like uncultured people. I am no animal, Dambuza, and my guards are not your peasants. The next time you wish to talk, call first. I am enjoying my day with my family, so if you wish to talk, set an appointment."

Woman: "Yoh (wow)! Unehaba nje (You're so rude)! It's bad enough that you decided to impregnate my daughter and throw her out of your house, now you're throwing us out like garbage!"

Gatsha: (alarmed) "Utheni (Excuse me)?"

Woman: "Ungzwile (You heard me)!"

King Dambuza: "Glenda, how many times must I tell you to shut up?"

Gatsha: "There must be a mistake here."

King Dambuzza: “Well, Gwen here says she is pregnant and you are the father.”

Father: “Gwen, susa lengubo umbonise (remove that blanket and show him).”

Gwen slowly uncovered herself and her big belly was obvious. Lehumo, Gatsha, Bongsi, Brenda and Siya were all so shocked.

Gatsha: (chuckling) “That is not my child. I never even slept with her. How dare you insult me in my own house?”

King Dambuzza: “Very well, Gatsha. It seems that you might be a little too used to using young ladies. So here is what is going to happen; we’re giving you two days to respond and if you do not, we will go ahead and tell the whole world what you did. It won’t be pretty. Salani kahle (Stay well).”

King Dambuzza was about to leave, but it seems as if Gwen’s parents didn’t want to leave just like that.

Woman: “You’re just going to leave like that?! He has to marry her!”

Father: “Woza man (Come)!”

Woman: “Sizobuya ok’salayo (At the end of the day, we’ll still be back).”

They left as Gatsha’s jaw became clenched and his veins started popping out of his face.

Gatsha: “I didn’t sleep with her, Lehumo.”

Lehumo knew at that very moment that is what Bongi was talking about.

Lehumo: “I know.”

The day was ruined in an instant as Gatsha decided to go to his bedroom along with Lehumo.

Gatsha: (sigh) “Lehumo, I didn’t do it. I swear to you I didn’t do anything. That night, that night I came home so drunk, I was so stressed that I just went to a bar after work and I decided to blow off some steam. I ended up having a little too much to drink. I couldn’t even believe how drunk I was until I came home. She was standing in the kitchen, with bumshorts, a crop top and make up. Believe me, I swear I didn’t do anything. She was talking to me and I was telling her about you. The next thing she leaned over and kissed me. I broke the kiss and told her to leave the next day. I told her she was fired. Believe me, baby, I swear on my own life, I didn’t do it.”

Gatsha was even shaking – the thought of having Lehumo leave him was dreadful to even think about. Knowing how weak his wife tended to be, he thought she would crumble, but Lehumo had grown in the previous months. She knew just how to handle the matter like a mature, spiritual woman.

Lehumo: “I believe you, Gatsha, I do.”

Gatsha: “Please be honest. Don’t just say something because you feel obligated.”

Lehumo: “I made those vows with you that day and I vowed to be with you through thick and thin. I know you didn’t do it – I believe you.”

Gatsha was so relieved that he had tears flowing down his face. For the first time in ten years, it was Lehumo’s turn to be strong and supportive towards her husband. A new whirlwind had visited them and she had to take the reigns as the queen and finally take charge.

“Faith is taking the first step, even when you don’t see the whole staircase.” – Martin Luther King

The new year was not so pleasant for Lehumo and Gatsha, but life had to go on. Lehumo had come up with a brilliant plan. She knew that Gwen’s family was just up to no good. They were after money. She decided to follow her gut feeling for the first time in a while and it told her that Gatsha was not the father of that child. He had sworn on his life even. It was a lot trickier than usual because the Dambuza family thought they were one step ahead of Lehumo and Gatsha, but luckily they had a whole legal and PR team. Gatsha’s phone rang and he answered.

Gatsha: “It’s Phindi, our lawyer.”

Lehumo: “Put her on speaker.”

Phindi: “Hi, Ncube’s. Apologies for calling you so early in the morning. I have some bad news.”

Gatsha: “Trust me, I doubt anything can top the news I heard. Shoot.”

Phindi: “Well, it seems as if the Dambuza’s had gone to Zululand daily and handed them an interview on a silver platter. You won’t like it. I just sent you a copy of the article right now via email.”

While Lehumo went through her emails, Gatsha kept talking to Phindi. Lehumo stood next to Gatsha so they could briefly read it together and they were both shocked. “King of Zululand raped and impregnated a 19 year old Princess.”

Gatsha: (sigh) “These people are out to ruin me.”

Phindi: “Well, you don’t pay me so much for nothing.”

Gatsha: “What’s your plan?”

Phindi: "I handed the Zululand daily a lawsuit immediately, along with the Dambuza family. Of course, with his kingdom nearly bankrupt, he is willing to retract his statement."

Gatsha: "But the damage might have been done already. I might lose investors."

Phindi: "Might, yes, but I highly doubt it. I spoke to your wife last night and I agree with her plan. Do it and if they agree, they will have to issue a statement live on tv, retracting their statement."

Gatsha: "I don't think I can do this, Phindi. I love my wife too much."

Phindi: "It will only be temporary, besides, Lehumo is the only legal wife here. Should anything happen to you, Gwen gets nothing."

Gatsha didn't like the plan but it seemed as if it was the only one they could do at that point, to save his reputation and to save themselves a lot of legal fees.

Gatsha: "Okay."

Phindi: "Good. I'll be waiting with the media in a few hours. Don't lose your cool, remember why we are doing this."

Phindi hung up and Gatsha dropped on the bed, speechless.

Lehumo: "Hey, it will be okay."

Gatsha: "Nini (When)? When will it ever be okay, Lehumo? I am willing to lose it all just for you."

Lehumo: "That's not an option, Gatsha. Remember how many orphans we feed and help throughout the year? Remember how you helped Wiseman and how he is now chairperson of your company? Do it for many more like him."

Gatsha: “How do you remain so selfless all the time?”

Lehumo: “Because I love you and materials can always be gained back. Trust me on this.”

Gatsha nodded in defeat. He didn't see this coming and he felt he should have followed up and dug a bit deeper on the kind of girl Gwen was. He had no idea that she was a royal member of the Dambuza family. All in all, Gatsha just couldn't wrap his mind around that whole idea. He kept asking himself how Gwen pulled her plan. Well, while the Dambuza's were getting ready to meet the Ncubes, little did they know what lay in store for them. Gwen had asked her parents to go to the shop, but had to make a small u-turn to see Kuli and Abigail. They were both so pleased about the whole plan.

Abigail: “Your plan worked, Kuli. I must say

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I wouldn't have figured it out myself.”

Kuli: "They don't call me a master mind for nothing."

Gwen: (worried) "I don't think I can keep up with this any longer, guys. I mean, Nkululeko insists on telling my parents he is the father of my child. He will ruin everything."

Kuli: "Oh, child. That's easy, we will get rid of him."

Gwen: (shocked) "You don't mean like, kill him, do you?"

Kuli: "Of course, how else would our plan succeed with him in the way?"

Gwen: "Please, don't. You can't do that."

Kuli: "This is simple. You either get him killed, or you lose the baby."

Gwen: "Do you mean give her up for adoption?"

Abigail: “Hayi wena man (No, man). We mean actually lose it. You know, abort.”

Gwen: (shocked) “I can’t do that. I’m 25 weeks pregnant. It’s illegal to have an abortion that late.”

Kuli: “You want your parents to find out you lost your virginity to their garden boy and lied about the King raping you instead?”

Gwen: “You can’t threaten me.”

Kuli: “We own you now, Gwendelyn. You belong to us now. You had your chance to run away. This is it. No turning back.”

Gwen started crying silently.

Kuli: “Ag, don’t look so sad. By this time tomorrow, you’ll be the Queen of Zululand.”

Abigail: “You mean second.”

Kuli: “We can get Lehumo’s title revoked. She is royal so she will be first.”

Abigail: (chuckling) “You still think that you are the queen of that place, neh (don’t you)? Gatsha overturned all previous laws long ago.”

Kuli: “I know how she crumbles, she hates rejection. I can get the whole Ncube family to reject her. I mean once they find out Gatsha impregnated Gwen, it will be tickets for Lehumo.”

Had Kuli known that she should have repented long before then, she wouldn’t have been in the mess she was in. Things were about to get dirty. Gone was the silent and nice Lehumo, she was claiming her title and finally taking her power back. Gatsha was falling even more in love with his wife, she

had finally mastered making things happen. For even Proverbs 13:3-13 says, “Be careful what you say and protect your life. A careless talker destroys himself. No matter how much a lazy person may want something, he will never get it. A hard worker will get everything he wants. Honest people hate lies, but the words of wicked people are shameful and disgraceful.

Righteousness protects the innocent; wickedness is the downfall of sinners. Some people pretend to be rich, but have nothing. Others pretend to be poor, but own a fortune. The rich have to use their money to save their lives, but no one threatens the poor. The righteous are like a light shining brightly; the wicked are like a lamp flickering out. It is wiser to ask for advice. The more easily you get your wealth, the sooner you will lose it. The harder it is to earn, the more you will have. When hope is crushed, the heart is crushed, but a wish come true fills you with joy. If you refuse good advice, you are asking for trouble; follow it and you are safe.”

44

P.S. it's been a hectic weekend and it's my birthday tomorrow, so I'm pre celebrating with drinks on my bed. I can't type anymore. I love you guys ❤️.

Chapter 45

“Only in the darkness can you see the stars” – Martin Luther King Jr.

Gatsha was so sad and rather irritated by the whole situation, but for once Lehumo had everything covered. For once, she was his rock, his shield. She patiently waited with her lawyer and the media in the lounge. Gatsha had had a few sips of whiskey. He usually did that to calm himself down. He was not a noisy person like his father, but people have their limits. Bongani came minutes later to tell the king and queen that their expected guests had arrived, this time in a much calmer manner.

Lehumo: “Let them in.”

Bongani: "As you wish, Ndhlovukazi (My queen)."

In walked Glenda, alongside her mother, with her father and King Dambuza. At least their big family were not present that time. They were humble as fuck.

King Dambuza: (bowing) "Afternoon, King Gatsha, King of Zululand. I come before you and I ask firstly that you please forgive me for my previous behaviour. It was not my intention to disrespect you like that. For that, I bring you R5000. It is not much, but it is what I can afford right now."

Gatsha was very unimpressed. Lehumo was his world and anyone who disrespected him, disrespected his wife automatically.

Gatsha: (frowning) "Am I sitting alone here, King Dambuza?"

King Dambuza: "I don't follow, Gatsha."

Gatsha: “Of course you don’t. You see, whenever a person disrespects me, they disrespect my wife. Did you hear yourself apologizing to my wife for your unnecessary outburst and drama the other day?”

King Dambuza: (embarrassed) “Oh, Ndhlovukazi (My queen), I humbly apologize for – “

Gatsha: “No need. It is not genuine anyway. You may sit and plead your case. State why you are here and make it quick.”

They sat on the couches highly embarrassed. As for Gwen, she could hardly look at both of them in the eye.

King Dambuza: “Well, as previously mentioned, Gwen did say that you raped her – “

Gatsha interrupted him again.

Gatsha: “Wait, before you go on

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I should let you know that you are on camera as discussed.”

King Dambuza knew that he had to play it cool with his words.

King Dambuza: “Well, yes. We decided to retract that statement we made to the Zululand Daily about you being a rapist.”

Gatsha hated wasting time and Lehumo could see he was getting pissed so she jumped in.

Lehumo: “Well then, since you have told the whole world that Gatsha, my husband and King of Zululand is the father of that child, we will do the following; Gatsha has decided to marry Gwen traditionally of course. She will own nothing on this land, nothing of ours legally – and then once the baby is born we will conduct a DNA test to conclude if indeed the baby is his. Let me just conclude this by saying that my husband swears on his own life that he didn’t sleep with Gwen. When Gwen came here she didn’t disclose that she was family of the Dambuza family nor did she even say that she was 19. He has also

decided to give you R500 000 lobola money as compensation since you do claim that he deflowered her. If you have a problem with any of that, you can speak now.”

They could both see how Gwen’s mother and father got instantly irritated after they heard the words “traditionally” and “R500 000”.

Mother: (irritated) “Is she serious?”

Lehumo: “By she I assume you’re referring to me. Yes, I am being serious. I don’t appreciate you not acknowledging my presence.”

Mother: (annoyed) “Fine. But if he wants to marry her, then he should pay R1 million.”

Lehumo: “He never WANTED to do anything. You FORCED him into this by claiming he raped her, is it not? That is OUR final offer since it is OUR money – not HIS.”

They could both see how the two were aiming for a higher amount, but King Dambuza was very happy to get even a cent from the Ncubes.

Father: “Fine, so when is the wedding?”

Gatsha: “What wedding?”

Father: (frowning) “Excuse me?”

Lehumo: “You heard him. What wedding?”

Mother: “You don’t think you’re going to take my daughter and not give her a proper wedding, did you?”

Gatsha: (chuckling) “Wena weh (Hey, you). This is not a wanted marriage. You wanted this – not me and most certainly not my wife. You planned this. So this is how it will go; if the child is mine, which I know it is not, then and only then will I give her a proper wedding. But right now, she will just be acknowledged

as my “second wife” and that’s it. No ceremony. My ancestors are already highly appalled by your devious behaviour.”

Mother: (annoyed) “Fine. I shall bring in my things.”

Lehumo: “Excuse me? What things? You don’t think you’re moving in here, do you?”

Mother: “How on earth do you expect her to be cared for when she is barefoot and pregnant without me? You wouldn’t know anything about that.”

Gatsha: “Of couse you would glamourize being pregnant and poor and shame my wife for having no children of her own, but you are not moving in here.”

Mother: (shocked) “You don’t expect her to be here alone with THAT woman, do you?”

Lehumo: “We all work in this house. I am sure she is good at something, other than lying. You can visit every now and then

and by every now and then I mean once a week or so. Now, if that will be all.”

Gwen’s parents were really sad, but not for the fact that they couldn’t protect their baby girl, but because they couldn’t stay in the house and milk the Ncube’s for all they had. Gwen on the other hand had to figure out a way out of that mess. She was five months away from giving birth and had to find her way out of Charlotte’s ugly web. She had given up her virginity to a gardener she ended up falling in love with and now, her plan was getting too complicated for words. She wouldn’t have the fairytale wedding she had always dreamt of and nothing could clearly shake off Gatsha’s love from Lehumo. As the Bible says in James 1:6 – 8; “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

“Be careful what you wish for. I know for a fact. Wishes are brutal, unforgiving things. They burn your tongue the moment they’re spoken and you can never take them back.” – Alice Hoffman

As the “wedding” progressed, Gatsha was very serious about showing no intentions of ever loving Gwen, so he became very blunt and blatantly honest all alongside his wife, much to the Dambuza’s dismay. Gwen’s mother was more than unhappy. That was the least of Gwen’s problems, as Gatsha refused for her to wear a traditional wedding dress. He simply refused to let her feel like a typical bride. The traditional beer didn’t brew the first time and the second time, it got maggots in it – which was a bad sign according to Bongi. She refused to be present as she had told Gatsha and Lehumo not to go through with their “facade”. Gatsha had Gwen sit all on her own far from him and Lehumo, as they both sat in their royal chairs in front of the whole crowd. The whole community was invited – to prove a point. A point none of them expected.

Gatsha: (toasting) “My fellow council, my fellow community members. I know most of you came here to put me to shame;

you came here to see if whether or not Gwen is indeed pregnant and not to put the rumours to rest or to support your king and queen. Well, I am here to tell you that she is indeed pregnant – but it is not my child.”

The crowd was gasping, while Gwen started crying filled with the utmost regret and envy towards Lehumo. She suddenly asked herself why on earth she went ahead with Abigail and Kuli’s plan.

Gatsha: “Yes, you know it as my child, but rest assured it is not my child. Then you are murmuring amongst yourselves and asking yourselves why I am marrying Gwen. Well, to spare my wife from shame and unnecessary embarrassment this is what I chose to do. Well, she is the one who let me do it. Never, have I met a woman of such stature. Rest assured, I am no paedophile. When Gwen came to our house, she disclosed that she was 21 and not 19, and she never told us she was a member of the Dambuza clan – not that it makes any difference. Anyway, she tried to seduce me, but I refused and I fired her. Months later, here we are and she claims I impregnated her. This is to prove to all of you how I am a man of my word. All of you have proven that you cannot be trustworthy and loyal to me no matter how much you try to

persuade me. When that child is born, I myself will get a doctor from my wife's reputable hospital to perform a DNA test and when it becomes known that the child indeed is not mine, I will put you all to shame. Just as people ostracised the leper in Luke 5: 12-16 and Jesus saved him; just as people ostracised the Paralytic in Luke 5:17-26, yet Jesus saved him; just as people ostracised Levi the Tax Collector in Luke 5:27-32 – yet Jesus accepted him; just as people ostracised The Sinful Woman in Luke 7:36-50 yet Jesus still accepted and saved her; just as people ostracised Legion the Demoniac in Luke 8:26-39 – yet Jesus accepted him; just as people ostracised The Lost Son in Luke 15:11-32 – yet Jesus accepted him – is just how he will save me out of this mess. You cannot be trusted – you don't know my heart but Jesus does. God does and He will prove you all wrong.”

The gasps became fewer, the murmurs became silent. A lot of them became regretful to believing hearsay instead of believing their very own king. After that, Gatsha wasted no time.

Gatsha: “Food and drinks are served and music is also available. Enjoy yourselves.”

Just like that, he got up and left Gwen weeping in her lonely chair. King Dambuza and Gwen's father had no power – they dared not disrespect Gatsha after he bailed out their kingdom at Gwen's price.

Gwen's mother: (fuming) "Gatsha! You will not stand my daughter up on her wedding day like this!"

Gwen: "Weh, Mama! Mangivuma kusasa ekuseni (When I wake up tomorrow morning), I expect to find you and your whole herd gone. You married your daughter off to me, so you don't belong here. If you ever dare speak to me or my wife like that ever again, I will personally have you banished from these royal grounds! Do you understand me?"

Gatsha was fuming and really over what they had done to him.

Gwen's mother had no choice but to nod and let them be. Gatsha and Lehumo retreated to their bedroom and left the rest of the guests along with Gwen.

Gwen: (crying) “Ma! Ubayeka kanjani labantu (How could you just leave those two)?!”

Gwen’s mother: “Ai, thula nawe (you keep quiet)! At least you get to be swimming in money and that bastard child will be taken care of.”

Gwen: (shocked) “How did you know?”

Gwen’s mother: “I was not born yesterday and besides, we all know how noble of a king Gatsha is. He loves that bitch so much, he would never look at you nor anyone else the way he looks at her. I know that Abigail and Kuli put you up to this.”

Gwen: (shaking) “Ma, I – “

Gwen’s Mother: (interrupting) “It’s okay. What’s done is done. We’ll deal with it soon enough. You focus on the end goal.”

Gwen: “What am I going to do, Ma? That doctor can’t be bribed.”

Gwen’s Mother: “Leave it all to me.”

Gwen chose to trust her mother, forgetting the evil and lousy Abigail never gave up on anything. Weeks went by and it was as if Lehumo and Gatsha’s marriage grew stronger by the day. They had become so strong, that they were praying together even more again. It was one of those antenatal appointments with Gwen, but she decided to surprise them yet again the way her mother instructed her to. It was their usual Saturday morning routine; Lehumo had made breakfast and Gwen had felt too ashamed to join them. Lehumo had grown an unusual appetite, but her husband didn’t mind and they both thought it was because of stress and being a bit too busy. Their IVF treatment was unsuccessful, but this time, they had decided to put all their faith in God. She had gained a bit of weight around her hips and breasts, but she didn’t really notice. She was preparing the breakfast table before their appointment to the doctor’s office but Gwen didn’t come down.

Gatsha: “Hawu (Goodness), Baby. Uphi umloyi (Where’s the witch)?”

Lehumo: “Hayi hayi hayi (No, no, no), Love. We don’t say such.”

Gatsha: “I call a spade a spade and you know it.”

Lehumo: “Come on, maybe she is feeling under the weather. You haven’t been too nice.”

Gatsha: “How can I when she forced her way into our marriage?”

Lehumoo: (sigh) “Let me go check on her.”

Gatsha: “Not before you give me a kiss and enjoy our breakfast with me.”

Lehumo smiled as Gatsha grabbed her for a deep, French kiss as he caressed her firm buttocks and rubbed her engorged breasts.

Gatsha: (moaning) “Oh, Baby wami (my baby), you feel so good, so beautiful, so hot. Yini kodwa (What is it)?”

Lehumo: (blushing) “Stop it.”

Gatsha: “I’m serious. You have some extra meat everywhere.”

Lehumo: (teary) “Wa reng, Gatsha (What)?”

Gatsha: “Baby, I didn’t mean it in a bad way. I love it.”

Lehumo started crying, leaving Gatsha speechless.

Gatsha: (frowning) “Lehumo, is there something you want to tell me?”

Lehumo: “Like what?! Like I’m fat?!”

Gatsha stood there in front of Lehumo for a second and smiled.

Lehumo: (sniffing) “Great. Now you’re smiling at me. Am I funny?”

Gatsha: (smiling) “Come, let’s go out for a picnic instead.”

Lehumo: “What about Gwen?”

Gatsha: “She is not my wife – you are. Now, come.”

They completely forgot about Gwen for a while and decided to head out. Gatsha already had what he had in mind, but didn’t want to be too excited, so he managed to get Lehumo distracted and they in turn forgot about Gwen’s doctor appointment. Gwen on the other hand had plans of her

own. Her phone rang and she found the courage to stomach the pain throughout and answer it.

Gwen: "Hello?"

Gwen's Mother: "Gwen! Kununi ngikufonela (I've been trying to reach you)! Why be ungaphenduli (Why weren't you answering)?!"

Gwen: (softly) "Eish, yoh, Ma! I... I'm in so much pain."

Gwen's mother: (panicking) "Gwen! Wenzeni (What did you do)?!"

Gwen: "I had to do it. I just had to."

Gwen's Mother: (worried) "Stay there, I'm on my way."

Gwen's Mother hurried out and asked their driver to take her to the Zululand Royal Palace. All along the way, she begged the

driver to go faster. After an anxious fifteen minutes, she finally arrived. She didn't even have the time to greet Bongani, but he noticed how frantic she stormed in so he followed her into the house.

Gwen's Mother: (shouting) "Gwen! Gwen! Ukuphi (Where are you)?!"

Gwen was in so much pain, all she could do was moan out.

Gwen: (moaning) "Yoooh."

Gwen's mother rushed to Gwen's bedroom, she opened the door and became startled immediately at the gruesome sight before her. Gwen was curled up in a spooning position with so much blood on the bed. Bongani himself became fearful.

Bongani: (shocked) "Weh (Oh), Mama! Igazi elinkaga (So much blood)!"

Gwen's Mother was nearly paralyzed due to shock, but quickly brought herself to life. She went near Gwen, touched her

forehead only to realize that Gwen had been drenched in sweat with a very high fever.

Gwen's Mother: (Scared) "Wenzi mntwana ka Sizwe, kodwa (What on earth did you do, Sizwe's child)?!"

Bongani: "Kumele simise esbhedlela (We have to take her to the hospital). Let me call my King."

Gwen's Mother: (abruptly) "No!"

Bongani looked at her suspiciously.

Gwen's Mother: "I mean, no, don't do that. You don't want to stress them when they are probably away on some business. I will sort it out."

Bongani: "Okay then. Let me get the car ready and we can take her to Neriah Makhubela hospital."

Gwen's Mother: (abruptly) "No!"

By that point Bongani had grown eagerly suspicious, but he didn't want to make it seem obvious, so he just stared at her in silence.

Gwen's Mother: "I mean, no, I don't want to bother you. Besides, the King and Queen expect you to be here while they are gone. I will take care of everything from here onwards. Call my driver to come and help me carry my child, please."

Bongani nodded in silence and went out. He called their driver as she had asked, but quickly sent his King a message. "My King, Gwen is bleeding. Her mother and their driver took her away. She refused to go to Hospital." Gwen's mother walked behind the driver, carrying the weak Gwen away. She had the blood-stained sheets in her hand.

Gwen: "Ngiyabonga (thank you), Ka khulu (very much), Bongani."

He just nodded with a brief smile on his face and left.

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“The devil doesn’t come dressed in a red cape and pointy horns. He comes as everything you’ve ever wished for.” –
Tucker Max

Gatsha and Lehumo had their phones off and came back home hours later. It was dark already, while Bongani was frantic. He saw them approach the gate and couldn’t even wait for them to stop before him. He rushed towards Gatsha’s side of the car.

Bongani: (frantic) “My King. I have been trying to get hold of you – both of you.”

Gatsha: “My phone was off and so was Lehumo’s, Bongani. What seems to be the matter?”

Bongani: “The other Queen was bleeding, my king. I had never seen so much blood before me.”

Gatsha and Lehumo were shocked.

Gatsha: "Bleeding? Where is she now?"

Bongani: "Her mother came with their driver and took her. She refused that she go to the hospital."

Gatsha was not surprised at all.

Gatsha: "I knew this was bound to happen."

Bongani: "I suspect she took something, my King. Something to make the baby disappear. I have seen a few woman in my village do it when I was a boy."

Lehumo: "Thank you, Bongani. Your loyalty is appreciated."

Bongani: "As always, my Queen."

Gatsha: "We shall be back soon."

Bongani nodded as Gatsha reversed the car. He ended up chuckling, leaving Lehumo irritated.

Lehumo: (frowning) “Wa tshega (You’re laughing)?! Ka nnete, nnete, Gatsha, wa tshega (You’re seriously laughing, Gatsha)?”

Gatsha: “Come on, Baby. Lighten up. You yourself knew such would happen. If it really was my child, she would have fought to keep it. Now, she killed it instead. That whore.”

Lehumo: (annoyed) “Mxm. This is not the time to joke about such, Gatsha.”

Gatsha: “You know, one would swear you’re pregnant. You have been moody all morning.”

Lehumo: (teary) “How can you joke like that knowing our situation?”

Gatsha: (laughing) “Well, mina ngiyakutshela ke (I’m telling you then), umithi (you’re pregnant).”

Lehumo seemed really unbothered and irritated by Gatsha's candid behaviour. She decided to keep quiet and go mute on him.

Lehumo: (clicking tongue) "Mxm."

Gatsha: "Hawu (Oh)? Awusangikhulumisi manje (You're not talking to me anymore)?"

Lehumo still remained quiet.

Gatsha: "Okay, then."

He decided to say nothing and stop by Burger King's drive-through at Ncube Mall.

Waitress: (smiling) "Good evening, Mr. Ncube. Good Evening, Mrs. Ncube. May I take your order?"

Gatsha: “I’ll have two of everything on the menu – except the kid’s menu.”

Waitress: (shocked) “Everything, sir?”

Gatsha: (smiling) “Yes, twice of everything please.”

Waitress: “May I ask who that is for?”

Gatsha: “My wife.”

The waitress saw the livid expression on Lehumo’s face and decided to just nod. Lehumo was really not in the mood to be playful. She chose to keep quiet. Gatsha patiently waited in the next window, talking to the non-responsive Lehumo.

Gatsha: “You know, I think we should name the baby Mohumi if it is a boy and Bahumi if it is a girl. Just like your mother told you in your dream a few months ago. What do you think?”

Lehumo just clicked her tongue and said nothing.

Gatsha: “Oh, well, I would really love a girl. I have the perfect name for her. My father told me that we’d have a baby by this time next year and that I should name her -. Let me not spoil the surprise by telling you.”

Lehumo still kept quiet, much to Gatsha’s amusement. The food finally came

along with dessert. Gatsha thanked the waitress and parked in the parking lot.

Gatsha: “Well then, Bon Apetite (Enjoy).”

Lehumo acted uninterested at first, but once she saw Gatsha digging into the Jalapeno poppers, she had to say something.

Lehumo: “You’re not planning on finishing those alone, are you?”

Gatsha: “I thought you were not talking to me anymore.”

Lehumo said nothing and snatched the packet away from him.

Gatsha: “Ah, baby, those ones are mine.”

Lehumo: “They are mine now. All of them. Eat something else.”

Gatsha chuckled as he saw his beautiful wife eat. She always had a weird moan whenever she enjoyed nice food. He salivated as he looked at her eat, imagining himself giving her pleasure as he always did. He knew deep down what his dream meant. The other night, his father came to him in a dream and told him something he didn't deem important until that day. “You're finally going to be blessed with all your heart's desire, my son. Remember the Psalm 37:4 – “Trust in the Lord and He will give you all the desires of your heart.” Your prayers have been heard, my son. Your child will be something unusual to the kingdom, she will carry your legacy right through in the most unorthodox way. She will be a complete replica of you – but a much tougher one. She will shake nations, be a born leader, but be careful of the devil you have let into your house – into your marriage. If your wife fails to remain strong, the wrong one will lead your kingdom when you die. Name her

Buhlebendalo (Nature's Beauty). She will be one of a kind, my son, even you will be surprised one day. I hope you get to see her grow."

And just like that, Sfiso had given Gatsha his long awaited answer to his prayers. Gwen's mother on the other hand, had gone somewhere else instead of the hospital. She went straight to Kuli and Abigail's apartment and banged on their door.

Kuli: "Alright! Ngiyeza man (I'm coming)!"

She opened the door and gasped in shock as Gwen's mother barged right in with the driver carrying the semi-conscious Gwen.

Abigail: (shocked) "And then?!"

Gwen's mother: (annoyed) "Ja, wena (yes, you). Be ucabanga ukuthi be ngeke ngikuthole (Did you really think I'd never find you)?"

Abigail: (shocked) "I don't know what you mean."

Gwen's mother: (chuckling) "I curse the day my brother married you. You have brought nothing but turmoil and evil into our family."

Kuli: "Hayi wena (No man)! You can't just barge into our place and say such. Ucabanga ukuthi ungubani wena (Who do you think you are)?!"

Gwen's Mother: (livid) "I'm the woman who will get you two sentenced to prison if you don't get my daughter well! You two really think I am that stupid?! I knew all along that you had plotted with my daughter against Lehumo and Gatsha. I didn't give a fuck about your plan, but now, you have messed with the wrong woman!"

Abigail: "What do you expect us to do? I'm not a doctor."

Gwen's mother: "Oh, but you used to be a midwife, baby girl. Do your magic, or I swear, it will only take one dial for me to tell Gatsha everything."

The two looked at each other and knew that she was not playing.

Abigail: (softly) "I don't have any equipment."

Gwen's mother: "Call someone. You were always good at connections."

Abigail: "That requires money, Glenda."

Gwen's mother took out a chunk of stash from her purse and threw it on the floor, right before Abigail's feet.

Gwen's mother: "Do your magic. The clock is ticking. You'd better hope she makes it and does not die."

47

“All Spirits are enslaved which serve things evil.” – Shelly
Quotes

“Hell is empty and all the devils are here.” – William
Shakespeare

Abigail started dialing her phone frantically along with Kuli. They were scraping together Nurses who were dealing with the black market and selling equipment and medication on the side to make an extra buck.

Abigail: “Yes, Hi, Phumi. I need some sutures, a clean scalpel, antibiotics, anaesthetics, syringes – the whole lot. Yes, I know it will cost money, I have that. It’s an emergency. Yes, send someone right away and you’ll get the cash immediately. Sharp.”

Gwen’s mother: “Well?”

Abigail: “She is on her way as we speak.”

Kuli grabbed some warm water, towels and cloths to start wiping Gwen and keeping her cool. The driver had gone outside to keep an eye on things.

Kuli: "She is burning up. She might need the hospital."

Gwen's Mother: "Clearly you are deaf. I said no hospitals!"

Abigail ran towards Gwen and tried to wake her, but Gwen seemed unresponsive.

Abigail: "Her pulse seems to be dropping. If I don't get this baby out now, she might not make it."

Gwen's Mother: "You do what you have to do, baby girl. You better hope and pray she makes it out alive."

Abigail started telling Kuli what to do.

Abigail: “Grab me a knife. A big bread knife. Sanitize it before you come here.”

Kuli did as she was told. It seemed as if Pamela was taking forever, so she decided to take matters into her own hands. Abigail started cutting Gwen open and hoped that she would not bleed to death. While in the process, a stern knock appeared on the door.

Gwen’s mother: “I’ll get it.”

She opened it and it was Phumi, the nurse. She looked at the horrific scene before her and became shocked instantly.

Phumi: “Look, I just brought the equipment. I want no part of this.”

Gwen’s Mother: “You already are part of this, hun. Go get the money.”

Pam followed Gwen's mother's signal, as she picked up the stack of cash from the floor. She looked at the unconscious Gwen and the focused Abigail in severe shock.

Gwen's Mother: "That will be all. Goodbye."

Phumi rushed out in shock, while Kuli followed Abigail's instructions. She quickly connected Gwen to a drip and immediately administered an anaesthetic for in case she woke up. Abigail was already in, so she didn't have time to use the scalpel Phumi brought in. She used some forceps to stretch Gwen's abdomen open in order to reveal the baby. Abigail looked at Gwen's mother in shock.

Gwen's Mother: "What is it?!"

Abigail: "There is so much sepsis in here."

Gwen's Mother: "Speak proper English."

Abigail: “What I mean is, whatever she had taken was really strong and quite bad. Her organs will rot away and she will die if I don’t remove her womb as well.”

Gwen’s mother: “Do what you have to do.”

Abigail nodded as she removed the dead child from the stomach, leaving Kuli dissatisfied. She vomited profusely, leaving Gwen’s mother annoyed.

Gwen’s mother: “Oh, come on, Kuli. You seriously can’t start having a conscience right now. You’re the one who came up with the plan from the get go. So, you will be the one who has to fix all this.”

Kuli: (displeased) “What do you mean?”

Gwen’s mother: “You took my baby’s womb away, so you will have to give her children. Steal them if you have to, but you will get the job done. You belong to me now.”

Kuli looked away displeased and started regretting all her life choices at that very moment. Abigail removed the remains of the pregnancy and Gwen's cervix. Poor Gwen; her choices led her to the point where she had no control over her own life. She lay there unconscious, as they removed her dead baby and her own womb without her consent. It was a do or die situation, but as they always say, be careful what you wish for.

Meanwhile Gatsha and Lehumo had finished eating in the car. Lehumo had basically eaten all of the food, leaving Gatsha smiling deeply to himself.

Lehumo: "If you keep smiling at me like that, Gatsha, I swear, ke tlo go rema ka mpama (I'll slap you to death)."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "As long as I get to stare at you all day even in death then I will be happy."

Lehumo: (clicking tongue) "Where are we going?"

Gatsha: "To the hospital."

Lehumo nodded because she assumed they were going to look for Gwen, but Gatsha had his own plans in mind. As soon as they had arrived, a nurse smiled at the two of them and looked like she had already been waiting for them with a wheelchair.

Nurse: (smiling) “Good evening

Mr. and Mrs. Ncube. Ndhlovukazi (My Queen), please, take a seat.”

The nurse instructed Lehumo to sit on the wheelchair, leaving her annoyed.

Lehumo: (staring at Gatsha) “A wheelchair, Gatsha?”

Gatsha: “Trust me.”

Lehumo was too full to argue with her jolly husband. As they passed the corridors, everyone couldn't help but greet and smile at them. No matter how they were feeling, they would

always take the time to greet the people of Zululand. The Nurse rolled Lehumo into one of the private wards.

Nurse: (smiling) "The doctor will be with you now now."

She smiled and left, leaving Lehumo wondering what her husband was up to.

Gatsha: "Please go change into the hospital gown, my love."

Lehumo: (rolling eyes) "You're so lucky I am too full to even argue with you."

She grabbed the gown from him and went into the bathroom, leaving Gatsha smiling all alone. Dr. Stein walked in and greeted Gatsha.

Dr. Stein: (smiling) "Ah, our King. What a pleasant surprise to see you here at this time of the evening. What brings you here? I hope you're not in trouble."

Gatsha: "Medical trouble, I am not in any, but my wife, doc, she will never forgive me for this."

Dr. Stein: (frowning) "I don't understand."

Lehumo walked out and greeted the doctor displeased.

Lehumo: "Hi, doc. My stupid husband brought me here and asked me to wear this gown without telling me what is going on. So, here I am. Your guinea pig for this evening. So, what is next, my husband?"

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Doc, I hope you know why we are here now."

Dr. Stein: (smiling) "Say no more."

Lehumo: (frowning) "Are you both seriously going to ignore me right now?"

Dr. Stein: "Please, lay on the bed, Mrs. Ncube."

She lay on it and exhaled heavily.

Dr. Stein started conversing with the confused Lehumo while wheeling the sonogram machine close to him.

Dr. Stein: "Mrs. Ncube, have you been experiencing any nausea, unusual eating habits, tiredness, swollen or tender breasts for the past few weeks?"

Lehumo: "Well, I think so. I am not too sure. Why?"

Dr. Stein: "Let me be frank with you, when last did you have your period?"

Lehumo froze for a while as she started counting. She stopped when she realized she hadn't had her period for the past six months."

Dr. Stein: “Well?”

Lehumo looked at Dr. Stein who was amused and at Gatsha who was smiling ear to ear.

Lehumo: “That’s impossible.”

Dr. Stein: “Nothing is impossible in this world, my Queen.”

Dr. Stein: “May I?”

He wanted to lift up her dress in order to perform a sonar.

Lehumo: (teary) “I don’t think I am ready. Gatsha, what if this is a false alarm?”

Gatsha: (holding her hand) “This time, it isn’t. Please believe me. Believe in us – believe in our ancestors, in our God.”

Lehumo let out a slight tear and Gatsha caught it just in time with his warm, affectionate hands. She nodded and gave the doctor the go ahead. He switched on the machine, and put the cold gel on her tummy. How familiar that was to her, but it brought nothing but painful memories to her. She chose to close her eyes, and then heard an unfamiliar sound.

Dr. Stein: "I see a heartbeat. And not just that, my dear royal couple. I am pleased to say that you, Mrs. Ncube are almost 7 months pregnant."

Gatsha: (teary) "God is good to those who want Him in his life, Lehumo. We have been answered."

Just like that, God had giveth and God had taketh. A simple decision changed Gwen's entire life. All because she was thriving towards evil and greed.

Chapter 49

“Shine your soul with the same egoless humility as the rainbow and no matter where you go in this world or the next, love will find you, attend you, and bless you.” - Aberjhani

It had been a few days since Gwen was passed out. She had to receive a few bags of blood transfusions and Gwen's mother got Abigail and Kuli to bury the deceased baby before she even had a chance to see the baby. While the King and Queen were finally rejoicing in their new blessing, Gwen was about to receive the most devastating news ever.

Gwen's mother: “Gwen, vuka (wake up). Vuka (wake up), my baby.”

Gwen: (drowsy) “What time is it? How long have I been asleep?”

Gwen's Mother: (panicking) “You don't remember?”

Gwen: (shaking head) "I only remember taking..."

She immediately recalled and put both her hands on her stomach, but was stunned to find it flatter.

Gwen: (hysterical) "What happened?! Uphi umntwana wami (Where is my baby)?! Ma?! Where the fuck is my child?!"

Gwen's Mother was immediately filled with streaming tears burning her cheeks. No mother loves seeing their child in pain, but Gwen's mother was not ready to accept defeat. Not yet.

Gwen's Mother: "Baby, calm down. You know what you did. Don't act like you don't remember what you did."

Gwen: (crying) "It was a mistake, Ma! I had to do it! I didn't have a choice!"

Gwen's Mother: "Shhh... let it all out."

Gwen cried so much until she felt like nothing was coming out anymore.

Gwen: “Just tell me, was it a girl or boy?”

Gwen’s Mother: “It was a boy.”

Gwen: (crying) “Yoh, Nkosi yami (my God).”

Gwen’s Mother: “That’s not all.”

Gwen looked at her mother confused.

Gwen’s mother: “The medicine you took gave you sepsis. As a result, we had to remove your womb.”

Gwen felt so shattered – it was bad enough she killed the child she created with a man she loved, but now she had no other chance of being a mother ever again.

Gwen: “Let me just die! Let me just die, Ma weh! This is too much for me! How will I ever live with myself?! No man will ever want me – ever! Gatsha will get rid of me now that the baby is gone!”

Gwen’s Mother: “Now, this is time to pull your big panties up, Gwen! I didn’t raise an idiot. I didn’t raise a quitter! Do you still want to be the queen?”

Gwen just nodded with tears flowing down her face, and she held her face up.

Gwen’s Mother: “Well, then. It is time for Plan B.”

Gwen: “What is plan B?”

Gwen’s Mother: “Lehumo most certainly won’t get pregnant ever again. She is practically old. They have no idea you have no womb anymore now. So, I will inform them of the loss of the child, and you will have to go back to the palace.”

Gwen: “They won’t want me there, Ma. Gatsha hates me – he despises me.”

Gwen’s Mother: “Leave it all to me. That barren bitch won’t know what hit her.”

It was really bad enough that Gwen had lost basically everything, but what was actually worse was that Gwen’s Mother, Glenda, had actually become a new accomplice to the plan against Lehumo. They had no idea that God had finally blessed them with a blessing they had been longing for, and well, they could not have been bothered with Gwen. Meanwhile, at the Royal Palace, Gatsha and Lehumo were so in love and so happy with one another. Gatsha had made his wife breakfast in bed as usual, except it was one of the best breakfasts since they were so happy.

Gatsha: “Breakfast is served, mkami (my wife).”

Lehumo: (smiling) “Thank you, baby.”

Gatsha: “I was thinking, that maybe we could announce your pregnancy once you start showing, you know. I mean we have literally less than three months to get ready for the baby’s arrival.”

Lehumo: “Can’t we just announce when I give birth? I mean, I just don’t want anything to happen – not right now.”

Gatsha: “I understand how you feel, baby, but you will be showing soon and people will start noticing. I mean, you can’t abandon your royal duties – even though I have been begging you to. So, you’re a public figure and they will start noticing.”

Lehumo: “Okay, you have a point. We can do it then, but only when I start showing.”

Gatsa: (smiling) “Have faith, my wife. People will always try doing evil, but when God says yes, nobody can say no.”

He kissed her forehead and they begun praying before eating. Of course, the Dambuza's never had timing because just minutes into breakfast, Bongani came rushing into the house.

Bongani: (shouting) "My king! My Queen! Apologies for barging in like this, but you have a very eager guest."

Lehumo and Gatsha rushed downstairs and found Bongani draped in sweat.

Gatsha: (worried) "Bongani, kwenzenjani (what is it)?"

Bongani: "Ngiyaxolisa (I am sorry), kodwa (but) the other queen and her mother are at the gate and they demand to see you. They refuse to leave without seeing you."

Gatsha: (annoyed) "Send them away."

Lehumo: (shaking head) "No, send them in."

Gatsha: (displeased) “Mkami (my wife) – “

Lehumo: (interrupting) “You are still kind of responsible for her, Gatsha. Let us hear what they have to say first and then take a decision together. Do not send them away like dogs. Don’t give them the satisfaction of spreading rumours about us yet again.”

Gatsha nodded and kissed her cheek. Bongani rushed to the gate and a few seconds later Gwen and her mother were at the door.

Gwen’s Mother: “Greetings, My king and Queen. I have brought your sister wife with me today, Ndhlovukazi (Queen).”

Lehumo: “I can see that. Where were you all along, Gwen?”

Gwen was about to start stuttering, but her mother quickly answered.

Gwen's Mother: "Uhm, there has been a bit of an accident, my Queen. Gwen lost the baby."

Gatsha: (chuckling) "Ai."

Lehumo: "When and how did this happen, Gwen? What happened to the baby?"

Gwen: "Uhm – "

Gwen's Mother: (interrupting) "Well, it was a bit too traumatic for her to bring the dead baby here, now don't you think, Ndhlovukazi (Queen)?"

Gatsha: (chuckling) "jah, neh."

Lehumo: "Why can't she speak for herself? I mean, surely you can speak, can't you, Gwen?"

Gwen's Mother: "Like I said, she is too traumatized to speak. Have a heart, I mean you know what it feels like to lose a child of your own, isn't it?"

Gatsha: (angered) "Ucabanaga ukuthi ungubani wena, sfebe (who do you think you are, bitch)?"

Lehumo herself was stunned because Gatsha never swore in her presence, and most certainly never swore to a female.

Lehumo: "Gatsha, I – "

Gatsha: (interrupting) "Uze lana okwami (you came to my house), to insult my wife?! You killed that bastard child and came here empty handed and expect me to welcome you here with open arms?! Ungazonya wena (Don't fuck with me)! Ungalingi (Don't you dare)! Ungangihlanyisi (Don't make me crazy), Glenda!"

Lehumo was very worried. Her husband seldomly acted like that. He was roaring like a lion, leaving Gwen and her mother scared to the core.

Gwen's Mother: "I didn't mean to be rude, my king. Forgive me, but you are still obliged to care for Gwen. She is your wife too."

Gatsha: "In case you didn't get the memo, I only have one wife. The only wife I made vows to and the only wife I welcomed to my ancestors. Was there any ceremony done for your whoring child? I didn't think so either. Now, I want you two gone! Get the fuck out of my house and never set foot here ever again!"

Gwen was crying silently, while Glenda, was about to leave, but became amused and startled by a very unusual sight. Gatsha held Lehumo by the waist and rubbed her stomach. She was staring at the both of them in shock, as she was standing before them, paralyzed.

Gatsha: “Heh banna (Goodness)! You’re still here?! I’ll throw you out myself.”

Gwen’s Mother: “No need, My king. I apologize for upsetting you like that. We shall be gone and never bother you again.”

A few months passed and Lehumo was lucky enough to not have had a very big stomach. She was about 36 weeks pregnant, very close to giving birth and had only started showing then. Her stomach was not even that big, but they were both so happy and delighted. Bongi was extremely happy, that she had come with Hosea to stay with them for a little while. She ensured that she protected the house along with Lehumo’s pregnancy as soon as she landed in the house. Apart from the constant tiredness and swollen feet, Lehumo had a blissful pregnancy. Gatsha was overjoyed – more especially since it was the day they had to announce their pregnancy to the people. Gatsha had begged her to take a break from work and her royal duties – with some people speculating, no one had an actual clue if she was pregnant or not. While they were planning a great day, Gwen had grown more miserable by the day. Her heart had turned to stone, as she kept imagining the happy, pregnant Lehumo with a man she once called her husband. Even though her family tried to

insult Lehumo and Gatsha by naming Lehumo the non-royal Pedi queen, Gatsha ensured to punish them where it hurt the most. For every stunt they pulled, he pulled out his part of investments in the Dambuza clan. Of course, King Dambuza was very unimpressed by his sister-in-law's tactics, so he also banished her from his royal grounds. She was making him lose money, money he couldn't afford to live without. Friction was caused between the two Dambuza brothers; being King Duduzile Dambuza and Gwen's father, but that didn't stop her from fueling her daily rage and hatred towards Lehumo. In her mind, she had actually believed that she would become Mrs. Ncube one day.

Gwen's Mother: "Did you see this? Your husband and that whore are planning a feast today."

Kuli: "Ai, nawe (Goodness)."

Gwen's Mother: "Care to share your displeasure?"

Kuli: "Hayi (No), man. It is bad enough this child endured the trauma she has gone through, but you have to stop

now. Accept defeat when it has been served on a silver platter – cold as fuck at that.”

Gwen’s Mother: (annoyed) “I won’t accept anything. You got my child into this mess, so you have to finish it. You and Abigail.”

Abigail: (frowning) “Why am I being dragged into this?”

Gwen’s Mother: “Don’t you forget that I am now the one funding your lavish lifestyles. I make sure you eat. So, ninyofa mina

ninya mina (I’m the reason you’re able to eat and shit). Ni ondlwa yimi phela (I am caring for you). At no cost mind you. So, you owe me.”

Kuli: (annoyed) “Yoh, Nkosi yami (Oh, My goodness). I can’t wait for the day we stop hearing that bullshit. What do you want us to do so you can stop nagging?”

Gwen's Mother: "You are going to kill Lehumo. Better yet, kill that child inside of her."

Abigail: (worried) "I don't think we should be messing with Lehumo like that. The last time we tried that, her ghosts came alive and taught us a lesson. I lost my daughter in the process."

Gwen's Mother: "That's not my problem. My daughter lost her son and womb because of you two. Use your juju or witchcraft. Poison her, pay someone to shoot her. Cause an accident – I don't fucking care. Just get it done. By the end of today, that bitch had better received some sad news."

Abigail was really not too sure about the whole plan. She really was very hesitant to do it – much like Alice when she became paralyzed on that fateful day. Kuli on the other hand was willing to do whatever she had to do to shut Glenda up. It was bad enough for her to live like a peasant after being the Queen of Zululand, long before Lehumo was in the picture.

Kuli: "Well, then, Abbie. What are you waiting for? Masihambe (Let's go)."

The anxious Kuli got up along with the hesitant Abigail. They wore their disguise fitted with a pair of Gucci sunglasses each.

Abigail: "I don't know, Kuli. I have a bad feeling about this."

Kuli: "You have done so much worse. Come on. Anything to get that bitch off my back."

Abigail: "Think about all this for a second, Kuli. You also lost Ayanda when you fucked with Lehumo last time. Aren't you afraid of something bad happening to you this time?"

Kuli: "Look, Abigail, my child is dead. The only child I have left here on earth does not want me part of his life anymore. I don't think anything can really break me at this point. I went from the richest queen in the country to a hustler. So, fuck whatever comes my way. I am ready for it."

They took a walk alongside one another, with Abigail's fear increasing with each step. She really had a bad feeling, but Kuli

was just not bothered. As they approached the huge crowd of people walking through the Palace, the guards did not even recognize them one bit. The yard was filled with beautiful decorations; it was truly about to be a celebration of note. Kuli of course, felt a whole lot bitter walking through the home that used to be owned by her. Seeing that huge tent with a big stage filled with presents and “It’s a surprise” written big on the flower podium made Kuli hate Lehumo even more. “I had a very similar baby announcement. That bitch stole my life.” She thought to herself. The painful thing about a person who wants to avenge something out of greed and pure evil is that they never notice when death stares them right in the face. They become so evil and force themselves from seeing the good in others. They got seats at the far back, much to Kuli’s dismay. She knew that she couldn’t ask for another seat as she was no longer royalty. Back in the house, Lehumo was dressed in a beautiful rouge yellow dress, courtesy of Bonggi. She said that it is a perfect Unisex colour, more especially since they refused to know the sex of the baby. Brenda had done her make up so beautifully, and one could not even notice the swollen feet in those beautiful custom made sandals.

Brenda: (smiling) “You look so beautiful.”

Lehumo: “You’re consoling me, but I love you for that.”

Brenda: (chuckling) “Rather you than me. I am not going back to that stage.”

Gatsha was outside the bedroom, waiting to see his beautiful wife. He wanted it to be a surprise – almost like on his wedding day. Bongi rushed in startling Brenda and Lehumo.

Lehumo: “Ma, what is the matter?”

Bongi: (worried) “I don’t know, my child. I have a bad feeling right now. I even tried praying right now, but my candle flame kept dying out. I think something bad is about to happen.”

Lehumo: “Ma, can we trust in God for once, please?”

Bongi: “I do, but I am telling you. Something bad is about to happen.”

Brenda: "Ma, please don't scare her like that."

Bongi: "Okay, kodwa (but) let us pray first before we leave this room."

Brenda: "You do the honours."

Bongi: (praying) "Baba wethu wa sezulwini (Our father in heaven), we come before you as your children, oh, lord. Most importantly we thank you for this amazing day. We know lord that we live in a world filled with evil and hate, but also, we live in a world filled with your love, mercy and grace. We ask that you bless this day and let us have a great day. Help us to celebrate my great-grandchild's day, oh, lord. For we know that the birth of this child is really not very far. I ask that you guide and protect our king and queen, oh, lord. Keep our enemies away from us and no matter what happens, punish those who decide to harm anyone today. Ba ka Mkhabela (The Mkhabela's), Ba ka Ncube (The Ncube's). Be with us throughout. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Even after her prayer, Bongi could not stop what was about to come. She knew that it was meant to happen. Yes, bad things tend to happen to good people, but God never promised a life without difficulties. They walked out and Gatsha immediately put his whiskey glass down when he saw his beautiful wife radiating.

Gatsja: (smiling) “Hawu (Goodness), Weh Mama (Oh, Mama), Ntombenhle (Beautiful), Ndhlovukazi (Queen), uMfazi weqotho (A true woman), my Beautiful Pedi Princess, My goddess, The love of my life, uMama wengani zami (The mother of my children), how blessed am I today? Oh, God is so full of mercy and grace for He took his time to bless me with your beautiful carnation. You were carved just for me. Your elegance makes me realize just how beautiful pregnancy is. Your small, majestic body carried my seed with such elegance and grace throughout and not even one complaint. For that, I will be eternally grateful to you, my queen.”

He knelt down with one knee, held her hand with both his and kissed it, leaving the hormonal Lehumo crying once again.

Brenda: “Now why on earth could you never praise me like that, Siya?”

They all chuckled as Gatsha stood up and kissed her tears dry.

Gatsha: “Ladies, I’ll take it from here.”

Brenda smiled at Gatsha as Siya took her hand in his, while the anxious Bonggi walked out behind them. As they approached the stage, Lehumo could not help but cry as she saw how beautifully decorated the stage was. Even their royal chairs had a twist to it. Gatsha was so proud to be her husband, that he let her walk in front of her and aided her to her chair. The crowd cheered as they realized it was an announcement of the royal heir. It was truly a beautiful moment for the two. Bonggi sat in her chair and tried to enjoy the moment, even though she knew her premonition was about to come to life. One of the villagers stood up and started praising the two.

Village woman: (chanting) “Ai, ai, ai, ai, ai! Siyabonga (we thank you), amadlozi wa se Khosini (The royal ancestors)! You who know our history, you who knew God had intended this plan to

happen at His graceful time and not ours! Oh, Siyabonga (we thank you). My king and queen, I wish for nothing but the best for your coming blessing. Her birth is not far, my Queen. You shall be blessed with one feisty Princess. Do what is right, my king. Your father was right, name her what he asked you to.”

She bowed down before them as the crowd ululated. Just like that, the sex of the baby was revealed and both Gatsha and Lehumo were elated. Gatsha’s dream was interpreted by the random village lady.

Gatsha: “My people, we thank you for you have come to enjoy this day with us. We thank you for taking your time to come and witness our beautiful moment. Yes, it is indeed true that God has decided to bless us with our heart’s desires. Yes, from this day forward history has changed as no Queen in this Kingdom has ever had a daughter for a first born. I am honoured to be married to such a noble woman.”

Kuli felt herself become so annoyed and angered by it all, as she waited for the perfect moment to strike. As the crowd gathered to congratulate the royal couple, Kuli did the worst. She put on her cape covering her face, and drew her

gun from her pocket. She aimed right at Lehumo through the crowd and fired a shot. Of course, she acted quickly. As soon as she shot her, the bullet hit her right in the stomach. She placed the gun in Abigail's hands, and as soon as the crowd ran, so did she – leaving the distraught Abigail with a gun in her hands. She turned around, and not a second was wasted, Bongani fired a shot right at Abigail's head. Just like that, Kuli betrayed her partner in crime and Abigail's life ended in a heartbeat. While the royal family was scrambling to get Lehumo out of harm's way, Kuli ran out along with the crowd. As she was running, she found herself hearing a very familiar voice.

Sfiso: "We meet again, my dear wife."

Kuli: (frightened) "Sfiso? Is that you?"

Sfiso: "Of course it's me. I warned you before, Kuli. I warned you. I told you that you will live to suffer. You will live to see yourself get old, filled with regret because your stone cold heart just can't get enough of hurting good people. You tried to kill my grand daughter, and now you will suffer the consequences."

Kuli: (scared) "I, I didn't meant to do it. I... I had no choice."

Sfiso: "You have always had a choice."

As Kuli ran, she found herself being run over by one of the community busses. She found herself right on the ground, in front of the bus. The bus driver walked out frantically.

Bus Driver: "Miss? Are you alright?"

Passenger: "Oh, my goodness! It is the former queen."

Kuli: (in pain) "I.... I can't feel my legs."

Grace isn't just forgiveness, it is forgiveness fueled by surrender." - Amy E. Spiegel

Rich people just always had a funny way of ruining good things. Drama seemed to follow the Ncube royal family – especially on good occasions such as celebrations of life and love. Lehumo was rushed to theatre immediately at Neriah Mkhabela Hospital, and well, Gatsha was hysterical, which was of course understood. He sat with his head buried in his hands, alongside Brenda, Siya and Bonggi. Hosea was still at boarding school writing exams, and well, he didn't take the news of his sister being shot in the stomach all too well. Bonggi noticed Kuli being wheeled out of theatre.

Bonggi: "I'll go get us some snacks."

Brenda: "She will pull through, Gatsha, you will see."

They all thought Gatsha was crying with his head buried into his hands, but well, he was in fact praying.

Gatsha: “My God, I don’t know what I have done to have trouble follow me all the way like this. Please, protect my wife. My wife and child, please.”

As he was silently praying with tears wallowing, he heard his father’s voice.

Sfiso: “All is well, Gatsha, mfana wami (my son). Trouble does not follow you, I made a mistake of marrying evil and now, it seems to have tainted your fate. They are both okay, it is not time yet for them to join the ancestors. Go meet your daughter, son. Don’t forget what I said to you; her name is Buhlebendalo.”

Just as soon as Sfiso finished speaking to Gatsha, the doctor walked out wheeling Lehumo out of theatre, along with a tiny baby in one of the nurse’s hands.

Dr. Stein: “I don’t know how you do it, my King, but she miraculously survived the surgery and the child is unharmed.”

He rushed to Lehumo first and kissed her. She was even awake which surprised everyone on theatre.

Nurse: “You must be highly favoured, my king. Meet your baby girl.”

Gatsha carefully took his new baby girl in his hands and cried. He cried tears of joy, and started chanting, leaving the whole hospital on a standstill for a few minutes.

Gatsha: (chanting) “Ngiyabonga amadlozi (Thank you my ancestors). Ngiyabonga Baba (Thank you father). Ngiyabonga Nkosi (Thank you, God). Mzilankatha, Nhlansi, Gabadeli, Onkatha kayingen’ endlini, yangena kubol’izinkaba zabantwana, Zibizendlela, Zikhali zeMkhonto (clan names). Nangibusisa ngomfazi weqotho ngempela (You have truly blessed me with a real woman). Mkami (My wife), Weh mama (Oh, Mama), this is the most beautiful gift you could ever have blessed me with. To you, my daughter, I will love you so much

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until you learn to see how a man must love you. I will forever love you for this beautiful woman sacrificed her body just for your existence. I name you Buhlebendalo, Princess of Zululand.”

Lehumo: “I name you Bahumi.”

Gatsha: (elated) “Welcome to the world, Buhlebendalo Bahumi Ncube, Princess of Zululand.”

While the hospital staff, Bonggi, Siya and the rest of the visitors were ululating, it started raining outside. Rain on a funeral or a birth of a baby is always a good sign. Meanwhile, Bonggi was very hurt. She went to Kuli’s ward and found her awake and crying.

Bonggi: “Ja (Yes), mthakathi (you witch).”

Kuli: (startled) “Ufunani La (What do you want)?”

Bonggi: “How does it feel to be at the receiving end of karma for once in your pathetic life?”

Kuli: “If you have come to gloat, rather leave.”

Bongi: “I warned you, Kuli, just as I warned your mother. You will suffer the consequences of all your doings. You will live to regret your entire existence. You will be haunted by the spirits of all those you have hurt and killed. You think I don’t know you caused my sister’s accident years ago? Well, now it is your turn. You won’t die – not yet. Not now, anyway. You will live a pathetic life, a life where you won’t be able to walk or use your one arm. You will only use one arm for the rest of your life. I hope you enjoy this coming ride, because it is a bumpy one, madame.”

Kuli started screaming as soon as Bongi walked out of her ward. She found Gatsha holding little Buhle in Lehumo’s ward.

Bongi: (smiling) “How are you feeling, my baby?”

Lehumo: “I don’t even know, but all I can say is I am glad to be alive.”

Bongi: "I am also glad. Let me see her."

Gatsha handed the baby over to Bongi and she smiled.

Bongi: "Hail the heavens, you are one blessed baby girl. Your name will speak for itself before people even know you. Your presence itself will instill fear and demand respect for you. I pity any man who will hurt you because you won't take any nonsense from anybody."

Gatsha and Lehumo smiled, but little did they know that Bongi looked at little Buhle with pain in her eyes because she knew that she would grow up and live a life of a complete lie. All because her mother wanted to save her from danger.

News spread fast and by sunrise the following morning, everyone had come to know of the tragedy that caused Princess Buhle to be born early. It was a beautiful day, and well, Lehumo didn't have much time to recover as she had to go home and be welcomed by the crowd as per tradition. Bongi assured them that no drama would unfold that day and indeed,

a day later, Lehumo was miraculously discharged from the hospital and able to walk. As soon as they drove towards the kingdom, many people were chanting and cheering and bearing gifts to wish the little one a happy birthday. As soon as they stood in their tent outside, for the people to see a glimpse of Princess Buhle, it rained once again. They finally retreated to the house, and Gatsha had a chance to allow Lehumo to rest, while he basked in baby Buhle's birth. He was so happy that he sang a lullaby to her until she slept. He placed her in her cot and retreated to the kitchen to make his wife some food. Gwen on the other hand was fuelling with rage. King Dambuza didn't want anything to do with Abigail's funeral, while Gwen's mother was unbothered that Kuli was nearly a quadriplegic. Life was about to get tough for them, but they didn't care.

Gwen: "She's living my life, mother! My life! I mean how unfortunate can one be?!"

Gwen's mother: "What are you going to do about it, Gwen? Are you going to sulk or face the fucking music?!"

Gwen grabbed her bag and rushed out. Her mother tried running after her, but as chubby as Gwen was, she outran her

mother. She made her way to the royal palace, and surprisingly people were really ready to fight one another just to enter the palace. Bongani was trying to keep the peace and trying to get everyone to leave, but somehow Gwen managed to run through the gate. She managed to flee past all those people and made her way into the palace. She still had her own set of keys, so she got in the back. Lehumo tried sleeping, but something told her to get up and check on her baby. A mother's gut is always right because she got the fright of her life. She found Gwen holding her child and was about to pierce her child's face using a bread knife.

Lehumo: "What the fuck are you doing?!"

Gwen: "Something I should have done a long time ago."

Lehumo didn't hesitate, but she immediately grabbed her baby out of Gwen's hands and pushed her out the window. Gwen flung out the window and met her end right on one of Gatsha's cars. That was the final straw for Lehumo. That was enough for her to know that she had to break away from that place in order to be safe and free – no matter how much it would break her heart and break Gatsha's even more.

“The Beginning is always today.” – Mary Shelley

Eighteen years later...

It had been a painful eighteen years for Lehumo, but even more especially for Gatsha. The thought of him waking up the following morning after Gwen’s tragic death, only to find that bitter note Lehumo left on her side of the bed for him. “My dearest Gatsha, words cannot explain how I feel about you. You have been my anchor, my strength, my heart’s keeper, my reason for living. You have given me the greatest years that I will forever cherish. We have gone through so many ups and downs, and now that we have Buhle, I don’t think I can be able to handle the drama. I know, I am selfish for what I am about to do, but I’d rather do it alone than have you sacrifice all you’ve worked hard for. It is time to protect our baby; I assure you that one day I shall return to you. Please, don’t bother trying to find me. Try and live the best life possible for I know that you might hate me for this. I won’t blame you if you got remarried. I will always love you, Gatsha, my darling husband. I am so sorry. With Love, Lehumo.”

Gatsha's heart tore into a million pieces that day and never got repaired. He had instantly shut down even after he had tried looking for her all those years. It was rather alarming how Lehumo managed to disappear like that; especially since she was royalty. Everyone knew her. Gatsha even hired a Private Investigator to find Lehumo, but it was a dead end. All he had was a few pictures of baby Buhle, which he stared at every night before downing a few sleeping pills just to sleep. Gatsha found himself spiralling out of control, of which he eventually decided to focus on his businesses. He might have lost Lehumo and his only child, but he managed to turn himself into an even bigger Billionaire. Even though Lehumo sent him a letter every year on his birthday; their anniversary; Buhle's birthday and of course her birthday. He found himself being drawn to Gwen's sister, Georgina, who of course was brought into his life at a time of sorrow and need by Glenda, Gwen's mother. He never loved her and even after eighteen whole years and two sons together, he still didn't love her. He got up that morning as usual and prepared himself for work. He found his two sons Ntsika and Njabulo, sitting at the breakfast table, waiting on their mother's scrumptious breakfast as always.

Ntsika: (smiling) "Sawubona (Hello), Baba (Father)."

Gatsha: (firmly) “Yebo (Yes), Ntsika. Njabulo, awubingeleli yini (aren’t you going to greet)?”

Njabulo: “Ngiyaxolisa, Baba (Sorry, Father). I am on level 102 with this game, so I don’t want to miss the chance of finishing it.”

Gatsha: “Hmm.”

He had become so strict and stern, he lacked the love he had for Lehumo, for she was the only woman he ever loved. He didn’t even feel the connection he had with Buhle with Ntsika and Njabulo, it was as if he had actually wondered if they were indeed his children. He found himself having to banish a few of his maternal relatives, after they named Buhle Umphazamisi meaning trouble maker, even after Lehumo had disappeared with her. He was devastated nonetheless, but he thought that being with Georgina would make his heartache go away, but it just made it all worse. Georgina walked out of the kitchen with the last dish of food, smiling as usual.

Georgina: (smiling) “Good morning, my love. Did you sleep well?”

Gatsha: (firmly) “Yes, thanks. Wena (You)?”

Georgina: “I slept alright, thank you. I was hoping we could talk a bit before having breakfast.”

Gatsha: (sternly) “Boys, hambani kancane (leave us for a while).”

They left and went upstairs.

Gatsha: “What is it? I don’t have all day.”

Georgina was a bit hurt by his reaction, but she still managed to fake a smile as always.

Georgina: (smiling) “I was hoping we could talk about me being more involved in the community. You know, I was thinking of launching my own initiative with the other royal wives. I was thinking hosting events, getting sponsorships – “

Gatsha: (interrupting) “Lehumo already started an initiative like that and it has been running for nearly 30 years, in case you forgot.”

Georgina was shattered.

Georgina: (softly) “Yes, but, I – “

Gatsha: “I don’t see why you’re doing this when we have been over this, Georgina. Besides, you’re not really my wife. You seem to have forgotten that.”

Georgina: (teary) “Kodwa ungilobolile (But you paid Lobola for me), Gatsha.”

Gatsha: “Only because your parents nagged me to. You agreed to this, why are you acting shocked?”

Georgina: (teary) “I just thought – “

Gatsha: “Eat the breakfast with the kids. I’ll have something on the way to work.”

As usual he left Georgina heartbroken and envious; envious of someone who just was not present in Gatsha’s life anymore. She had been living in the shadow of a stranger; Lehumo was anything but a distant memory for Gatsha. He compared everything Georgina did to her. He was still so caught up on her that he refused to make love to Georgina. He always used to take it from the back and that was it – no foreplay, no kissing. Georgina was spiralling out of control and once again her mother, Glenda, was ruining yet another daughter’s life. She found herself breaking down alone in her chair in front of the dining table, forgetting all about calling the boys down for breakfast. Glenda walked in feeling no shame nor remorse seeing her daughter breaking down.

Glenda: “Good morning. Oh, G, come on, now. I didn’t raise a peep squeak for a daughter.”

Georgina: (crying) “Is this what it feels like to be married to Gatsha? I mean, you never said I’d be stuck in a life of pain like

this, Ma! It has been seventeen years and every fucking day just gets worse!”

If Glenda was a normal, loving mother, she would have taken her daughter’s pain into consideration, but she was already way into the luxurious lifestyle that she would have rather sacrificed Georgina’s happiness instead. A whole 62 year old slay queen Gogo was looking past her daughter’s pain.

Glenda: “Suck it up, G, will you? I mean you know very well that you don’t have to be loved by Gatsha to have a great life. You already know that you’ve been sleeping with one of Gatsha’s workers. You have all the money in the world, so what is your problem?”

Georgina: “We’re not even married, Ma weh! You put me up to this and you failed to let me know that I am barren!”

Glenda: “Will you keep your voice down?! Do you have any idea what that will do to the boys once they find out? Do you want them to be homeless? To lose all their benefits in life? Is that what you want for your children?”

Once again, Glenda had managed to let Georgina slip deeper into depression and remain silent. Meanwhile, Lehumo had gone all the way to Pretoria, Mamelodi. She found the perfect guy to erase her entire existence and start afresh. Of course, she had to take Hosea with her. Bongi didn't have the heart to leave her house, her town like that, but she tried to keep in touch. Of course, Hosea was thirty by then and one big rebel. He had to leave a life he loved, a life of soccer for a life he considered boring and a life of hiding. It was a painful adjustment

even though Lehumo thought that she would eventually go back to Gatsha, she didn't have the heart to. She followed him on the media at all times, and it really broke her heart having to lie to her daughter and tell her that her father had died a very long time ago. They unfortunately had to get new identities; Lehumo calling herself Belinda Vilakazi, Hosea then became Hercules Vilakazi, and Princess Buhlebendalo Bahumi Ncube officially became Precious Vilakazi. She had turned into a feisty 17 year old girl, who took after both parents and was the top of her class all throughout her school life. It was her mother's day off and she came back home very happy.

Precious: (happy) "Hello, Mommy dearest!"

Lehumo: (smiling) "Hi, baby."

Precious found it a bit odd to see her mother was in bed at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

Precious: "Mama? O shap (are you okay)?"

Lehumo: "I am okay, baby. It must be the flu."

Precious: "Can I make you some soup? You always used to make it for me whenever I was feeling under the weather."

Lehumo: (smiling) "That would be great, honey. Thank you."

Precious smiled and went to the kitchen to make her mother some soup. The truth was that Lehumo had been feeling a bit ill for the past few days. The constant heartache over the years and being overburdened with the secrets she had been keeping was just too much. Whenever she was alone, she would google

pictures of Gatsha and my goodness, she would cry herself to sleep. When she saw news that Gatsha had “married” Georgina and had two sons, it tore her apart. She was working as a caregiver at one of the hospices nearby in Mamelodi. She did not want to hurt Gatsha, but making that choice made her feel as if she was setting him free. She felt that their love was tainted and that no matter how much they did actually love one another, they were never going to be free. How often have people made choices and gotten crucified for them? It is always easy and simple to speak when you are an outside member; for when you see a pretty glass house you don’t think it could get stoned or break down one day. Lehumo was indeed hiding a lot from her daughter, but only God could judge her. She was hiding a lot of secrets – including her current health status at the time. She found herself wiping her coarse tears off her face, and forcing herself to breathe, when she received a very unexpected call.

Lehumo: “Sawubona (Hello), Ma.”

Bongi: “Sawubona, Mntwana wami (Hello, my daughter). Unjani (How are you)?”

Lehumo: "I've been better."

Bongi: "You do know that my call is not a social one, right?"

Lehumo: (sigh) "Yes, I know."

Bongi: "You know what you have to do, Lehumo. You have been living a lie for over 17 years now. The truth has to come out."

Lehumo: "You know it was not easy for me to do what I did. You know that very well, I mean, if I didn't do it they were going to kill her. You said it yourself, ma. Please, don't judge me. You are the only one who does not hate me."

Bongi: "I don't hate you, you know that. Hosea also doesn't hate you. Yes, he carries a lot of resentment and perhaps things could have turned out a different way had you stayed and fought, but we all have our limits. I'd do anything for the three of you, but we all know that my time on this earth is

nearing its end. I am old, Lehumo, and you also need to tell her the truth before you leave this earth as well.”

Lehumo: “I know I might be selfish, but Ma, I can’t. I can’t do that to her. She is about to do her matric and I can’t let her know. Not right now. Besides, you are much healthier than me. You can’t leave this earth before me – we made a deal.”

Bongi: (chuckling) “You know very well you can’t negotiate with spirit. You know very well your mother has been preparing you. You won’t be in pain anymore very soon.”

Lehumo: (teary) “I’ll be leaving my daughter in so much pain and misery knowing very well she is the sole heir of her father’s hard earned money.”

Bongi: “Do me yourself a favour and call him. Call him before you leave, you know he will follow you very soon.”

Precious walked in and found her mother wiping her tears off.

Lehumo: "Okay, we'll talk soon. Thank you. Bye-bye."

Precious: (frowning) "Mama? Keng (what is it)?"

Lehumo: "It's nothing, baby. This flu is making my eyes runny. Before you know it, I won't have any tears to dry out."

Precious: "Mama, you know you're a bad liar."

Little did she know that her mother was excellent at lying.

Lehumo: (Chuckling) "Look at you. All grown up and telling me what to do. I love you so much, Precious. I always did my best to raise you and love you."

Precious: "Mama, please don't tell me you're saying goodbye forever."

Lehumo: (chuckling) "Why would I do that?"

Precious: "This is exactly what happened in the movies. The mom falls ill and starts reciting a beautiful speech and before you know it, she falls asleep and never wakes up."

Lehumo: (laughing) "Come on, now. That is not going to happen."

Precious: "Promise me, Ma."

Lehumo: "I promise."

Precious: (smiling) "Good. To ensure that you will be promising me that, I'd like to sleep with you tonight. Just to nurse you back to health."

Lehumo: (smiling) "I don't know what I did to deserve you."

Precious: "Are you kidding me? You're the best mother ever."

That was enough for Lehumo even though she knew that finding out the truth would break her daughter.

Lehumo: "I tried."

Precious: "Tried is an understatement. Now, stop talking as if you're saying goodbye. Drink your soup. I'll check up on you later."

Lehumo smiled at her daughter and tried to eat her soup, but couldn't get more than two spoonfuls in. She knew that her time had come and it was very unfortunate to leave her daughter at that age. She had hoped that Hosea would step up to the plate, even though they were not on very good speaking terms ever since she left Zululand with him. She then decided to do what she had been dreading for over 17 years.

Gatsha: "Gatsha Ncube Hello?"

Silence.

Gatsha: "Hello?"

Lehumo: "My king."

Gatsha felt a sharp pang in the center of his heart. It felt like he was in an unimaginable dream.

Gatsha: (nervous) "Lehumo?"

Lehumo: (teary) "How are you?"

Gatsha: (palpitating) "Lehumo, is it really you?"

Lehumo: "Yes, my husband. It is really me."

Gatsha: (tear) "Why, Mkami? Why did you? Was I not good enough, Ndhlovukazi (Queen)?"

Lehumo: "You know that is not true."

Gatsha: "I've looked everywhere for you. It's been years. You have no idea how I have cried myself to sleep. I can't live without you, Lehumo. Please... Please come back. I'll do anything."

Lehumo: "One day you'll understand why I did what I did. Our daughter's life was in danger, Gatsha. I had to save her, and by saving her I had to hurt you in the process. Please, forgive me."

Gatsha: "I forgave you long ago. Is she still alive? I mean, I know she is, I feel her spirit with me everyday. I still have her blanket, I can't forget her scent. I have never washed it."

Lehumo: (crying) "I'm dying, Gatsha."

Gatsha: "Please, tell me where you are. I promise you we can work it out. I can get you the best care in the world. Just please, give me another chance to be the husband you have always wanted. I'll give it all up for you."

Lehumo: (crying) "It's not that, Gatsha. My time has come. I can't live with myself after what I did to you, but I hope one day you understand just how evil the people of Zululand are."

Gatsha: (crying) "Please, Please tell me where you are, Lehumo!"

Lehumo: (crying) "I love you, Gatsha. I hope that we do meet again on the other side."

Gatsha: "Ndhlovukazi (My Queen)...."

Lehumo hung up and cried, she took her last breath right on her bed with her phone in her hands. Gatsha immediately felt her spirit leave this earth. He felt as if his whole body was literally being torn into two. He could not bare the thought of living without his wife and child any longer. The torture was just too much.

Gatsha: (screaming) "Lehumo!"

He thought he had nothing to live for anymore. He was a true failure in his own eyes. He had failed to protect and find his daughter and wife, and “married” a woman he didn’t even love. He had children who weren’t even his. His father had confirmed to him in a dream he had years ago. He decided if he couldn’t be with Lehumo in the flesh, he would be with her in spirit. He opened his last drawer on his deks, and took out his gun.

Gatsha: (crying) “In spirit we failed, but in death we shall be one again, my love.”

He didn’t think twice as he placed the gun below his chin and pulled his trigger. Just like that, Lehumo and Gatsha had died together in one day. Princess Buhlebendalo Bahumi Ncube aka Princess Vilakazi became an orphan unwittingly.

“Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live, it is asking others to live as one wishes to live.” – Oscar Wilde

While Lehumo and Gatsha’s souls were getting ready to meet their ancestors while Precious was in the kitchen preparing a great meal for her mother. Hosea walked in unexpectedly. She was used to it because he had a habit of rocking up whenever he felt like it.

Hosea: (knocking) “Yey, Mzukulu (Hey, my niece).”

Precious: (smiling) “Hi, Malume Hercules (Uncle).”

Hosea: “hawu (Goodness), Wangigugisa kanje (you’re making me feel old). You could have just said “Hi, Malume (uncle).”

Precious: (chuckling) “I’ll remember that next time.”

Hosea: “Awuna ibeer nyana perhaps (don’t you perhaps have any beer here)?”

Precious: “Malume (Uncle), you know Mama doesn’t drink much beer. Besides, you know she has bottles of whiskey and cognac in her cupboards but never drinks them. Doesn’t alcohol ever expire?”

Hosea: (chuckling) “Not really when you have whiskey and proper cognac or wine, it matures over the years. The older it is, the more refined it gets. Can you go buy me a six pack of Corona, please?”

Precious: “Ai, Malume (Oh, Uncle), uphuza kakhulu (you drink a lot) for someone who is only 30.”

Hosea: “You’re still young, mzikulu (niece). One day, when life hits you as hard as it has hit me, you will understand.”

Precious took the money from Hosea’s hand and went to buy him a six pack. He hardly had the energy to visit his sister and

talk about life itself, but that day he just had a strange feeling. He decided to go to her bedroom. He knocked for a while and there was no answer. He figured she was deliberately ignoring him, but opened the door anyway.

Hosea: (knocking) “Lehumo. Come on, it’s just you and I. Precious isn’t around. Okay, I am coming in, but at my own risk. I don’t want to see you naked.”

He slowly opened the door and found her eyes closed and her phone laying on top of her. He took the phone and stared at the picture of Gatsha, which Lehumo was staring at.

Hosea: (chuckling) “Regret is a painful bitch.”

He slowly looked at her and realized that her chest was not moving up and down. He slowly felt her pulse and realized she was cold.

Hosea: (shocked) “Fuck. You really decide to do this to me now? When I barely have my own life together?! Wow, I never

thought you could be even more selfish – even in death you still remain selfish. Now I have to help Lehumo all the way through the rest of her life.”

He took a deep breath and stared at her, and finally, the tears he had been burying underneath had finally come out.

Hosea: (crying) “I know you did what you had to do, but you still had a chance to mend things, Lehumo. I love you, I never stopped loving you even though you took my whole life from me.”

He quickly composed himself and wiped off his tears. He was thinking of a way to tell Precious that her mother was no more. He knew that would break her as it would break anybody. She finally came back from the bottle store, and Hosea managed to compose himself. She took rather longer than expected.

Precious: “Tjo (Wow), Malome (Uncle). Line ne e le telle gore (The queue was so long). Le gona Bra Mike o ganne go nthekisetsa (Besides, Bra Mike didn’t want to sell to me).”

Hosea: “How did you manage to buy for me then?”

Precious: “Ke mmoditse masepa (I told him shit). O kwatetse gore ke mo ganne (He’s mad at me because I refused to be his girlfriend). Fucking paedophile.”

Hosea: (chuckling) “Ai, Precious. Thank you, but you shouldn’t think you are untouchable, you know. I mean, people can end up killing you out there.”

Precious: “Malome (Uncle), I am not weak. My mom might be soft, but nna I’m far from it. I must have gotten it from my father maybe.”

Hosea got touched by her speaking of her mother in present tense knowing she was no more. Meanwhile, Precious had always been candid about her “father”

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someone Lehumo created and told her that he ran away as soon as she told him she was pregnant. Lies and deceit never

last forever. They always have a way of catching up with us, and it is even more painful to the recipient especially, when the liar or the deceitful one dies. It is painful that at times, we think that we do what is best for our children, but in turn, we actually damage them even more than they would have been had we just told the truth. Hosea had been living a lie ever since he had to leave Zululand, but well, Lehumo always did right by him and tried to give him the best life. He might have been resentful and angry, but he realized it was no use being angry at someone who was no longer there to be angry at. Precious was now his priority. He was a fuck up himself; with three children, three different baby mama's and a very unstable love life. He had become the opposite of his name, and quite the rebel. As the Bible says in James 3:16 – “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” He could have been a famous soccer star, and even then the ladies still loved him, but what was done was done. 2 Corinthians 7:10 says “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”

Precious: “Let me go check on Mama.”

Hosea: (worried) “No! I mean, ska mo tsosa (don’t wake her). I was there and she is pretty drugged up. You can wake her later.”

Precious nodded.

Precious: “Shall I dish up for you?”

Hosea: (smiling) “Of course. I can never say no to your food.”

Precious: (chuckling) “I wonder why you don’t have a wife, Malome (Uncle).”

Little did Precious know that Hosea was a ladies man, a father of three.

Hosea: (Chuckling) “I’m too young to be tied down, Precious. You will know one day.”

Precious: “Ag, I don’t think I’ll ever get married. I mean, look at Mama, she never got married nor had a boyfriend.”

If only she knew. They prayed and ate their food. Once done, Hosea tried to find a way to ease Precious before she found her mother dead on the bed.

Hosea: “Precious, tell me; do you have any regrets in life?”

Precious: “Well, I think I am too young to have regrets, but one regret I think I have, is that I never got to give Beula a serious beating.”

Hosea: (frowning) “Seriously?”

Precious: “Yes, I mean sure, I broke her nose, but I should have broken way more than that, Malome (Uncle). That girl has never liked me and I never bothered. She just keeps getting in my way, but she must wait and see. I am going to show her flames next year.”

Hosea: "I mean don't you have regrets about your father or something?"

Precious: "How can I regret something or someone I have never known? I am at peace with myself. I see a lot of my friends and some learners at school who grow up with both parents, but they are just too screwed up if you tell me. Mama has been more than that, both mom and dad to me. I cherish that a lot and one day, I will make her proud and thank her for it."

Hosea: (teary) "Precious, there is something I have to tell you."

Precious: "Please don't tell me you're dying."

Hosea: (teary) "Your mother is – "

Precious: (worried) "What? What is it? Is she okay? What?"

Hosea: (deep sigh) "I don't know how to tell you this."

Precious rose from her couch and rushed to her bedroom before her uncle could even finish his sentence. He took a big gulp of his beer and followed her. Precious stormed into the bedroom, with her heart palpitating – almost as if it was about to leave her body. She saw her mother sleeping peacefully, but she just knew she was not okay.

Precious: (teary) “Mama?! Mama?! Mama tsoga (wake up)!”

Hosea: (teary) “She is gone, Precious. She is gone.”

Precious: (screaming) “No! She can’t be gone! Just like that?! She was awake just a few hours ago!”

Hosea: “It’s going to be okay, I promise.”

Precious wailed as she dropped onto the floor. Hosea grabbed her with both arms and let her cry in his. How on earth was he going to raise her when he could not even fix his own life?

“To the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure.” – J.K. Rowling

Everything was a real mess on both sides of life; in Zululand and in Mamelodi. Back in Zululand, Georgina was too stressed when she realized her husband hadn't come back home since he had left for work in the morning. She had been pacing up and down, pondering her mind with a million thoughts and scenarios of what could have happened to him. Despite Gatsha's behaviour towards her, she really loved him. Her mother walked in while she was pacing up and down.

Glenda: (surprised) “Hawu, Georgina. Yini indaba (What's the problem)?”

Georgina: (worried) “Eish, Ma. I am worried about Gatsha. His phone rings unanswered and he just hasn't come back home yet.”

Glenda: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, ai. I thought you would tell me something sensible.”

Georgina: “I’m serious, Ma.”

Glenda: “He always works til late and you know he basically never makes it to dinner. If you’re so worried about him, why don’t you go to his workplace?”

Georgina: “And leave the kids nobani (with whom)?”

Glenda: (rolling eyes) “Ai, I sometimes wonder if you’re actually my daughter, wena. uSlow (you’re so slow). You have a royal nanny, man. Masihambe (Le’ts go).”

Georgina didn’t have time to think about it, as her mother just pulled her by the arm and they drove off in her mother’s luxurious Lexus UX SUV. What poor Georgina didn’t realize was that her mother would have rather let her suffer than lose all the benefits that came with her being Gatsha’s “Baby Mama”. They made their way to the office and security was not even around. Gatsha had given them the day off. Even though Georgina was not legally married to Gatsha, she had the same benefits and access as a wife would – to some

extent. While Glenda drove in, Georgina started feeling very odd.

Georgina: "I have a very bad feeling about this, Ma."

Glenda: "You like panicking for nothing. Masihambe (let's go)."

They walked out and headed to the lift. The closer they approached his office

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the weirder Georgina felt. They finally made it to his office door. Glenda opened it and they found the most disturbing scene that nearly made Georgina's heart stop.

Georgina: (screaming) "Yoooh, Nkosi yami (Oh, My God)!"

Glenda: "Yoh (Wow)! Umenzeni umuntu wabantu (What did you do to the poor man) for him to even think of killing himself?"

Georgina was too dumbstruck to even yell at her mother for being so insincere.

Georgina: "I have to start making calls and arrange the funeral."

Glenda: "Are you fucking kidding me?"

Georgina: "What?"

Glenda: "What do you think will happen to you or those boys when they find out the King is dead? Do you even think he left you anything? Because we both know he didn't love you. You're not even his wife, Georgina, for goodness sake!"

Georgina stopped for a moment to absorb everything her mother was telling her, while trying so hard not to look at Gatsha's head oozing with blood everywhere.

Georgina: "Kuyafana, Ma (It really doesn't matter). I mean, I knew what I was getting myself into and besides, we can't avoid this issue. He is dead."

Glenda: "You and I are the only people who know about that."

Georgina: (shocked) "What are you trying to suggest?"

Glenda: "I am suggesting that we get rid of his body ourselves."

Georgina: (shocked) "Are you even hearing yourself, Ma? Amabati angaka (so much bad luck)?"

Glenda: "It's either that or back to the streets with your two boys. Are you willing to let all these riches go? We both know that Lehumo is still his legal wife and who knows what might have happened to that brat she gave birth to? I should have killed her when I had the chance. Gwen was such a weakling. God rest her soul."

Georgina was too shocked at how her mother was too blasé about everything.

Georgina: “Do you even have a conscience, Ma?”

Glenda: “Is a conscience going to feed me oysters and dessert with my every meal? Will it buy me MCC champagne? Come on, now. Wake up and stop being a nuisance. Are you in or not?”

Georgina stood there silently for about a minute as she took one look at Gatsha’s body and then one look at her mother. She nodded with so much regret, but she knew that the day she agreed to her mother’s plan was the day she basically sold her soul to the devil. She had lied so much, that she hardly managed to recognize herself in the mirror anymore.

Glenda: (smiling) “Good. I’ll get started.”

Georgina sat down, staring at Gatsha’s lifeless body while Glenda started calling someone on the phone.”

Glenda: “Ja (Yes), yimi (it’s me). Bring all the chemicals you need. I have a code red situation. I’ll text you the address. You

know what to do. Make sure no one sees you or else no payment for you. Sho (sure).”

It sounded to Georgina as if her mother had already done this before. She seemed so relaxed and carefree about it all.

Glenda: “Well, let me get us a drink while we wait for my guy.”

Death is the dropping of the flower that the fruit may swell.” –
Henry Ward Beecher

Back in Mamelodi, with all that was happening, it felt as if Precious' life was falling apart. She literally felt like she had no one left. Yes, Hosea or Malome Hercules as known to her was there yes, but she couldn't expect a whole 30 year old disastrous father of three to leave his life and take her on when she was about to become an adult herself. She was one year away from varsity – which was not so bad, but her mother was all she knew. Her three friends came to comfort her and even though there was nothing they could say or do to make the pain go away, but their presence was enough for her. Leah, Rachel and Deborah came to see her while she was on the mattress as per tradition. It felt like torture and plain abuse to her. She felt helpless sitting on that mattress crying all day. Leah and Rachel were sisters, twins to be exact and still had both parents present – rich parents to be precise, but Deborah knew Precious' pain all too well as her own mother died in a rather painful way when she was just 8 years old. It still felt like it was the day before for her.

Leah: “Hey, hun. We’re so sorry for what you’re going through. We can only imagine.”

Leah was more of a spokesperson for Rachel who was more toned down and had rather less to say just about everything.

Deborah: “Believe me, I know your pain. You’ll get through this. At least your uncle is still alive and will help you give your mother a dignified funeral.”

Precious: (sobbing) “She never told me she had a brain tumor, guys. Imagine that. I found out after her body was taken away to the mortuary. I had just made her her favourite soup when...”

She couldn’t even finish her sentence.

Deborah: “It’s okay, friend. You will get through this, remember what she taught you about the Lord. Psalm 34:18 – “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those

crushed in spirit.” I know the road from here onwards seems bleak, but you will get through it. I know it.”

Deborah always had a way of saying all the right things. Precious sunk her head in Deborah’s lap and cried until she felt a little better. They left and a famous guest came by to see them. While Hosea was in the kitchen waiting for Mam’Bongi to arrive, his friend Meshack, otherwise known as Mish walked in. He was the famous township gangster and at the tender age of 21 had his own house, three cars, five taxis, a night club and chesa nyana slash bottle store. He had done really well for himself even though he had a lot of demons hidden in his closet. For someone who was named after a man in the Bible, he turned out to be quite a thug like most boys raised without their fathers in the township. His mother had tried all she could to raise him well. He had tons of respect for women, but lacked to treat the women in his life with the same respect he had for his mother. A part of that had to do with what he had witnessed as a child, but nonetheless everyone has their demons. There are criminals in life who wear expensive suits, but do good deeds in the eyes of the people. Hosea being the rebel he was, he had been in a real deep mess in terms of debts, but Meshack had his back. They

had been really good friends ever since Hosea arrived in Mamelodi.

Meshack: (knocking) “Guess who’s home?”

Hosea: (chuckling) “Mish! Heh banna (Goodness) Ubuye nini (When did you get back)? I was under the impression that you were still in Durban.”

Meshack: “I was, but I booked a flight back as soon as I heard about your sister’s passing. I’m so sorry, mfo (bro).”

Hosea: (teary) “Thank you. It means a lot that you came just for me.”

Meshack: “Yeah, how are my accounts coming along?”

Hosea: “You know me, everything is always just fine.”

Meshack: "I like the sound of that. Uphi uBridget (Where's Bridget)?"

Hosea: (annoyed) "Ska mpotsisa ka motho oo (Don't ask me about that person)."

Meshack: (chuckling) "Ke medi ya hao mos (She's your girl, sin't she)?"

Hosea: "You know very well what is what. Bridget wa hlanya jo (Bridget is crazy)."

Meshack: "O hlantsa ke wena (you make her crazy)."

Hosea: (clicking tongue) "Mxm, can you believe she keeps insisting that I marry her? O mfile le deadline, jo (she even gave me a deadline, bro)."

Meshack: (laughing) "That is why I just never had kids with any of my bitches. Those things are troublesome man."

Hosea: "I don't know what to do."

Meshack: (chuckling) "Just watch your back, H. Make sure she doesn't kill you. How is Precious?"

Hosea: "She is turning 18 in a few months and is not your type."

Meshack: (chuckling) "Hao (Goodness), when will you stop playing the over protective brother? I mean for someone who fucks almost everything in a skirt, you sure do act like you're a good man."

Hosea: "I am a good man, I just have my demons."

Meshack: "Don't we all? Bona man (Look man), I just want to see if she is okay. If I was really a paedophile I would have deflowered her long ago. Don't be like that."

Hosea still gave Meshack the benefit of the doubt, though. He and Meshack were pretty much alike; they lacked respect for women to a certain degree and they just could never commit to anything, but Meshack felt something for Precious. He had been waiting for her to grow a bit older

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and honestly saw a wife in her. He could never confide in anyone, but his mother about her – not even to Hosea. He didn't want people to think he was oddly weird or preying on her. He didn't have a good track record with women at all and everyone knew that.

Hosea: "She is in the bedroom. Don't take too long, she is exhausted."

Meshack: "Sure thing, H."

Meshack walked to the bedroom and knocked softly.

Precious: (deep sigh) "Come in."

Meshack opened the door slowly and his heart sank to the pit of his stomach as soon as he saw how red and swollen her eyes were. She saw him as her uncle's best friend – nothing more. She knew nothing about boys at that time.

Meshack: "Can I come in?"

Precious: (teary) "Yes."

Meshack immediately hugged her and allowed her to put her head in his chest.

Meshack: "Talk to me. How do you really feel?"

Precious: (crying) "I feel so empty, Mish. I feel like a part of my heart has literally been torn from me. She was the only parent I ever had. She is all I have ever know, Mish. How did you do it? How did you manage to grow up and be so successful after your own father passed on?"

Meshack hated talking about his father. To him, he was a monster who deserved to die. Only two people know what really happened to him – himself and his mother.

Meshack: (tense) “I felt relieved to be honest. I didn’t have a great life growing up. My father is part of the reason why I am the person that I am today, and not in a positive way. But in your case, Precious, you were destined for greatness. Believe me, you will make it in life. You have always been a great girl and you’re smart – intelligent, man. I wish I had your brains, that is the one thing that will save you from this cruel world. My mother always says if you manage to wake up, there is a brighter day ahead of you. Believe me when I say that the pain never goes away, but you will heal and get better. You will learn to cope and grow up to be an even better and even more beautiful woman.”

Precious: (smiling) “You are smooth with your lips, neh (hey)? No wonder all the girls want you so badly.”

Meshack: (chuckling) “I know that, but I don’t want them. There is one particular girl I really like.”

Precious: “Why don’t you go for her? Surely you can have any girl you want.”

Meshack: “The one I want doesn’t want me – yet. But, I am a patient person.”

Precious: (chuckling) “Well, good luck with that, really.”

Meshack: “Coming from you, I appreciate it.”

While Meshack was giving her his condolences, Mam’Bongi finally graced the house with her presence.

Bongi: (walking in) “Hercules, woza lana wena (come here).”

Hosea: (shocked) “Hawu (Goodness), Gogo. Since when do you call me that?”

Bongi: “Stop playing stupid and help me with this suitcase, it is beyond heavy.”

Hosea chuckled while he carried her suitcase in. Bongi felt strange immediately when she walked into the house.

Bongi: (frowning) “Hey wena (you), Hosea, what have I taught you all these years?”

Hosea: (frowning) “Askies, Gogo (Sorry, Granny)?”

Bongi: “Why haven’t you cleansed this house yet? Bahumi is still sleeping in the sheets that Lehumo died in! Ngapha usahlala na lomfazi we hlanya (you’re also still with that crazy woman), Bridget! What have I ever taught you, Hosea?! Have I taught you to be a thug? You roll with thugs now?”

Hosea: “Shh, Gogo! Precious will hear you. Do you want to traumatize her right now?”

Bongi: “Uyazini (You know what)? Uyangihlanyisa (you’re making me crazy)! I could smack you right now! Everything is a

mess. Lehumo left that child in a real mess and you yourself can't even fix anything."

Hosea: "Uthini na, Gogo (What are you saying, Granny)?"

Bongi: (shaking head) "Something is really wrong. Gatsha is dead. He committed suicide the same time that Lehumo passed on. Their souls met once again and both left this earth together. Everything is a mess in Zululand and there is nothing I can do about it."

Hosea: "Well, surely I can do something."

Bongi: "The only thing you need to do is to stay away from Bridget. She is going to harm you. You'd be lucky if you don't die."

Hosea: "Mish told me the same thing. What did you see, Gogo (Granny)? Am I going to die?"

As Bongi was about to respond to Hosea, Bridget walked in with the three kids, fully clothed in black.

Bridget: “Sanibonani (Good afternoon). Hello, Gogo (Granny). I am finally glad to see you since you’re the closest thing to a mother to Hercules.”

Bongi: (annoyed) “Sawubona (Hello), Bridget. Ufunani la (What are you doing here)?”

Bridget: “What do you mean? I came to do my duties as umakoti (the daughter-in-law).”

Bongi just side eyed Hosea in annoyance.

Hosea: (clearing throat) “Bridget, can I speak to you?”

Bridget: “Later. I have to start prepping for the church ladies. They are coming in a few hours.”

She left Hosea and Bongi standing there while they were staring at her in shock.

Bongi: "Hosea, I have a bad feeling about this. You need to watch your back."

Hosea knew that Bongi's warnings were more than just that. Trouble was lurking and he had to think clearly.

We cannot accept the love we think we deserve.” – Martin Luther King.

While Bridget was acting like the prominent daughter in law, Bongi took the time to play with her great-grandchildren. Meshack found the situation hilarious while Hosea was unimpressed with Bridget’s behaviour. The church ladies came to offer their condolences, including Meshack’s mother Thoko.

Thoko: (smiling) “Sawubona Bongi (Hello Bongi).”

Bongi: (smiling) “Thokozile, long time no see.”

Thoko: “Too long. Manje (And now)? uBridget wenzani (What is Bridget doing now)?”

Bongi: “Believe me, I have no idea. I decided to remain quiet and enjoy my great-grandkids before ngibulala umuntu (I kill someone).”

Thoko: (chuckling) “Ngiyabuya, ithi ngisayokhuluma no Menzi (I’ll be right back. I want to speak to Meshack).”

Bongi: “While you’re at it, please tell him to stay away from my great grandchild.”

Thoko: “Believe me, I share the same sentiments.”

Thoko walked towards Meshack.

Thoko: “Sawubona (Hello), Hercules. May I steal my son for a minute?”

Hosea: (smiling) “Sawubona (Hello), Mam’Thoko. Ofcourse.”

Meshack and Thoko walked outside to talk.

Thoko: “How is she?”

Meshack: (teary) "She is broken, Ma. I have no idea what to do or say to make her feel better."

Thoko: (shocked) "Meshack, look at me."

Meshack looked at her and a tear escaped his eye.

Thoko: "Please, don't do this, Meshack. That girl is a child. She knows nothing about men while you have slept with nearly the whole of South Africa."

Meshack: "Ma, this is different. I love her."

Thoko: (sigh) "You say that about all of them, Mish. What happens if she falls for you and you hurt her like you did the rest of them?"

Meshack: "Ma, I am trying so hard to change. Why can't you see that?"

Thoko: “Because I know you, Mish. I know you too well. You are going to end up like your father.”

Meshack: (tense) “I won’t end up like that monster, Ma.”

Thoko: “You and I both know that you’re not good for her, Meshack. Why do you want to ruin her life?”

Meshack: “I don’t have time for this. Precious needs me right now. I’ll see you after the service.”

He left his mother standing there and went back into the house. Bridget made sure to serve everyone tea and biscuits. As soon as the church ladies left, Bridget took it upon herself to start cooking for Thoko, Bonggi, the three kids, Meshack, Precious and Hosea, much to his annoyance.

Hosea: “Bridget, can we talk, please?”

Bridget: "Sure. I can multitask. You of all people should know that."

Hosea: "Bridget, you really don't have to cook. I told you not to show up here. It's my sister's funeral, for goodness sake!"

Bridget: (angered) "So? What exactly are you saying, Hercules? Are you saying I'm not good enough for you? That I am not supposed to help out although I am taking care of your three children?!"

Hosea: "Bridget, calm down, man."

Bridget: "Or what? You're going to leave me like you left your two previous baby mamas? I'm not going anywhere, Hercules! I gave you another son, and I took care of your daughter and other son while their useless mothers left them with you! I sacrificed so much for you and you want to leave me?!"

Everyone was so stunned that they were actually staring at the two. Hosea hated that kind of attention, so he did what he did best – contained the situation.

Hosea: “Calm down, Bree. I didn’t say I’m leaving you. I just meant you need to tone it down, that’s all. I haven’t paid any lobola for you and now you want to slave off like this. Come on, man.”

Bridget calmed down as soon as he started saying that.

Bridget: (relieved) “Okay, I get you. But, next time, don’t be so aggressive or else I won’t take it very well. I’ve been with you for over ten years, Hercules. You can’t leave me. Not now, not ever.”

At that point Hercules knew that he had more problems than he did five minutes before. He slowly walked away from her to everyone else in the lounge.

Bongi: “It won’t end well

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Hercules. You need to decide what you want before it blows up in your face.”

It was at that very point that Precious’ life was about to make a big turn around in a few months. She was about to start matric in a month or two, and Hosea had more problems than he had anticipated. Nonetheless, Meshack was about to become Precious’ biggest supporter and he had a big impact on her. He introduced her to a life she never knew she would be able to handle.

Back in Zululand, things were not spiralling too much out of control as much as Glenda had thought. Just two days after Gatsha’s “disappearance”, his trusted lawyer appeared with much saddening news. He knocked on the Royal Palace door.

Glenda: “Enter.”

Georgina: “Ma, you don’t even know who it is, and already you’re inviting them in.”

Glenda: "You need to relax."

Gatsha's trusted lawyer, Kumkani walked in. He had been Gatsha's lawyer and good friend, apart from Siya who had moved to London with Brenda and the boys. They even had a daughter later on and it was too painful for Brenda to live in Zululand without Lehumo around.

Kumkani: "Greetings, ladies."

Georgina felt like she was about to drop dead on the floor.

Georgina: (nervous) : "He.. Hello."

Kumkani: "I apologize for my impromptu visit, but I have urgent matters to discuss with you, Ms. Georgina Dambuza."

Glenda: "What kind of matters?"

Kumkani: (annoyed) “This is a matter between Ms. Dambuza and I, Ma’am.”

Glenda: (Annoyed) “Utheni (What did you just say)?”

Georgina: “It’s fine, Ma. Mr?”

Kumkani: “Oh, Mdhletse. You can call me Kumkani.”

Georgina: “Okay, Kumkani. Can she be present?”

Kumkani: “Sure. Well then, I am sure we are all aware of Mr. Gatsha Ncube’s disappearance. He had a specific document in case of such emergencies.”

Georgina: “Wait a minute. Isn’t Mr. Nkatha Gatsha’s lawyer? I mean no offence, but you look awfully young to be a lawyer.”

Kumkani: "I am one of Mr. Nkatha's junior associates. I get that a lot, but he is a busy man and I will be running his new firm in Pretoria."

Georgina: "I see."

Kumkani: "Anyway, I have come here to read his instructions to you since he has gone missing."

Glenda: "Wait, what makes you think that he is missing?"

Kumkani: "Because I have known him for years and he never does anything out of the ordinary. He has been gone for two days now."

Gerogina: "Can you read the document already, please?"

Kumkani: "Alright."

He took out the document and started reading.

Kumkani: “To my dearest Georgina. By now you should know that I am missing and if it is indeed the case, I would like the following to be adhered to: firstly I’d like you to note that I know that the boys aren’t mine – they were never mine to begin with. I know that you are actually barren and that I never treated you right. You knew that I never loved you, but you stuck around and did your best. You made me breakfast, lunch and supper for the past eighteen years and I appreciate that even though you never complained a single time. For that, I thank you. I thank you for trying to give me a new meaning to my life after I lost Lehumo. This is just an interim will, which means that it stands legal in the case should my body not be found or I be declared missing. Kumkani will handle my business until such a time that he sees the boys fit to run the business. In the mean time, they both have to go to University and get meaningful degrees of their choice if they want to have a stake in the business. You can still remain in the house and get a monthly stipend until such a time that I be found. Should the boys not fulfil my wishes, they will forfeit everything – including their montly stipends as well.”

Glenda: (annoyed) “Ini (What)?! Where does that leave me?”

Kumkani: "Mrs. Dambuza, please note that your daughter and Mr. Ncube were not even married. This is a favour from his side. So, if anything, just know that he is still legally married to Lehumo."

Glenda: (shocked) "What happens if she comes back here or she is found?"

Kumkani: "That is my business. I'll let you know until such a time should there be developments. Until then, goodbye. I'll be in touch."

Glenda: "Wait! Before you leave, how much is this stipend they will be getting?"

Kumkani: "If you must know, Ms. Dambuza will be getting R30 000 every month and the boys will each be getting R50 000 monthly."

That was music to Glenda's ears. He left the two while Georgina was broken and rather shocked. She instantly regretted listening to her mother.

Glenda: "And then, wena (you)? Why se umuncu kanje (Why do you look so sour)?"

Georgina: "Ma, do you realize that we actually killed a man who had me in mind all these years? I regret ever listening to you."

Glenda: (chuckling) "If anything, you should be thanking me. If you're getting 30k per month now, imagine how much you will be getting once he is actually found dead. Don't be stupid, man. Suba weak (Don't be weak), Georgina. I didn't raise no weakling."

Unfortunately for Georgina, she was weak minded. Her mother preyed on her sanity, her purity and made her a pawn in her game. But as God had said years ago, nothing that is done in the dark stays hidden. Luke 12:2-3 – "Secrets will be uncovered, the trull will come forth and God's thought about every behaviour and action will be vindicated. What's done in the dark shall come to light."

“Of all the words of mice and men, the saddest are; “It might have been.” – Kurt Vonnegut

One year later...

Precious learnt to cope without the presence of her mother. She had just finished matric even though it was a very difficult year. She had overcome a lot of struggles and was approaching age 19. Nonetheless, Bongi did all she could, but she was rather old and couldn't stay in Mamelodi. She loved her house and needed to be there till her end days. She knew what was coming, but she also knew that she just couldn't stop it. Precious was already accepted at five Universities, including Harvard. Her mother's R1 million life policy was set just for that. Of course, she had used a bit of that money for her matric fees and living expenses, so she was left a little less than R1 million. For her, it was enough to get her settled. She had no idea how she would endure a second Christmas without her mother, but Mish was there for her in every way possible. He made time for her every chance he got. While Precious was dealing with her own demons, Hosea was struggling with his. He had just got home to an annoying Bridget once again.

Hosea: “Honey, I’m home.”

Bridget: (annoyed) “Ngabe ushonjalo ukhipe ilobola (You could be saying that for real after paying lobola).”

Hosea: “Yoh, Hayi man Bree. I just got back from work. Do you really want to shit on me right now?”

Bridget: “You seem to forget that I am the only one who knows all your secrets, Hercules. You know that I can get you fired and arrested.”

Hosea: “Heh?”

Bridget: “I wonder what your employers would think about you doing business with Mish.”

Hosea got so angry that he lost control. He did something he had never done before – not even with his previous baby

mamas – he landed his firm hand on Bridget’s cheek. She was so stunned that she nearly lost balance.

Bridget: (shocked) “Fuck you, Hercules! You’re going to pay for this, you hear me?!”

Hosea: “I didn’t mean to do that, Bree, but fuck it. You sure know how to push a man. I have tried, I really have, but I just don’t love you. I can’t live my life based on a lie anymore. Shit. My kids deserve better and if you’re going to keep using them as a pawn against me then fuck you. Pack your shit and get out. My kids stay - all of them.”

He walked out leaving Bridget in the kitchen all alone. Little did he know that she had plans of her own.

Bridget: “Now one leaves me and gets away with it - no one.”

He had heard the stories about her, but he accumulated them to the usual township gossip that people spread around. He had decided to go have a drink at Mish’s chesa

nyama. Meanwhile Precious was alone at home until Debbie, Ruth and Leah arrived.

Leah: “Knock Knock.”

Precious: (smiling) “Hey, guys. What brings you here?”

Rachel: “Well, we thought we could have our own pens down. I mean we are indeed done with high school – finally.”

Leah: (chuckling) “Oh, please, Rachel. What do you even know about Pens down or parties to be exact?”

Deborah: “Rachel, don’t be so rude to your sister.”

Leah once again decided to keep quiet.

Precious: “I don’t think we should even go partying. Besides, we’re barely legal.”

Deborah: “You honestly think I’d go partying with Leah? Come on.”

Precious, Deborah and Rachel found it so funny that they burst out in laughter, while Leah on the other hand found it not so funny.

Leah: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, le tlo mbora lena shem (you’re going to seriously bore me, shame).”

Precious: “Come on, Leah. You practically make fun of everyone all the time. You can’t always make jokes about others and then get mad when they make fun of you.”

Leah just clicked her tongue in annoyance.

Deborah: “Anyways, we thought we could just go chill at Mish’s car wash.”

Rachel: "You mean Precious's boyfriend."

Precious: (firmly) "He's not my boyfriend. I don't have a boyfriend."

Leah: "Well, it is high time you bitches started experimenting unless you want to end up like holy Deborah over here. I mean, Charlie practically has had blue balls for the past three years."

Deborah: (annoyed) "I'm saving myself for marriage, Leah. But what do you know? You've been having sex ever since you became a teen."

Leah: "Wa ntlwaela wena (You're starting to annoy me), Deborah."

Precious: "Okay, guys. Chill, please. Let me get my bag and we'll head out. Fun vibes only, please."

She grabbed her handbag and they walked out. Even though Leah was a bit annoyed at Debbie for her comment, Debbie

couldn't care less about how Leah felt. She was the rude one of the group and a lot of girls and boys disliked her for that. She was really pretty, much like Rachel, but she was way naughtier than her twin sister – than all of them actually. While the rest of them were virgins, Leah was overly experienced for her age. They took a walk to the car wash which was about ten minutes away from Precious's house. Upon arrival, they were greeted by one of the waitresses.

Waitress: "Hello, table for four?"

Precious: "Yes, please."

Waitress: (frowning) "Hey, aren't you that girl?"

Precious: (surprised) "Askies (Excuse me)?"

Waitress: "Yeah, you're that girl, man. The one who is after Mish. Shame, he's probably going to fuck you and leave you hanging like he does everyone. But then, you're just an orphan

so you're of no use to him. You should leave an experienced man like him to mature girls like us."

Precious was so angry – unlike her father and her mother, she got angered really quickly. She was rather impulsive.

Precious: (angered) "I think you got the wrong person."

Waitress: "Oh, no. I am speaking to the right girl, alright. Precious Vilakazi – the orphan slut of Mamelodi."

That waitress never saw it coming for someone as tall and busty as herself. Precious was not very tall, in fact she was just as short as her mother. She had taken her mother's complexion, but was the spitting image of her father. She got so fired up that she landed a hot punch on that girl's face and she found herself on the floor as the tray she had in her hands landed on her face, causing her nose to bleed instantly. Precious was breathing fire, standing right on top of her.

Debbie: (shocked) “Precious! Mo tlogele (Leave her)! You’re bigger than that.”

Precious: (angry) “Fuck being bigger.”

She got on top of that girl as everyone was watching them in shock. She started punching the girl multiple times again.

Precious: (fuming) “O ntlwaela masepa, nyoa mmao (You’re full of shit, your mother’s cunt)! Ke tla go trapa nna (I’ll beat the shit out of you).”

While she was beating her up, leaving her friends in shock, Mish quickly took her away from the waitress.

Precious: (shouting) “Ntlogele (Leave me alone)!”

Waitress: “Get her arrested, Mish! Did you see what the fuck this bitch did to me?!”

Leah: "Well, you kind of deserved it."

Meshack: "Shut up, Rose! Precious, calm down, please."

Precious: (fuming) "This bitch insulted me instead of offering me a table to sit. She doesn't even know me yet she accused me of wanting you. She called me an orphaned whore who is after you, Mish!"

Meshack was so angry after hearing that statement.

Meshack: (fuming) "Yey, wena (Hey you), Rose. Did you really say that to her?"

Waitress: (looking down) "Not exactly, but – "

Meshack: "Rose, ke tlo diretse favour kao fa spane, sfebe ke wena (I did you a favour by giving you a job, you bitch). Now o no roga di customer tsa ka so (Now, you're swearing at my customers like this)?"

Waitress: "Mish, I – "

Meshack: "You know how I deal with people like you. O tserere advantage wena entlek (you took advantage of me). You're fired. I'll pay you for the rest of the month, but as far as it goes, this is your last day."

Waitress: (teary) "Mish, I – "

Meshack: "Voetsek (Piss off)! Zaya (Go)!"

Rose left defeated, as she gave both Meshack and Precious one last look before leaving.

Meshack: "The rest of you, the party is over."

Everyone was afraid of Meshack and most of the people actually respected him. They went back to their spots and the dj continued playing music.

Meshack: (smiling) “Hi, girls. There is a table for you over there. Order anything you want – on the house.”

Meshack also had a bit of a temper, but he could easily switch it up as if he was not angry a few minutes before.

Deborah: (smiling) “Thank you, Meshack.”

Meshack: (chuckling) “Please, only my mother calls me that.”

Leah: (smiling) “Precious, are you coming?”

Meshack: “She’ll be there in a minute. Order yourselves some drinks for now.”

He still had his arms firmly around Precious who was just quiet but breathing heavily.

Leah: “Alright then. Don’t take too long.”

Leah, Rachel and Deborah went to sit where Mish had allocated them. Another waitress went to serve them while he was with Precious.

Meshack: “Come, let’s take a walk.”

Precious couldn’t exactly disagree as he had held her firmly. They walked a bit further away from the Chesa Nyama and she seemed to have calmed down a little bit.

Meshack: “So, you want to tell me why you acted like a whole female Rambo on Rose?”

Precious: (clicking tongue) “She had it coming. She insulted me. Calling me an orphan whore. She said I was after you and that you’d just fuck me and leave me hanging like the rest of the girls around here.”

Meshack: (chuckling) “You’re not even sorry, bathing (goodness), Precious.”

Precious: “It’s not like you were going to leave her standing there without giving her a few slaps had it been you.”

Meshack: (scratching head) “Well, you’re kind of right.”

Precious: “Seriously, though, Mish. What did she mean? I mean it’s not like you’re my boyfriend or anything.”

Meshack was a bit hurt because he really thought that after his genuine gestures she would actually have saved some space in her heart for him as her boyfriend. He had fallen head over heels for her like never before – despite dealing with his own demons. He would occasionally keep her company at her house on a few weekdays and some weekends, at times he would fetch her from school. He had even organized one of his guys to be her full time bodyguard without her even noticing. He knew of her every move at every second of every day. It was a bit creepy, but it was his way of showing how much he loved her.

Meshack: (softly) “Eish, bona (Look), Precious. I won’t lie and say that I don’t like you because I do – I really do. I have never felt the way I do about any other girl before. I know, you’re only eighteen, but I am willing to wait for you. I really want to make you my wife one day.”

He had struck Precious off guard because she had never seen him as a potential boyfriend. She was suddenly not so sure if she had actually been low-key attracted to him or not. She was silently looking at him – really looking at him. She noticed his cute one dimple on his right cheek, and despite being rather light, he was actually really handsome. He had a well-groomed shaved beard and he was always neatly dressed. Not a day went by that she didn’t smell his cologne.

Meshack: “Well? What do you say?”

Precious: “I don’t know, Mish. I mean, I really have never been with a guy before.”

Meshack: “I know.”

Precious: (puzzled) “You know?”

Meshack: “I mean, I can tell. Besides, your uncle keeps reiterating it to me. He also continuously tells me to stay away from you.”

Precious: “I don’t know, Mish.”

Meshack: “Can you at least think about it? Give me a chance to get to know you and for you to get to know me and then you can make a decision. How about that?”

Precious: (smiling) “Okay. But what about my uncle?”

Meshack: “Leave H to me.”

Precious smiled and nodded. Meshack was so relieved as he was not one to be nervous – ever. He was elated, his heart was jumping for so much joy that he hugged her. That hug they

shared at that moment felt very different from the previous ones they had shared. It felt as if they were subconsciously consummating their love for one another – a love they were still yet to experience.

Meshack: “Come, your friends must be wondering where you are.”

They walked back hand in hand and everyone was staring at them. Precious had not been noticing the stares all year long whenever she was walking around the streets. Rumours had already been flying that she was Meshack’s girl. Well, he had warned anyone not to even try getting near her or else they would regret it. Little did Precious know that she was now the girlfriend of the most dangerous man in Mamelodi.

Meshack: “Sit. I’ll bring you a cloth and some ice for that hand.”

Precious: (blushing) “Okay.”

Deborah: "Ooh, P wa Mish."

Rachel: (smiling) "What was that all about, P? Are you guys an item now?"

Precious: (blushing) "No, man."

Leah: (frowning) "For real, now, Precious. La jola or bjang (are you two dating or what)?"

Precious: (smiling) "Well, sort of."

Leah: (annoyed) "It's either la jola (you're dating) or not."

Deborah: "Hawu (Goodness), Leah. Sounds like somebody's jealous."

Leah: "Oh, please. Why would I be jealous?"

Rachel: “Well, because Mish oo ganne kgale (Because Mish said no to you long ago).”

Leah: “Mxm, ska ntlwaela Rachel, wa nkutlwa (don’t piss me off, Rachel, do you hear me)?”

Precious: “Look, it’s no big deal, Leah. Besides, you really need to stop speaking to Rachel like that. She’s your sister.”

Leah: “I’m just saying that I don’t know what the fuck she is talking about. Besides, if you guys are going to be an item, then it’s best you know what kind of guy he really is.”

Deborah: “I don’t think that is any of your concern, Leah. Besides no one butts into your relationships. You know, like your relationship with Mr. Abrahams.”

Leah: (angered) “Wa reng (Excuse me)?”

Precious: “Can we please just have a decent lunch? Please?!”

Leah: "I just thought you'd want to know what you're getting yourself into."

Precious: "Thanks, Leah, but I think I'll figure that one out myself. Today was not about Mish or me, it was about celebrating our new life. Come on, guys."

Rachel: "Precious is right. Can we just eat and drink a little and stop talking about Mish."

Leah: "Of course you'd side with her."

Precious attributed Leah's behaviour to being rude by nature, but little did she know just how much of a jealous person she was. She was not just envious of Precious, but of all of them including her sister Rachel. Leah was going to be the downfall of them all in the long run and they simply had no idea. Meshack came and handed her a cloth with ice and a mojito.

Meshack: “Your limit is two drinks – all of you.”

Leah: (frowning) “You’re not my boyfriend, phela.”

Meshack: “And I’m forever grateful that I am not. For as long as you’re here ladies, you remain my responsibility. Two drinks and then you head on home.”

He winked at Precious and walked away.

Leah: “Party Pooper.”

Proverbs 13: 40 warns us by saying “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.”

“They’ll either want to kill you, kiss you, or be you.” – Suzanne Collins

It had been a year since Gatsha’s “disappearance” and things were going from bad to worse for Georgina, while her mother was reaping the benefits. Her monthly stipend together with the boys’ was more than enough for her to get a share thereof on a monthly basis. Georgina could not live with herself, as she could see Gatsha’s spirit haunting her at night. He would just stand there and not say anything to her. She resorted to drinking and taking sleeping pills at night just to sleep. She had basically become dysfunctional, while her mother could manoeuvre herself around the money they all received. The boys had finished matric, and she had tried to get them more involved in the kingdom matters as a way for them to get more money. She had basically poisoned them and ensured that they crave the power of being full royals and taking over the kingdom. They had become so discourteous that people were actually starting to wonder if they were indeed Gatsha’s sons. Meanwhile, Kumkani was busy with his own mission, trying to track down Lehumo and Princess Buhle. He was getting really frustrated, and even though he was unaware that he was

actually close to Buhle since he was in Pretoria, it was rather frustrating being him. He decided to call Mr. Nkatha, his boss.

Mr. Nkatha: “Kumkani. What a lovely surprise. I hope you come with good news.”

Kumkani: (sigh) “I wish, sir. I think this time I have failed you.”

Mr. Nkatha: “Kumkani, you are my best associate. What will happen to the business and to Gatsha’s business if you crumble? I put you in charge of this because I know your capabilities. I cannot afford to have you crumbling in this situation.”

Kumkani: (sigh) “I think I have bitten off more than I can chew.”

Mr. Nkatha: “I was like you once, so ambitious. Even the white prosecutors hated me and said that I am over ambitious, but look at me now. I am one of the top prosecutors in this country. Now, I put you in charge because I know you can do it. Rome wasn’t built in a day. Those boys are still young and they can’t

touch the business right now. They won't be able to for a while. Judging by the way they are behaving, they won't get beyond their first year of varsity."

Kumkani: "Thank you for trusting me."

Mr. Nkatha: "I only trust a few people in my life; God, my mother and now you. Not even my wife adds up on that list."

Kumkani: (chuckling) "Okay, boss."

Mr. Nkatha: "We'll speak soon. Don't put so much pressure on yourself. Go and grab a drink, have some sex. We'll talk later."

Kumkani: (chuckling) "Bye."

He hung up and lay back in his chair wondering if he would actually find Lehumo and Buhle before it was too late. Back in Zululand, it was just another day for Glenda to exercise her power trip over Georgina. She walked in and found her sitting

on the porch drinking what seemed to be her fourth bottle of wine.

Glenda: “Georgina! Georgina! Hayibo (Goodness) Uphi lo muntu (Where is this girl)?”

Georgina: “Ngi lana (I’m in here)!”

Glenda walked towards the patio and found Georgina borderline drunk.

Glenda: (shocked) “Goodness, Georgina, what the hell? Do you want the boys to see you in such a state?”

Georgina: “Would it matter if they did? I mean they’re not even mine.”

Glenda: “Keep your voice down. Do you want to lose everything?”

Georgina: “I’d rather be poor than live the life I am living right now. All this is just not worth it. I have sold my soul and I can’t seem to buy it back. How do you even sleep at night? Ulalajani (how do you sleep)?”

Glenda: “Georgina, maybe you should sleep this off.”

Georgina: (crying) “I am depressed, Ma. Why can’t you just see it?”

Glenda: “I’ll get the doctor to give you stronger antidepressants. Come on, I don’t have all day. I have organized a meeting with the council members and the boys. Let me take you to bed.”

Georgina felt even more helpless that her mother couldn’t give a damn that she was in severe pain. Nothing could help her then and there was only one way out for her. Back in Mamelodi, Precious and her friends had had a bit to drink. Being someone who was a bit of an amateur drinker, she was a bit drunk. Meshack was unimpressed when he saw them starting to dance and guys starting looking at them – particularly Precious. They hadn’t even made their relationship formal as yet and already he was possessive.

Meshack: (firmly) “Precious, it is time for me to get you all home.”

Leah: “Speak for her only, nna I’m still having fun.”

Meshack: “Do you want your parents to get me arrested for letting you drink here? Now stop being annoying and come on.”

He spoke in such authority that they didn’t even think twice. They took their bags, got in his car and he drove them home. He started with Leah and Rachel and then Deborah. Precious was the last one to be dropped off, deliberately.

Precious: “Hao (Goodness) Mish. You could have just dropped me off first.”

Meshack: “I just wanted to make sure you’re okay. It is my duty after all as your boyfriend.”

Precious: (chuckling) "You're not my boyfriend yet, man, Mish."

Meshack: "But I will be."

Precious: "Leah said something weird to me today. About you."

Meshack: (frowning) "What did she say?"

Precious: "She said that I need to know what kind of guy you actually are. What did she mean by that?"

Meshack: (clenching jaw) "Leah wa nyela waitse (is full of shit, you know). O kwatetse gore ke mo ganne (she is just angry that I refused her request)."

Precious: "Rachel said the very same thing to me."

Meshack: "Bona babe (Look babe), a ke batle go lwesa le di chomi tsa gao (I don't want to cause a fight between you and your friends), but Leah ke sfebe (is a whore). Everyone knows."

O nyobisa ma teachere (she fucks teachers), di bus driver (bus drivers), bo bohle ba (everyone). I just want you to give me a chance.”

Precious: “Okay.”

Mish kissed her on the lips, even though it was just a peck on the lips, it was Precious’s very first kiss ever. It sent chills and butterflies right down her spine and everywhere on her body. She had never had such signals before.

Meshack: “Goodnight. O robale shap (sleep well).”

Precious: (smiling) “Good night, Mish.”

She walked out and he waited for her to get into the house before he drove off. She felt her legs become rather wobbly and decided to sleep it off. The next morning she was woken up by Bridget’s loud banging on her door.

Precious: “Eish, eish, eish. Ke ye tla (I’m coming).”

She opened the door and Bridget didn't even seem to have taken a bath. She didn't even look like she even slept at all. She had the three kids with her and just barged right in.

Precious: "Ai, hello to you too, Bridget."

Bridget: "Ausi (Sis) Bridget!"

Precious: "Okay. O batla eng (What do you want)?"

Bridget: "O kae ena (Where is he)?"

Precious: "Who?"

Bridget: "Your uncle, man! He didn't come home last night. I had prepared a lovely dinner for him and he didn't even eat his food. He was supposed to eat his food."

Bridget was speaking in riddles and Precious was too hungover to make out what she meant.

Precious: "Eish, Ausi Bridget. I haven't seen him in a while. I don't know where he is, seriously."

Bridget: (frantic) "Okay then. Let me make us some breakfast. I am sure you're starving judging by the hangover that has you by the balls."

Precious: "Who said I'm hungover?"

Bridget: "You don't have to lie to me. Been there, done that. Here, take this and go buy us some eggs bread and juice. I'll figure out the rest."

Precious took the money and walked out to buy food. She was a bit annoyed that Bridget had a way of just making herself feel at home without permission. Bridget was one shady woman. She always had a hidden agenda. That morning she found herself snooping in Precious's bedroom, looking for something

that might lead her to Hosea, but she found something else and had struck gold in her mind. She went through Precious's phone and found a recent sms "Capitec MoneyIn+R1000 000. Balance R1 005 000." She had gone through a small notebook on Precious's bedside table where she wrote down pin codes and people's numbers. She did that in case she had lost her phone and was a bit forgetful when it came to numbers. She came across Precious's cellphone banking pin and did the unthinkable without even thinking twice. She quickly logged in and transferred the money into her account and deleted all the messages. She didn't hesitate, didn't even kiss her kids goodbye and out she went, leaving no trace. Meanwhile Precious found Mish at the tuckshop.

Mish: (smiling) "Morning, Baby."

Precious smiled as she inhaled Mish's cologne when he hugged her. She was a bit embarrassed as she was still in her pajamas and hadn't even brushed her teeth. He attempted to peck her lips again, but she refused.

Precious: "Aowa (No), man, Mish. Ga ke so hlape le meno (I haven't even brushed my teeth)."

Mish: (chuckling) “I love a natural woman, man, Precious. Come on. Besides, since when do you walk around the streets in your nightwear?”

Precious: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, ai, since Bridget decided to send me to the shops and make us some breakfast. Apparently my uncle has gone M.I.A. on her and she is panicking. Ke lapile gore (I’m so tired).”

Mish: (chuckling) “That girl wa lapisa (is tiring). But you shouldn’t have left her alone in your house.”

Precious: “I should probably head back since I even left my phone at home.”

Mish: “Come on, I am sure she can manage. Come, let me go buy you some Mcdonalds. You can’t be eating anything made by that girl.”

Precious chuckled as she got into his car. She ignored the stares from the people once again and off they went. Mish bought her enough food to feed the kids as well and after an hour or so, she got back to find the kids alone watching tv.

Precious: (surprised) “And then? What is up with you guys?”

Gabby: “Ah, Mama o no tswile (just left). We don’t know where she is. Re tshwere ke tlala sesi (We are starving, sis).”

Gabby, short for Gabriella was Hosea’s 12 year old first born, from another woman. She was half coloured hence she had an English name, but he also named her Neriah, after his mother. The second born was a 10 year old boy named Noah who was named after his father and Gatsha was the 8 year old last born he had with Bridget, named after his brother-in-law. Hosea had bad luck with the women he had children with as they always seemed to run away and leave him with the children. This time, Bridget did the unthinkable and left as well.

Precious: “Ai, okay. I brought you guys some Mcdonalds.”

Gatsha: “Yay! I hope you got me a happy meal, Sesi (Sis) Precious. I love their toys.”

Precious: (chuckling) “Well, there is more than enough. Help yourselves.”

She let them eat and went back to her bedroom after taking a shower. She started eating and was chatting to Mish on WhatsApp.

Mish: “Can I take you out tonight?”

Precious: “I’d love to, but Bridget took off and left the kids.”

Mish: “My mom can look after them. You game?”

Precious: “Sure. What time?”

Mish: “How about 6pm?”

Precious: "Okay. See you then."

Mish: "I can't wait."

She spent the rest of the day cleaning and nursing her mild hangover. She was still unaware of what Bridget had done. She got the kids to take a bath and Mish was right at her doorstep at 5:30.

Precious: "Come in."

Mish: "Hao (Goodness), baby. You're not dressed yet?"

Precious: "You said 6pm, Mish, bathing (goodness)."

Mish: (chuckling) "Okay then. Let me take them to my mom. But when I come back, you have to be ready."

Precious: “Yes, boss. Kids, akere I told you that you were going to visit Mam’Thoko tonight. Please behave. Your mom will probably come fetch you later on.”

Gabby: “Okay. Bye Auntie.”

Precious: “Bye-bye.”

Mish blew her a kiss and left with the kids. She had asked herself how people thought he was so dangerous yet he was so loving and caring whenever he was with her. She took a shower and got ready and he was punctual, at 17:59 he was knocking at the door.

Precious: (smiling) “Bathong (Goodness), Mish. Couldn’t you at least come after six?”

Mish: “I am a very punctual man, P. It’s rude to keep a lady waiting. Besides, I was talking to my mom about you. She wants to officially meet you after our date.”

Precious: (nervously) “Aowa (No), Mish. I mean we haven’t confirmed anything yet.”

Mish: “P, ke dilo tsa makgoa tseo (that’s white people stuff). Besides, I am serious about you so why not?”

Precious was not sure about that, but she went ahead with it. Mish had taken her for dinner at Turn n’ Tender and by then she was so humbled by the stories he had told her about the way he grew up. He still hadn’t told her everything, but she was impressed that he was so successful at the age of 22. They walked around and he decided to buy her a nice bag from Louis Voutton that she had been eyeing.

Precious: “Mish, you really didn’t have to.”

Mish: “You’re my girl. I want to.”

While they were walking towards the car, he opened the door for her and she got in. Her phone rang and the number was unrecognizable.

Precious: "Let me get this. It might be important."

Mish: "Sure."

Precious: "Hello?"

Caller: "Ms. Vilakazi. I hope you're well. We have been trying to get hold of you since this afternoon."

Precious: "Oh, I apologize. My phone blocks numbers that seem like spam."

Caller: "This is Mr. Bezuidenhout. I am calling regarding the cash transfer you made to a Ms. Bridget Mudau."

Precious: (puzzled) "Excuse me? What cash transfer?"

Caller: (deep sigh) "I thought as much. I am afraid there was an eft made directly from your savings account to Ms. Bridet Mudau's account."

Precious felt like she was dreaming.

Precious: "How much?"

Caller: "She took all of it, ma'am."

Precious: (worried) "Can't you reverse it?"

Caller: "I'm afraid she already diverted the money to another account. We couldn't do anything as we couldn't get hold of you. We will open a fraud case, but in the mean time, we cannot get the money back into your account. I am sorry, Ms. Vilakazi. I'll be in touch."

He hung up and Precious started crying immediately, worrying Mish.

Mish: (worried) “Keng (What is it)? Talk to me, baby.”

Precious: “She took my money. That bitch took my money.”

Mish: “Who?”

Precious: “Bridget. She took all of my money.”

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“Life can be only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.” – Soren Kierkegaard

Precious was a real mess and tried really hard not to spoil her first date with Mish, but everything was just too much for her. She had been crying for the past half an hour in Mish’s car.

Mish: “Baby, bona (look), I promise you, Bridget will be found and she will pay for what she has done.”

Precious: “You can’t promise me that.”

Mish: “Believe me, I am a man of my word. I just need your permission to have her found.”

Precious: (sobbing) “Okay.”

Mish nodded and made the call.

Mish: “Sho (Sure), Ronza. Ja, ngicela umfunele le sfebe bathi nguBridget (Please find that bitch Bridget for me). I need her alive. Let me know when you have found her. Sharp.”

At that moment Precious didn't really have time to explore thoughts in her mind of what kind of job Mish actually does. She was just glad that he was there and he was doing his best to make sure she was okay.

Precious: “I'm sorry for ruining our first date.”

Mish: “You didn't ruin anything. Bona (Look), babe. I swear to you, I will find her and everything will be okay.”

Precious: “How, Mish? That money was supposed to be for my tuition and to last me a while. Now I have nothing. I don't know what I am going to do and how I'm going to pay for registration next year.”

Mish: “How much do you need for registration?”

Precious: (puzzled) “Mish, I can’t expect you to do that.”

Mish: “You can’t expect me not to take care of my girl, do you? What do you want people to think of me? Ngithe udinga malini (I asked you how much do you need)?”

Precious: “R5000.”

Mish: “That’s child’s play. I’ll pay for it.”

Precious: “That’s not the most of my problems, Mish. My fees cost an arm and a leg.”

Mish: “I’ll pay for those as well.”

Precious: (shocked) “Mish, really you don’t have to. I’ll apply for a bursary or a loan or something.”

Mish: “Presh, no woman of mine will stand in long queues like she’s poor. I’ll take care of you, just let me.”

Precious: (nodding) "Okay."

Mish: (smiling) "Now, please, don't worry about this. I will sort it out. You can't meet my mom with puffy eyes."

Precious: (surprised) "Are we still going to see your mom? Yoh (Wow), Mish."

Mish: "Come on. I don't like disappointing her like that."

Precious: "Okay. We can go."

Mish: "Good. I'll buy you some ice cream on the way so you can calm down."

Precious smiled as Mish kissed the back of her hand. He finally started the car and they were gone. He bought her a McFlurry as promised, and they finally arrived at his house. She had never really entered the house, and as she heard it was a

beautiful house. A big, neat house with a gorgeous garden and two fountains outside. It also had an electric fence with a very high wall and he used a code to open the gate. That was not something a person would see in the township everyday. Mish parked the car outside and could sense Precious was really nervous.

Mish: "Are you ready?"

Precious: "I think so."

Mish: "Don't worry, my mom is harmless. Come."

He opened the car door for her, something she always saw in movies. It was a great feeling to experience it herself, really. She walked out and he held her by the hand and kissed it again. He knocked and entered with the nervous Precious by his side.

Mish: "Ma, I'm home."

Mam'Thoko: (smiling) "Hello, my boy."

He let go of Precious's hand and hugged her, then pulled the hug and held Precious's hand again.

Mish: "Mama, this is my Precious. iNdhlovukazi yami (My queen)."

Precious blushed and looked down. Mam'Thoko immediately noticed how shaky and embarrassed she looked by the pink cheeks, but she knew just what to do.

Thoko: (smiling) "Hello, Precious. It is nice to officially welcome you to my home."

She opened her arms awaiting a hug from Precious. She didn't want to be rude so she nervously walked towards her and hugged her. Her hug felt so warm, so motherly, that it made her feel like she was somehow in her own mother's arms. She hardly got to speak to Mam'Thoko since she and Lehumo went to the same church.

Thoko: “You look so nervous. Relax, please take a seat.”

Mish was about to sit down with her, but his mom stopped him.

Thoko: “And then, wena (you)? Ucabanga ukuthi wenzani (what do you think you’re doing)?”

Mish: (frowning) “Haibo (Goodness), Ma. You’re not going to interrogate my woman without me.”

Thoko: “Who said anything about an interrogation here? Ungangijwaeli amasimba, yezwa (Don’t bullshit me, okay)? Go check on the kids. They’re watching tv.”

Precious was a bit alarmed that Mish’s mother could even utter a swear word. She was a devoted church lady, so she basically assumed she was strict and narrow.

Mish: (chuckling) "Okay, Mama."

He kissed Precious on the cheek and whispered in her ear.

Mish: "Scream if you need help."

He winked at her and left. That made Precious more nervous, she could barely hide it. Thoko chuckled and walked up to the fridge and took out a bottle of red wine and two wine glasses.

Thoko: "You look so nervous. I am assuming this is the first time a boy has ever introduced you to anyone."

Precious just nodded.

Thoko: "Precious, come on. Don't be so stiff. I know you youngsters. Niyaphuza (You drink)."

Precious: "No offence, Ma, but I thought church women didn't drink."

Thoko: "Your mom used to drink, didn't she?"

Precious nodded shyly.

Thoko: "Church women are also human, my baby. Even pastors. Khululeka (relax) I won't kill you. I just want to get to know you."

Precious nodded and accepted the glass of wine from Thoko. She took a few sips to ease her nerves.

Thoko: "I'm not here to interrogate you or tell you to stay away from Meshack, because I know you won't do it. I mean, no one can resist him. He got that charm from his lousy father, I consider it a curse if anything."

Precious noted from his mother's tone that his father wasn't a very likeable man.

Thoko: “Anyway, my job is to be honest with you. You see, Meshack is a man and I know you’re young, but I am worried that he might hurt you. You’re too innocent

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too pure for him. Believe me, he has had a few girlfriends as young as you, but usual he just hurts them. There are no surprises there. He is different with you, though, but it always starts like this. I just don’t want you to get hurt.”

Precious seemed a bit alarmed by Mam’Thoko’s speech, but for some reason she didn’t think of any possibility of leaving Mish.

Precious: “I hear you, Ma.”

Thoko: “I can see it in your eyes that you won’t leave him – not anytime soon anyway. I know you’re a virgin.”

Precious immediately turned pink and looked down.

Thoko: “Relax, he didn’t tell me anything. I know a virgin when I see one. Mish might have fallen for you because of that,

amongst other qualities. I just need you to know that Mish has a dark side, just like everyone else and a lot of girls left him because they couldn't handle that. Something tells me that you'll be able to handle that, but it won't be easy, my baby. You need to be firm with him and tell him when he is wrong. Do not accept any bullshit from him because once you do, you'll be his puppet. Men are like that. Once they notice just how much you love them and are willing to do for them, you just become their little toy. I don't want to see you become like that. I am sure your mother also wouldn't want that."

Precious saw that Thoko's words came from a place of love.

Precious: "I hear you, Ma."

Thoko: "I'm glad. I can see your eyes are pretty puffy. Did he make you cry on your first date? Because if he did I swear I am going to give him a piece of my mind."

Precious was really chuffed at the fact that Thoko was so fearless and the respect Mish had for her was amazing. She

was quite short, but had a beautiful busty figure. She had small boobs, but big buttocks and beautiful curves. She didn't even look like she even had any children.

Precious: (chuckling) "No, ma. He didn't make me cry. Someone stole money from me. Money that was left to me by my mother."

Thoko: (firmly) "Could that someone be Bridget?"

Precious nodded.

Thoko: "Hmm, don't you worry. If there is anything my son is good at is taking care of those he loves, and I can tell, from what he always says about you – he loves you. He loves you very much, too much if you ask me, but he loves you. Don't worry yourself about Bridget. He will find her."

That brought some ease to Precious.

Precious: “Thank you, Ma. I really appreciate it. I just don’t know what I am going to do with these children. I’m only 18.”

Thoko: “Don’t you worry. I’ll gladly help you with them. Just be careful of that Gabby. I don’t know what kind of mother brought her into this world, and it is not as if Bridget did a great job with them either. They have interesting mannerisms.”

Precious: (chuckling) “That is true.”

She was really happy to find a second mom in Thoko and after a few sips, she was rather relaxed.

Thoko: “Any questions?”

Precious: “Well, I just would like to know, what happened to his father?”

Thoko: “He will tell you when he is ready. And once he does, you will also be glad that he is dead. He has never told any girl that story. It must probably be why he hates himself so

much. Don't be too surprised if you find him awake in the middle of the night staring at the mirror. He's not a Satanist or anything, he just has a hard time dealing with his demons."

Precious knew that Mish was a piece of work, but little did she know how big of a piece. Mish walked in and found them laughing together.

Mish: "Oh, good. I thought you would have made her cry by now."

Thoko: (clicking tongue) "Unganginyeli wena (Don't fuck with me). She is special, one of a kind. Not like those useless girls you used to try and introduce me to."

Mish: (chuckling) "Have faith, Ma. I told you that this is my future wife."

Thoko: "Ja, ja."

Mish: "Shall we go?"

Precious: "Oh, yes. Let me go get the kids."

Thoko: "No need. This house is empty anyways. I am glad I have a few children to boss around and get in line for a while. Enjoy the rest of your night, I'll watch them. No funny business, Meshack."

Mish: "Hawu (Goodness) Ma."

Precious: (blushing) "It was great meeting you, Mam'Thoko."

Thoko: "Likewise, beautiful. Don't be a stranger. My door is open anytime. If he messes around, give him a slap for me."

Precious laughed while Mish chuckled.

Mish: "Bye, Ma."

They walked out and Precious looked a bit relieved.

Mish: “You seem a lot more relaxed now.”

Precious: “I am relieved. I thought she was going to give me a lecture about you or tell me your deepest secrets.”

Mish: “Come on. What did she say to you?”

Precious: “Nothing much. She just said I shouldn’t be surprised if I see you staring at the mirror in the early hours of the morning and that you’d tell me when you’re ready about what happened to your father.”

Mish tensed up a little bit once Precious said that.

Mish: “She’s right. I’ll tell you – one day. Come.”

He opened the door and they drove off. Precious was surprised to see that they drove past her house.

Precious: “Re ya kae (Where are we going)? I mean, you just drove past my house.”

Mish: “I was hoping we’d go to my place, well, that’s if it is okay with you.”

Precious had never really spent a night or even a day at a boy’s house. She didn’t even know if he wanted to do it with her that time.

Precious: “Uhm, I didn’t even switch on the lights.”

Mish: “Relax, my guy has it covered. No one will try anything at your house. Relax, baby. I just want to spend time with you. If you’re not comfortable with it, we can turn around and I can take you back.”

Precious: “No, it’s okay. We can go.”

Mish smiled and held her hand. He drove to his own house in Sunvalley, one of Mamelodi's quiet suburbs if I could call it that. She was amazed to see just how beautiful it was. Mish had great taste and class in pretty much everything. Just like his mother's house, he entered a code and the gate opened. He parked his car next to two more of his. She was amazed and intrigued, it made her even more curious to find out what exactly he did to get this much money and success. Nonetheless, no one is an open book. One person can change you and turn you into something you didn't think you could ever be. Some change us for the better, while some just make us tougher. Precious was soon to grow up a bit faster.

“Love is hard to find, hard to keep and hard to forget.” – Alysha Speer

A few months later...

Precious had settled in really well at University. Yes, Meshack kept his promise and paid for her registration, including her whole first year fees upfront. Everyone knew about them and every girl had envied her. They all wanted to be her, while guys wanted to be him. She had fallen for Mish in a way she never thought she could. Bridget was still gone, while Hosea was still AWOL. It was a bit tough for Precious to adjust, but with Thoko there and having taken full responsibility for the children, everything was just fine. She took the kids whenever she could, but Thoko and Mish ensured she had enough time to study. She had decided to study law at the University of Pretoria, since it was one of the best Universities in the country and plus it was not that far from home. Mish refused for her to stay at res as he didn't want to “lose” her to one of the varsity boys. She was still a virgin, though, and three months into the relationship, she was starting to consider giving it up. Deborah was studying Chartered Accounting also at UP, while Rachel was studying IT,

also at Tuks. Meanwhile, Leah passed with a mere H, so she had to upgrade her course. She made sure to leave everything and everyone behind and went to UJ, leaving the rest of the gang at UP, which they were more than happy with. Precious was done with her classes for the day, so she decided to go visit Debbie at res, where Rachel also was.

Debbie: "So, what's it like being the IT-girl?"

Precious: (rolling eyes) "Bathong (Goodness), Debs. I am not the IT-girl."

Rachel: "How do you still manage to be so humble after everything? I mean you have your own driver, Mish bought you an Iphone and you're pretty much the only girl on campus who is forever draped in Gucci, Versace and Prada. Come on, P. Give us tips."

Precious: "There is nothing to tell, honestly."

Debbie: "Wait a minute. Are you meaning to tell us that you and Mish really haven't done it?"

Precious: "Bathong (Goodness), Debbie. O makatsa keng (Why are you so surprised)? It's not like you and Charlie have ever had sex."

Debbie: (looking down) "Well, actually..."

Rache: (shocked) "Heh (Huh)?"

Precious: (surprised) "No way! When?"

Debbie: "Well, a few weeks ago. I was going to tell you guys, but we were just so busy."

Precious: (chuckling) "What happened to saving yourself till marriage?"

Debbie: "That shit is hard, honestly. The more freedom we had and more time we got to spend with each other, one thing led to another and it just happened."

Rachel: "Yoh (Wow), how was it?"

Debbie: "Painful as fuck at first, I won't lie. No matter how gentle Charlie was it was just hectic, but after a few times it was really nice."

Rachel: "Eh, so wena Presh, when are you giving Mish? I'm sure he's dying of blue balls."

Precious: (laughing) "Hayi man. I don't know, I've kind of been thinking about it lately."

Debbie: "Only if you're sure then do it. Don't do it for anyone else."

Precious: "He hasn't pressured me into doing anything."

Debbie: "There you have it."

Precious was really thinking about it, little did she know that Mish was not so clean behind her back. Her phone rang and it was Ronza.

Precious: "I have to go, guys. My ride is here."

Debbie: "Alright. We should meet up for drinks tomorrow. And maybe you could sleep over or something."

Precious: "Sure thing. Bye."

She left and found Ronza waiting for her outside. He was not really allowed to initiate any conversation with her or anything like that

so most of the car rides were quiet and she was on her phone most of the time. She noticed he was taking a turn into Mish's neighbourhood.

Precious: “Ronza, why are you taking me to Mish?”

Ronza: “Bozza’s (Boss’s) orders.”

She thought nothing thereof and assumed that Mish wanted to spend time with her or something. She got off and greeted Ronza goodbye. She had a key and the passcode to his house, something he had never done before with any of his previous girlfriends. She walked in and noticed food and candles on the table, but nothing was eaten. Then she noticed something disturbing; there was clothes all over the floor, all the way to his bedroom. A pair of his jeans, his shirt and a pair of underwear that looked like a female’s. Her heart started pounding.

Precious: (nervously) “Mish!”

She heard some scuffling in his bedroom.

Mish: “Oh, Shit.”

Voice: "What's wrong, Baby?"

Mish: "Voetsek (Piss off), Rose! I'm not your baby."

Precious recognized that voice and that name. She opened the door impulsively and there it was – her worst nightmare. Mish was in his briefs, while Rose was naked, not even hiding her body.

Precious: (teary) "What the fuck, Mish?"

Mish: (worried) "Sthandwa sami (My love), it is really not what it looks like."

Precious: (angered) "Don't patronize me, Mish. What the fuck does it look like?"

Rose: "Ai, Miss Perfect ena ka di big words (Miss Perfect and her big words)."

Mish: “Shut the fuck up, Rose.”

Precious cried and stormed out. Mish had no choice, but to run after her.

Mish: “Precious, wait! Baby, wait please – “

Precious: (crying) “Don’t you touch me, Mish! I knew you were a liar. You’re all the same. Stay the fuck away from me. I never want to see you ever again!”

Precious stormed out of the gate, leaving Mish hanging in his underwear. He headed back into the house to make a call and found Rose still naked on the bed.

Mis: “Ronza. It’s me. Bona (Look), ke flopile (I messed up) big time. Ja, she just walked out, but can’t be far. Make sure she gets home for me. Take her straight home. I’ll be there soon. Sharp.”

He hung up and Rose just couldn't wait.

Rose: "Really? You don't need her, Mish, you need me. I can make you feel good."

Mish got so angry and did the unthinkable. He slapped Rose so hard she fell off the bed.

Mish: "Don't you ever fucking touch me ever again! I had a moment of weakness and you took advantage of that. You can never be her, Rose – never. You seduced me and you are going to fix this."

Rose: "But you're the one who brought me here."

Mish: "Did I force you?"

Rose: (looking down) "No, but I can go to the cops and tell them that you did."

Mish got up and grabbed her by the throat.

Mish: “Repeat that again – I dare you.”

Rose kept quiet.

Mish: “You think you’re clever wena, neh (hey)? This is what you’re going to do. You’re going to tell Precious that you seduced me and that nothing happened between us.”

Rose: “But I’d be lying.”

Mish: “It wouldn’t be the first time, now would it? I’ll give you R50 000 just so that you tell her and after that I never want to see you again.”

Rose: “Fine, I just don’t get why all this trouble for her? I mean what’s so special about her?”

Mish: “She is my future wife, someone I love. She is smart and has everything a man could ever want in a woman. That is something you wouldn’t know about, would you, now Rose? Akere o nyoba ke bo bohle ba (You get fucked by everyone).”

Rose: (teary) “How could you do this to me, Mish?”

Mish: “I never said I loved you, so akitsi o makatsa keng (so I don’t know why you’re so surprised).”

Rose: “You’ll pay for this.”

Mish: “Sure. Get up, you have a job to do.”

Rose was about to get dressed, but Mish stopped her.

Mish: “Sorry sesi (sis), o nagana gore o etsang (what do you think you’re doing)?”

Rose: “I’m getting dressed.”

Mish: “Skang nyella (Don’t fuck with me), Rose. Hlapa pele (take a shower first). You know the drill.”

Rose walked to the bathroom humiliated, while Mish tried to call Precious numerously.

“Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift of God, which is why we call it the present.” – Bill Keane

Precious was a real mess. She was crying non stop while walking in the street. Within five minutes after she witnessed what she witnessed, Ronza appeared as instructed by the boss. He hooted for her and she looked at him.

Ronza: “Get in.”

Precious ignored him and walked on.

Ronza: “Bona (Look), Boss will never forgive me if you don’t get it. So, you can do so willingly, or I can drag you in here. Your choice.”

Precious still ignored him.

Ronza: “Bona gore o red bjang (Look how red you are). A yellow bone like you can’t be walking around in the sun like this. Get in. Please.”

That was the longest conversation they have ever had. Precious swallowed her pride and got in the front, which was really unusual as Mish always instructs Ronza to make sure she gets in the back. That way, should anyone try something, she would somehow be covered by being able to get down at the back seat unlike the front. Yep, that was his way of ensuring she would be able to dodge bullets should shit hit the fan. She was crying and then Ronza started giving her a lecture.

Ronza: “You know, you’re very special to Bozza (Boss).”

Precious: “Did he also tell you to tell me that?”

Ronza: “No, I can think for myself, you know. Anyway, what I meant was that he really loves you. I have never seen Bozza so in love, it actually scares him. I mean, sure, he has his faults, but he genuinely loves you.”

Precious: (sniffing) “Then why did he cheat on me?”

Ronza: “Were they both naked? I mean did you actually catch them in the act?”

Precious kept quiet as she was starting to doubt her own mind.

Ronza: “Don’t get me wrong, what he did was really bad, but I mean what did you expect when you don’t give him any pussy? No offence, but a man needs to have some sex every now and then.”

Precious: “But I wasn’t ready.”

Ronza: “He got that, hence he rather decided to blow off some steam with that bitch Rose.”

Precious: “She is not a bitch if he slept with her.”

Ronza: (chuckling) “You have so much to learn, Ndhlovukazi (Queen). Men sometimes fuck just for the sake of fucking. They don’t really love those bitches at times. It’s nothing hectic. He loves you, that much I do know.”

Precious just kept quiet the whole ride home. She asked Ronza to drop her off at Mish’s mother’s house.

Ronza: (shaking head) “Bozza gave me strict instructions to drop you off at your house.”

Precious: “Please, Ronza. I just need to get my mind off things.”

Ronza: “Okay, but don’t involve your Mamazala (Mother-in-law) in your affairs. She won’t like what Bozza did.”

Precious: “Ofcourse. Thank you.”

She thanked him and got off. She then remembered she didn’t have the access code to his mother’s house, but she had her number. She was really nice to Precious, she would call every

now and then and text her on whatsapp, send her some motivational quotes and Bible verses. What she liked about Precious was that she was God-fearing, something Mish had never gone for before. I guess in some type of way, she thought that Precious would be his saviour.

Precious: “Hi, Ma. Ngingaphandle (I’m outside).”

Thoko: “Oh, I keep forgetting to give you the code. Yazi, uMish (You know, Mish) can be stupid at times. Come in.”

She walked in and tried to hide her tears. As soon as Mam’Thoko opened the door, the tears started flowing.

Thoko: “Oh, my baby. Ngena (Come in).”

She hugged Precious for a while and she just cried her lungs out until she felt a bit better. She didn’t even realize how much she was sobbing until she saw how red Thoko’s eyes were.

Thoko: “Sit. I’ll get you some wine.”

Funny enough, Mam'Thoko never offered her tea or coffee. Wine was her remedy away from church. She poured her a nice glass of red wine, Precious gulped it down and Thoko knew that Meshack was the cause.

Thoko: "Spit it out."

Precious: "I don't even know where to start, Ma. I feel so much pain. Pain I never thought I could ever feel before."

Thoko: "Hmm, you don't have to say it, but I know he cheated on you. My question is, do you still love him?"

Precious nodded in shame.

Thoko: "Of course you still do. All I can tell you is once it starts, it just gets worse. You can stay, no one can tell you to leave him. He is my son, I love him to bits, but he can be one hell of an asshole."

She was about to spill the beans when Mish walked in frantically, leaving Thoko dissatisfied even though she had no idea what happened.

Mish: (scratching head) “Sawubona (Hello)

Ma. Ngicela ukukhuluma no Precious (May I please speak to Precious)?”

Thoko: “Hmm, ni ya mangaza nina (you never cease to amaze me). Don’t be long. This is my house after all.”

She left the two of them, while Precious looked down in shame for even agreeing to let him talk to her.

Mish: (worried) “Baby wami (My baby).”

Precious remained silent and refused to let him touch her.

Mish: (teary) “Presh, please, I didn’t do anything with her, I swear. She... she seduced me. I didn’t even want her, but next

thing I knew, she came to my house and one thing led to another, but I swear to you, I didn't sleep with her."

Precious: "You obviously opened to her, I mean how else did she get in."

Mish realized Precious was not stupid, but the fact that she was responding meant she was willing to give him a chance.

Mish: "She called me saying she needs money for funding. I am not a bad man, Presh. I do my bit in the community. She can tell you herself, if you just give me a chance, please."

Precious kept quiet for a while, but she thought about it long and hard.

Precious: "Okay."

Mish smiled and gave her a hug. She didn't receive it as she always used to, but that was enough for him. They walked out

of the kitchen, and found Mam'Thoko in the lounge, watching tv.

Mish: "Ma, siyabuya (we'll be back)."

Thoko: (unimpressed) "Okay."

Mish walked out with the reluctant Precious, he opened the car door for her as usual and they drove off to the nearby park, where Rose was sitting on one of the benches, anxiously. Mish confidently walked out with Precious' hand in his knowing very well he was lying to her.

Mish: "Sho (Sure), Rose."

Rose: (nervous) "Hi. Hi Precious."

Precious didn't respond.

Rose: “Look, I know you don’t have any reason to believe me, especially after everything I did to you, but this time, I am telling the truth. I didn’t mean to hurt you. I went to Mish’s house and tried to seduce him. I just thought that it was my last chance to get with him. I felt you were not good enough for him. Please, forgive me. I know I don’t deserve anything of yours, but I didn’t want to ruin your relationship.”

Precious looked deep into Rose’s eyes. Something told her that she wasn’t being genuine enough, but somehow, she forced her mind into believing her.

Precious: “Did you sleep with him?”

Rose: “No. I swear to you, Precious. I feel so bad. You have to believe me.”

Precious: “I appreciate your honesty.”

Mish was so happy and his heart felt at ease as soon as Precious said that. Rose left them with a pained heart, but Mish

had got what he wanted. He couldn't risk losing his Precious. He did what he had wanted to do initially, hence he had planned the candle lit dinner at midday. Mish knelt down on one knee right in the park, with his G-star raw jeans in the middle of wet soil.

Precious: (shocked) "Mish, wetsang (what are you doing)?"

Mish took out a beautiful, white gold 10 carat diamond ring.

Mish: "From the moment I saw you, I knew that you were the one for me. I knew that I would marry you. I am so intrigued by your beauty, inside and outside, I love your infectious laugh, your immense intelligence, and your strong will. I love you so much, Precious. I have never loved anyone the way I love you. I want to give you so much, and I worry that one day I won't be enough for you. All my life, I have waited for someone like you. Ndhlovukazi (Queen), I know that what you witnessed today tore you apart so much, that you most probably won't forget it. But, you should know by now that I always keep my promises. That day I saw you weeping after your mother's death, I promised you ukuthi ngizokushada (that I'd marry you). Please, do me the honours and make the happiest man in the world. Will you marry me?"

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“The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide you’re not going to stay where you are.” – J.P. Morgan

A few weeks later....

The day had finally arrived – the biggest wedding day to ever be witnessed in Mamelodi. Mish had gone all out, leaving everyone in shock – even his right hand man Ronza. He really couldn’t believe that Mish was actually spending so much money on his wedding with Precious. He had told her to do anything she wanted and he would just approve anything – to top it all off it was Precious’s 19th birthday. Her very own mother got married at the age of 19 herself; talk about history repeating itself. Lehumo had left her child behind with a million questions, but nonetheless Gatsha had forgiven her a long time ago.

They left the earth together in spirit and joined the ancestors. The only problem was that the Ncube ancestors were angry at Lehumo for leaving her husband without any answers and even more angry at her for leaving Precious on earth living a whole lie with a name and surname that was not hers. In that, they

hadn't accepted her joining the Ncube ancestors and in that, Gatsha's spirit had also revolted. That made things so hard for Precious as it would take extra long for her to find her way back home. Bongi herself had slowly lost the full ability of her powers because she refused to be honest with Gatsh about the whereabouts of Lehumo and their daughter. When spirit speaks and you don't listen – they can punish you to a certain degree, but when spirit speaks and you refuse to listen – that is a different story. Slowly but surely you will lose everything – and eventually, your life. Bongi had come to Mamelodi being Precious's only living relative, since well Hosea was AWOL.

She was also present in the lobola negotiations and Thoko had asked their pastor to play the male role for Precious in the negotiations since she was basically an orphan. Thoko on the other hand, had her two brothers and one sister present, much to her annoyance. Meshack was also not happy about their presence either, but he remained calm for Precious's sake. The morning of the wedding they had to start with introducing Precious to the Ndhlovu ancestors, that way they could celebrate all day since they had planned a really big feast. Thoko and her siblings, as well as Bongi had come together to ensure that it would be a memorable day for both Precious and Meshack. Precious was in one of the bedrooms at Thoko's

house, while everyone else was busy outside. She was dressed in Zulu traditional attire, wrapped in a blanket and head wrap.

Bongi: (knocking) “Hi, baby. May I come in?”

Precious: (nervously) “Yes, Gogo (granny).”

She walked in and was so stunned. It was as if she was looking at Lehumo.

Bongi: (smiling) “You look just like your mother.”

She couldn’t tell her that she looked like her father for obvious reasons.

Precious: “I feel very nervous, I won’t lie.”

Bongi: “You know, your mother also got married at age 19. I guess you two have great luck.”

Precious: "Gogo (Granny), what was my father like."

Bongi: (teary) "He was a wonderful man; very stern and sweet and he loved your mother above everyone else. God came first in His life and he chose to win every battle with your mother alongside him. It wasn't easy having you, but he stuck around. You know, it took them eleven years to conceive you."

Precious was really humbled to hear about her father although she had never met him.

Precious: "How come Mama never had any picture of him?"

Bongi: "Because all their pictures burnt down in the house she lived in with him. Sad, isn't it?"

Precious: (sigh) "It is. I was hoping he would be here to walk me down the aisle, just like every girl dreams, but such is life."

Bongi: "Don't be so sour on your wedding day, baby. It's bad luck, besides, I'll be there to walk you down. Now, come, the Ndhlovu's are waiting on you."

Precious: "Ai, those ones. I bet Meshack's aunt really despises me. If she could choose a wife for him she obviously would."

Bongi: (chuckling) "Let her be. Ignore her and don't ever give her any satisfaction of making you feel sad."

Precious: "That's easy for you to say, Gogo (Granny). Have you ever heard the comments she makes about me? She doesn't even wait for me to leave the room."

Bongi: "You have so much to learn. Khululeka (Relax), sisi. Wait for your wedding day to be over and then you will officially be Mrs. Ndhlovu. Then you can give her a piece of your mind, but for now, let everyone think that she's the one with the problem. Don't give them reason to doubt Meshack's choice."

Bongi always knew how to say the right things.

Precious: (smiling) “Thank you, Gogo (Granny).”

They walked out and found Thoko in the lounge alongside her siblings. The two brothers really had no problem with Meshack getting married. They would have done anything for a nice bottle of whiskey, but as for Thoko’s sister, Thandi, she had a problem – with everyone and everything.

Thoko: (ululating) “Oh, my baby. You are so beautiful. Come, let’s not keep the ancestors waiting. We have so much to do today.”

Thandi: (clicking tongue) “I don’t see anything special about her. Why all the fuss? I mean we all know that Meshack will leave her very soon. He never sticks to any woman. I am sure this one used muthi (black magic) on him.”

Bongi clenched her jaw and held Precious’s hand firmer as she could sense her anger. Thoko was very unimpressed with Thandi.

Thoko: (annoyed) “Thandi, firstly you were not even invited to this wedding and secondly what’s the fucking point of you being here if you’re going to be negative throughout?!”

Thandi: (shocked) Excuse me?”

Thoko: “Excuse you, vele (of course). Unganginyeli (Don’t piss me off), Thandi. This is my son’s wedding and I will not have you ruin this for Precious. It’s no wonder your daughters aren’t married – you’re such a bitch even at your age!”

Everyone kept quiet because Thoko was not one to raise her voice.

Thandi: (shocked) “Kodwa (But) Thoko – “

Thoko: (interrupting) “Kodwa Thoko yamasimba (Fuck that)! Try your bullshit again and I swear, I will have you thrown out of here in a heartbeat – try me!”

Everyone kept quiet and Thandi looked down in shame.

Thandi: "I apologize, my sister."

Thoko: (clicking tongue) Bongi, please bring Precious outside.
Angina isikhati sa bathakathi (I don't have time for witches)."

She gave Thandi a stern look and walked out.

Thoko's elder brother: "Awumameli wena (you don't listen)."

Thoko's younger brother: "You'd better hope and pray
Meshack does not find out about this."

They walked out leaving Thandi regretting her actions. They went to the back of the house where they did their usual ancestral clenses. They had traditional beer and some snuif. They knelt down and Thoko started speaking first as Meshack's mother. Meshack was not there which was a bit unusual, but he asked to do it later as he didn't want to see his wife before the wedding.

Thoko: (appeasing the ancestors) “Ba ka Ndhlovu (The Ndhlovu’s), I come before you as one of you. You know I have been praying and asking you to give us a great day today all week. I bring to you my new daughter-in-law and umfazi ka Meshack (and Meshack’s wife). Igama lakhe ngu Precious Vilakazi (Her name is Precious Vilakazi). You have always been there for your child, and I ask that you be there to protect his new wife as well. Nginilethele isnuif (I have brought you snuif), no mnqombothi (and traditional beer), ngicela ni hambe nabo (Please go with them) everywhere they go. Sicela isuku elimnandi namhlanje (We ask for a great day today). Ngiyabonga b aka Ndhlovu (We thank you).”

While she spilled the traditional beer onto the snuif, something weird happened. Usually the beer is supposed to travel down as if it was spilling in different directions on the ground to show that the ancestors were approving of whatever the people were asking for, but in this case it was not moving – it remained in one position and seeped into the ground immediately. Thoko knew that it was not a good sign, but as for Precious, she was just happy that things were looking up for her and that she found a new family. Bongzi herself knew what it meant and so did Meshack’s uncles and rude aunt Thandi.

Thandi: (clapping hands) “Jan eh.”

Thoko gave her one stern look and she kept quiet immediately.

Thoko didn't want to ruin her son's day especially after all the money he had spent, so she decided not to breathe a word on it to Precious.

Thoko: (smiling) “Precious, mntwana wami (my child). Go get dressed. Your friends must be dying to get into their dresses.”

Precious smiled and hugged Thoko.

Precious: (smiling) “Thanks, Ma. I really appreciate it.”

As soon as she left, Thandi couldn't wait to burst. She didn't even try to behave for fifteen minutes.

Thandi: (shouting) “Ngazile (I knew it)! That child is probably a bastard child or something! Why else would the ancestors not agree to this union?! Why are you forcing this wedding to continue, Thoko?! Is it not bad enough that your son is a thief just like his father?! Oh, wait, I forgot – he killed his own father!”

Thoko was so livid – she had been biting her tongue all week, but at that point, she had had it. She charged at Thandi and grabbed her throat using both hands. She didn’t even hesitate and she made sure that her grip was tight, leaving her brothers and the rest of the family members in severe shock – except for Bonggi, who was just as furious.

Thoko: (enraged) “Who the fuck do you think you are, Thandi?! How dare you judge me when you of all people know what I have been through? I confided in you just so that you could throw it back in my face?! Was Meshack a gangster murderer to you when he paid your house bond when your stupid husband left you for another man?! Was he a killer when he paid your children’s school fees instead of his own?! Heh (huh)?! Fucking answer me!”

Thoko's elder brother: (scared) "Sisi (Sister), I think you should let go of her so she can answer."

Thoko regained her correct mental state of mind when she realized Thandi was struggling to breathe and let go of her. Thandi found herself gasping for air and coughing as she fell onto the floor. Thoko looked at her with rage-filled eyes.

Thoko: "You and your daughters will not be joining us in the VIP section – not even in church. You will touch nothing and do nothing unless you want another killer as your family member.

Thoko's elder brother: "Kodwa sisi (But sister) – "

Thoko: "You can join her if you want to defend her. Otherwise

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I have a wedding to get ready for."

Bongi and Thoko left the three standing there amongst the rest who were cooking and went to her bedroom. She found herself overcome with tears as she started shaking.

Bongi took a glass from her side table and poured her a glass of whiskey.

Bongi: "Breathe and drink up."

Thoko gulped that glass like it was water.

Thoko: "How dare she, Bongi?! How fucking dare she?! After everything I have been through. After everything Meshack has done for her and her two ungrateful brats."

Bongi: "Leave her. She is just a small fish in a big pond. We have bigger issues to worry about."

Thoko: "I know you saw it too. This is just fucked up."

Bongi: "Sadly, I can't fix any of it."

Thoko: "Try something."

Bongi: "I wish I could. The ancestors have turned their backs on me. I can only see what they allow me to see. They won't even give me solutions anymore. Both her parents are dead and her mother never told her the truth about her real family. As we speak, she has to find her own way. Her life is in danger and so is mine. We cannot set foot there until the ancestors feel it is time."

Thoko: "I'm worried about Precious, Bongi. I know she loves Mish, but she does not know him."

Bongi: "Yes, but she is the only one who can tame the beast in him. There is nothing we can do."

Thoko: "I don't want her to end up like me."

Bongi: "She won't."

Sadly, Thoko was right. Precious was going to end up in the exact situation as her – except she would turn out to be more ruthless than Meshack. People do crazy things in desperate times. As for Thandi, even the Bible warns us about the power of the tongue. Proverbs 12:18 – “There is one whose harsh words are like swords thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” Proverbs 18:21 tells us that “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.”

Thoko decided to let it all go and focus on her son, but Thandi knew that Thoko didn't like repeating herself. If she found her or her daughters doing anything at the wedding or defying her orders, she was for sure going to kill her. Meanwhile Precious was so happy as she had just gotten into her beautiful custom made wedding dress. Yes, her wedding gown was a princess wedding gown with a rouched – beaded boob tube top, designed by the one and only Gert-Johan Coetzee. Meshack wanted to go all out, but little did everyone know that he overdid it. She only had Rachel and Deborah as her bridesmaids, as Leah said that she was too busy to even attend the wedding – which was more than fine for them as Leah could be a bit of a party ruiner. Nonetheless, they were all happy for her.

Deborah: “How are you feeling, chomi (friend)?”

Precious: "I'm so nervous, guys. More importantly, I wish my mom was here, but somehow I feel her presence here."

Deborah: "That's because she is here with you – she has always been with you."

Rachel: "You look so beautiful, Presh. Now, I can't wait to get married."

Deborah: "I hope Charlie marries me soon or else he will have to pay."

They all laughed and made a toast.

Rachel: "To new beginnings."

Deborah: "Without Leah, I hope."

Rachel: (laughing) “You ain’t got to say that twice.”

Deborah: “Seriously, though, Presh. We wish you and Mish nothing but the best.”

Rachel: “And many babies.”

Precious: (teary) “Cheers.”

Rachel: “Ah haowa (Oh, no). You can’t cry now, you have to save those tears for Mish’s vows.”

Precious wondered what on earth Mish would say in his vows. She hated crowds and she had no idea what she was going to say, but she knew that she would have to speak right from the heart. Meanwhile Mish was same old Mish. His demons were back to haunt him and as foreseen by his mother, he spent the night before his wedding which was also his bachelor party having sex with one of the strippers. Of course, he felt guilty as fuck, but he couldn’t let that stop him from marrying the love of his life. He had started a whirlwind of problems as the girl

now thinks that Meshack is in love with her – despite him telling her that it was a one time thing. He was staring at himself in his gorgeous custom made suit in front of the mirror with Ronza and Bigs in the room with him, having some expensive whiskey.

Bigs: (chuckling) “Keng na (What is it)? Getting cold feet, I see.”

Ronza knew Meshack in and out and he didn’t comment on stupid comments made by Bigs.

Mish: (clicking tongue) “Mxm.”

Bigs: “I remember my wedding day. I was scared shitless.”

Ronza: “That’s only because you married one of the craziest chicks in Mams. She can operate a knife better than any guy I know.”

Bigs: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, ah no man, Ronza. Why do you have to say such about my wife?”

Ronza: “Or ke maka (Is it lies)?”

Bigs: “Ah, wa bona wena (You see now).”

Mish: “Bigs, go check if the car is ready. I think we should head on out before we’re late.”

Bigs: “For sure, Bozza (Boss). No need to spell it out for me. I know you want a private moment with your best man. Sure thing.”

Bigs walked out leaving Ronza and Mish alone.

Ronza: (shaking head) “That guy doesn’t learn when to shut up.”

Mish: (nervously) “I fucked up, Ronza.”

Ronza: (deep sigh) “Nna Bozza akitsi ke reng (I honestly don’t know what to say this time, Boss). I mean I warned you – even your mom warned you to leave before things got too serious.”

Mish: “I love her, dude.”

Ronza: “My father used to say that love is just not enough at times. Respect, faithfulness comes above all else. If you can’t respect yourself how will you respect her?”

Mish: “The nightmares are coming back. I can’t sleep – no matter how much I drink or how many sleeping pills I try.”

Ronza: “Come clean. I pray sometimes. It heals my soul.”

Mish: (sigh) “What am I going to do now? Crystal thinks we are in love and she even took my number. She has been calling me non stop.”

Ronza: “I can’t tell you what to do – you’re a big boy, Mish. Do the right thing. Come, you can’t keep the bride waiting. You have a wedding to get to.”

He hugged him and Mish was really genuinely thankful for having Ronza by his side.

Mish: “I really appreciate having you here, Ronza.”

Ronza: “Shit, Mish. Don’t go soft on me now.”

They both laughed as they walked out. At the church, Thoko arrived with Bonggi as the VIPs were seated in the church. The rest of the people were only allowed to witness the wedding back at the reception. She spotted Rose between one of the crowds and got annoyed instantly.

Thoko: “Rose, ubekwa yini la (what do you want here)?”

Rose: (smiling) “Hi, Ma.”

Thoko: "I asked you a question."

Rose: "I just came to the wedding just like everybody else."

Thoko: "You're not even on the list. One mistake and I'll personally deal with you. Got it?"

Rose nodded co-operatively as she knew Mam'Thoko a lot more than everyone else. She was not one to mess with. Bongsi and Thoko went to sit in the front as family of the groom and bride, but for some odd reason Thoko was really nervous.

Bongsi: "You are going to pop a vein if you don't relax."

Thoko: "Sorry, I just can't shake off this weird feeling I have."

As she turned her head, she saw him right at the back walking in dressed in a fancy suit. She gulped nervously as she saw him

walk right towards her. It was as if she was looking at the spitting image of her dead husband.

Raymond: (smiling) “Hi, mommy dearest. You didn’t even have the courtesy to invite me to my own brother’s wedding. How cruel of you.”

Thoko: (nervous) “Viper. Ufunani la (what do you want here)?”

Raymond: (chuckling) “I see you still have a good memory. Relax, I came to see my little brother getting married. Is that so hard to believe? Besides, I won’t want to ruin the best wedding to ever happen in Mams.”

Thoko: “You’d better not try anything.”

Raymond: “I won’t even try, I know you leave a string of dead men wherever you go.”

He winked at her and went to sit down at the back. Within minutes, Mish walked in with his groomsmen, leaving Rose with

a tint of jealousy and the rest of the crowd buzzing in awe. Thoko was even more nervous than before, she tried standing up to warn Mish of the uninvited guest, but Bongi pulled her down.

Bongi: "Don't. Now is not the time. Let me go get Precious."

She nodded and walked out. Mish was too happy to notice the uninvited guest at the back of the church. Bongi headed to one of the rooms Precious was getting dressed in.

Deborah: "Oh, thank goodness, Gogo. We thought you weren't coming."

Bongi: (chuckling) "Don't be silly. Oh, my pride and joy. You look like an angel."

Precious: "Thanks, Gogo."

Rachel: "Shall we go?"

Bongi: “Hayi wena (No man). Without praying? Aowa (No).”

They held hands and Bongi started praying.

Bongi: “Father God, we come before you as your children. Thank you so much for blessing us with this wonderful day and the gift of life. We ask that you be there with us to witness this day and have great fun. Please let this union be blessed and not broken, oh, Lord. For you know what is best and we trust in you no matter what. Protect us all against all evil and danger and bless us with nothing but the best. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

Precious: “Thank you, Gogo (granny). I really needed that.”

She smiled as they walked out.

“Things change and friends leave. Life doesn’t stop for anybody.” – Stephen Chbosky

Mish had been waiting for this moment for a long while. He kept his eyes fixed on the entrance as Deborah and Rachel started walking down the aisle serenaded by the song Matrimony by Wale and Usher. Then he saw his beautiful bride; it was broad daylight, but her beauty didn’t do justice to the sun. To him; she outshone the sun; to him she was the most beautiful person and the only person right in there. He noticed no one else – not even Raymond. Precious was saying a silent prayer –there was no walking back as she was hoping that she was making the right choice for herself. She saw Mish who looked so dazzling and handsome, not too bad for a man who always wore skinny jeans and tshirts, she thought to herself. Mam’Bongi handed her over to Mish and whispered in his ear.

Bongi: “You’d better take good care of her, Meshack.”

Mish: “I promise to, Ma.”

He had forgotten about his fuck up the night before. It has been said that people do the most atrocious things out of fear and selfish nature. Had he told her what he did the night before, then maybe, just maybe she could have been spared the heartache and pain and toxicity in the near future.

Meshack: “You look so beautiful, Ma Ndhlovu (Mrs. Ndhlovu).”

Precious just smiled at him. She had secretly been waiting to feel her mother’s presence just to make sure that she was doing the right thing according to her. Just as her eyes were wandering around while the pastor said a prayer, she saw her mother’s spirit right at the entrance of the church, with Gatsha, but to her it was probably her father as she had no idea who he was. She was just happy to see her mother’s spirit – something not a lot of people encounter on this earth. She immediately smiled with a tear rolling down her face. Once the pastor said amen, Mish was just happy to notice her crying and assumed it was tears of joy.

Pastor: “It is time for the vows, Mr. Ndhlovu, you go first.”

Mish: (nervously) “When I first saw you, you were just a young kid and of course my best friend’s niece. You had no idea what I had in mind; I had gone home that very same day and told my mother that I have found my wife. She asked me who it was. When I told her that it was you, she told me I was crazy. I am a man of my word, Precious Vilakazi, with this ring, I promise to love you in every way imaginable, I promise to not only show you the world, but to grant you the world as well. I promise to remain faithful and to respect you with everything in me. You keep me sane; you make me see myself in ways I have never imagined. When I look in your eyes, I know that God exists, for He took his time creating a beauty like you. Your inner beauty radiates and makes everyone jealous. I for one am terrified of messing up for you are the one I love and I am scared that one day you might see me for who I really am. I know I don’t deserve you, but I thank you for giving me the chance to be a husband to you. I love you so much, Ma Ndhlovu (Mrs. Ndhlovu).”

Thoko ululated along with Bongi and the rest of the crowd. Rose was so hurt that Mish could actually say such beautiful words to a woman. He’s never said that to her.

Pastor: “Now, your turn, Ms. Vilakazi.”

Precious: (teary) “Meshack Ndhlovu, whoever said the words “true love comes when you least expect it” was right after all, because indeed I found true love in you. I never imagined myself being with a man like you. You say that you’re afraid I’d leave you one day after realizing who you are, but the truth is, you yourself have no idea how great you are. You give me meaning to life, believe me. You have shown me that I can do anything I want to, you have shown me that you can love and you can appreciate a woman. I know a lot of people don’t think that you deserve me

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but God knew that you do deserve me hence he brought us together. I promise to love and cherish you. I promise to respect you and grow with you. I can’t wait to experience life with you. I love you, Mr. Ndhlovu.”

They once ululated and were in awe, all except for Rose, who was now crying silently.

They exchanged their beautiful and expensive rings, and it was the time that Meshack was waiting for.

Pastor: "I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride, Mr. Ndhlovu."

Meshack smiled as he gave Precious a passionate and long kiss. The crowd ululated, and Thoko was so grateful that the pastor skipped the "please speak now or forever hold your peace" part. That would have ended in disaster for sure. Meshack and Precious led the way out of the church and he once again didn't see Raymond as he walked out before they walked towards him. They got into their limousine and Precious was too elated.

Precious: (smiling) "Mish, thank you for giving me such a beautiful wedding. I never knew you were so romantic."

Mish: (smiling) "Stay tuned for you have yet to see more today."

They arrived at their reception area, which was the Sheraton Hotel in Pretoria CBD. That was a great way to control who went in and who was not invited, but Raymond always had his way. The bridal party walked in dancing to Vusi Nova's

Ndimfunene. They danced all the way to their table, leaving everyone still stunned that Mish could even dance. He was always scary and serious and everyone was afraid of him. Rose was so hurt; every moment felt like a sword was being pushed deeper into her gut. As they sat down, Mish couldn't wait to show his wife that he could be romantic.

Mish: "Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you for coming here and taking your beautiful time to witness our beautiful union. My wife and I are extremely happy to see all of you. With that said, I know people want to make speeches, but we really hate that shit."

The crowd chuckled and laughed.

Mish: "Apologies for my language, anyway I would like to give my wife a special intro to our wedding dance – one she would never forget for centuries to come."

He got off the stage and the band started playing a familiar song. There he was, singing Maroon 5's Memories, leaving everyone in total shock more than anything. Precious had

known Meshack for a few years and dated him for a few months and had no idea that he could sing. That guy wouldn't even sing in the shower. Where on earth was he hiding that voice – she thought to herself. At that point, Rose was in tears, those tears felt like they were digging their way into her face and her whole body felt like it was on fire. She couldn't take it anymore and silently took her bag and walked out. Of course, she was unnoticed as Meshack singing was something they didn't get to see everyday. He carried on singing and pulled her gently to him, serenading her as he allowed her to dance around him. It was a beautiful sight, that left every female even his mother crying.

Mish: "I love you, Mrs. Ndhlovu."

The crowd stood up and clapped in awe.

Precious: "You can sing? What else are you hiding from me?"

Mish: (chuckling) "Give yourself time to get to know me."

Everyone started eating as the band played music, and Raymond decided to make that his grand entrance.

Raymond: (smiling) “Hi, little bro.”

Mish’s smile instantly disappeared and Precious realized it was someone who wasn’t really Mish’s favourite, but oddly they looked alike – very much alike. Raymond was just a bit darker than Meshack.

Mish: “Ufunani la (What are you doing here)?”

Raymond: (chuckling) “Funny question. I came to witness you getting married. I must have lost my invitation in the mail. Anyway, you have a beautiful wife. I see you haven’t lost your charm. What can I say? Like father like son.”

Mish was getting irritated as he pulled Precious behind him.

Mish: “You’re not invited. Leave now before this gets ugly.”

Raymond: “Ah, I see you still have a grudge against me. Call me when you have decided to forgive and forget. I have a proposal for you which you might like. I can make this gangster paradise of yours grow to greater heights, Mish. Give me a call.”

Mish: “Fuck off.”

Raymond: (smiling) “Okay then. Get your temper in check. We wouldn’t want you to repeat what you did to our father, do we?”

Raymond always knew which spots to hit whenever he wanted to aggravate Meshack. Mish was about to charge at him, but Precious gently stopped him.

Precious: “Mish, don’t. He obviously wants you to do that.”

Raymond: “Wise wife. She is a keeper. Later, bro.”

Meshack was left standing there breathing heavily, while Precious was left wondering; what really happened to his father?

“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.” – Mother Theresa

It had been a very great day in Mamelodi. Precious and Meshack’s two day wedding was blissful indeed. After the first day, they all went to Thoko’s house for the after party; well of them except for Meshack and Precious. They stayed behind at the hotel, where Meshack had a very special night planned for the two of them. It was finally time for them to consummate not only their marriage, but their relationship as well. Of course Mish had had sex plenty of times, but he wanted this time to be special for Precious.

Mish: (smiling) “Ma Ndhlovu (Mrs. Ndhlovu), please go up to our room. You’ll find a very nice surprise waiting for you.”

Precious kissed him and nodded as she nervously went up the lift. She took a deep breath before opening the door. She was amazed to find the most beautiful setup before her. the room was filled with beautiful, scented candles; there were rose petals everywhere on the floor; a bottle of champagne had been sinking in an ice bucket with two glasses next to it and

there was a red, lacey pair of lingerie on top of the bed, with a jewellery box and a note next to it. She decided to open the note first. “Ma (Mrs) Ndhlovu, I can’t wait to officially be one with you. A nice warm bath has been prepared for you as I know it has been a long day. I love you, see you soon. Xoxo Mish.”

She smiled to herself as she thought of how thoughtful Mish was throughout the whole weekend. She opened the box and it was a beautiful diamond necklace. It looked really expensive, but Mish really didn’t worry about money while planning the wedding. She really thought that such happened in movies only. She took off her wedding dress and got into the bath tub that was filled with bubbles and scented oils and rose petals of course. There was another bottle of champagne in there, and just as she was about to open it, in walked Mish.

Mish: “Ungathukwi (Don’t be afraid). It’s me.”

Precious: “Oh, I thought you were still at the bar enjoying yourself.”

Mish: (chuckling) "I should be enjoying myself with my wife."

He walked towards the bathroom and Precious had her eyes closed. She nearly dropped dead when she saw him standing before her – naked. She had never seen him naked, really. She had been avoiding all that, but seeing all that in front of her made her rather worried. Will that even fit in? She asked herself mentally.

Precious: (shocked) "Mish..."

Mish: (smiling) "I thought I'd join my wife for a bubble bath."

How could she even say no? I mean they were married. That's what married people do, right?

Precious: (nervous) "Okay."

Mish got into the water and sat behind her. Feeling his penis poke against her bums really made her worried. He could sense how tense she was.

Mish: (softly) “Sthandwa sami (My love), relax. I want you to get used to this. You are mine and I am now yours. Get used to seeing me naked and having these intimate moments. You have no idea how special you are to me, Presh.”

Precious wanted to respond, but Mish was a pro at seducing women. He slowly kissed her neck and kissed her all the way down to her hand. His soft hands started caressing her round, petite breasts from underneath the warm water. While he was kissing and nibbling on her neck and ear, his hands were doing the magic. His right hand slowly travelled to her thighs and he wasted no time. He had been waiting so long for this. He started rubbing his finger on her clit and Precious enjoyed it so much that she spread her legs wider.

Precious: (moaning) “Oh, Mish...”

Mish: (breathing heavily) “Shit, baby. Your pussy feels so warm, so soft.”

He continued rubbing her clit as her breathing got heavier and her moaning got louder, he went faster. Within minutes, she climaxed and he loved it.

Precious: (embarrassed) “Eish, Mish, what just happened?”

Mish: (chuckling) “You just had your first orgasm, baby.”

Precious: “Can that happen without penetration?”

Mish: “A lot can happen without penetration. Come, let’s get out of the water.”

He helped her get out and dried her. They walked to the bed and he lotioned her body. He had never been so sensual and so intimate with a woman before. She loved how attentive and gentle Meshack was with her. She was about to grab the lingerie and put it on, but Mish couldn’t wait that long. He turned her around and started kissing her passionately. He didn’t take too long as he broke the kiss and started sucking on her beautiful breasts, while she was standing.

Precious: (moaning) “Oh, Mish.”

Little did she know how crazy she drove him whenever she called out his name. She sounded like a pro according to him. He went down with trails of kisses on her belly, all the way to her pelvis. That brought up so many butterflies and made her want more. His lips travelled to her pussy and she quickly stopped him.

Mish: “Relax. Trust me, okay?”

Precious nodded even though she felt a bit weird. Leah had showed them a porn movie or two and the things she saw there were shocking. She had no idea so many parts of a person’s body could be licked and sucked on. It seemed a bit unhygienic to her, but she was about to experience her very first oral sex moment. Mish gently pushed her onto the bed and spread her legs immediately. He started gently licking her clit and as soon as he noticed her starting to relax and her hands holding his head, he went in for it. He started licking and sucking on her clit more vigorously. The harder and faster she started

breathing, the more he kept going. As soon as he went to her entrance, she didn't take long before she climaxed.

Precious: (breathing heavily) "Fuck, Mish! O nketsang (What are you doing to me)?"

Mish: (chuckling) "I'm pleasing my wife."

He went up and started kissing her again. This time, her body responded so well, so fast. Precious enjoyed tasting herself for the very first time on a man's lips and tongue. They had been kissing so many times that she had become good at French kissing. Mish positioned himself in between her legs.

Mish: "Are you ready for me, baby?"

Precious: (nodding) "Yes, yes, I'm ready Ndhlovu."

Mish was already hard and so ready for his wife. He had completely forgotten about being inbetween Cassandra's legs the night before. He kissed her more and slowly started putting

in the tip. Precious dug her nails in his back as she could feel the stinging pain.

Precious: (moaning) “Ahh!”

Mish: “It’s going to hurt, baby, please relax. Can you do that?”

She nodded with her eyes closed.

Mish: “Open your eyes and look at me, Sthandwa sami (My love). I want this moment to last you a lifetime.”

She opened her eyes and he slowly went in. She could feel the pain, but it was not that bad. Leah had told her that the very first time would be painful as hell and so did Deborah, but based on the few moments before the actual deed, she knew that sex with Mish was about to be an awesome ride.

Mish: (moaning) “Oh, shit, baby. You feel so tight. I love you, Precious.”

Precious: “I love you too, Mish.”

Within minutes, Meshack collapsed on top of his wife. He had had sex a lot before, but nothing could compare to his moment with his wife. He felt like he had finally become one with someone who loved him unconditionally. With her it was not even about the money, but about real love. It felt as if Precious could see deep within his soul – and that, scared him shitless. They slowly drifted off to sleep as they had their second wedding day the following morning.

Mish found himself dealing his demons once again. A familiar memory rather, appeared in his dreams yet again. It’s a familiar memory that seemed to be haunting him ever since he was 13. No matter how much he tried, it just never went away.

Shadrack: (drunk) “Ja, sfebe ndini (Yes, you whore). Everyone told me about you, in fact, my own mother warned me about you. I know you’re fucking that pastor of yours. Wa mfebela akere (You’re fucking around, aren’t you), Thoko?!”

Thoko: (scared) “Shattie, how many times must I tell you that you’re the only man I’m with?!”

Shadrack slapped her so hard, her lips tore and she started bleeding. She landed on the floor face first and her forehead split. Blood was oozing on the floor, which was not an uncommon sight in their house. Meshack was sleeping that night, but got woken up by his father’s noise as always.

Shadrack: (unbuckling his belt) “I’ve had enough of you. It’s high time I showed you how to respect a man like me.”

Thoko: (teary) “No, please. Please, don’t do this, Shattie.”

Shadrack: (angered) “Oho, you don’t want to sleep with me?! Wa bona ke go boditse gore wa mfebela (You see? I told you that you’re fucking around)!”

Shadrack got so pissed off as always and he threw one of the pots that was boiling with potatoes Thoko had intended to mash for him later on, on top of her. The pot hit Thoko so hard,

she was semi-conscious at the time. The water was scorching hot and burnt her all over her body, but she could barely feel the pain as the blow on her head was really bad. Meshack got so angry and got up. He saw his father trying to reach for a knife while stumbling around, but he reached for one that was already on the table first. He wasted no time and stabbed him on the back. His father was a tall man, so it had to take more than one stab wound to inflict serious pain on him. Shadrack screamed and fell onto the ground. He tried to grab Meshack's leg, but Meshack stabbed him continuously all over his body. He stabbed him until he couldn't hear his father's cursing words and screams anymore. He got tired of hearing his father call him a useless dog and a piece of shit. How he wished he was not his father. When he saw Shadrack laying on the floor in a pool of blood and multiple holes on his body, he didn't hesitate. He wanted to make sure that he was really dead, so he did the unthinkable. He pulled his father's lifeless body up and grabbed his head. He cut his head off with a kitchen knife, one his mother always used whenever cutting vegetables. He ensured that he would be dead. He didn't mind the blood spewing from his neck onto his face. It was already 2am in the morning and most people were asleep. The neighbours were so used to Shadrack's noise and they stopped interfering when he shot one of them after they tried to save Thoko. Thoko was hated on by all the women in the neighbourhood. They were

judging her and asking her why she just didn't leave him. Many even questioned her love for her son for subjecting herself to such bullshit. He walked up to his mother and felt a pulse. She was alive, that was more than enough for him. He took his mother to her bedroom and stitched her up. He knew how to do it because his father would come home shot or stabbed and demanded that he fix him up and even showed him how to do it. He was a professional before he had even become a teen. He then went to the garage to his father's tool box and took an electric saw. He chopped his father's body piece by piece – limb by limb. Once his whole body was chopped off he put his pieces in a big plastic bag, started his father's car and went to dump him off at the nearest dumping site. He came home and did what his father taught him to do best – get rid of the evidence. He cleaned up everything and made the house look spotless. He ensured that his mother was a lot better in the morning, although she was still weak. Surprisingly she remembered everything. They took off that morning to start afresh. A week later, Shadrack's decomposed, chopped body was found and that was when Meshack told his mother the truth. She had never been the same since.

He woke up drenched in sweat yet again after the whole dream. He found himself staring in the mirror as he always

did. He didn't bother to check the time as he knew that it was probably midnight or 3am. The dream always occurred during those times. He ordered room service and drank a whole bottle of whiskey in the dark while staring at Precious. Two hours later he managed to shut down and sleep.

The morning of the traditional wedding came. Meshack woke his wife up with another round of amazing cunninglingus. He always loved doing that to clean women – not just any woman. But he particularly loved eating Precious out. There was just something about her purity that really got him off. She was moaning as usual and he loved it. They had another round of amazing love making and it was not as painful as the night before for her.

Meshack: "Come, let's go shower. We have a wedding to get ready for."

Precious nodded as they went to shower. After the shower, Mish started kissing Precious again.

Precious: “Ah, aowa (no), Mish. Kuku ya ka e sale bohloko (My pussy is still sore).”

Mish: (chuckling) “I’m giving you a week and you’ll be begging for it every night.”

Precious: “Aowa, I doubt. Oh, shit.”

Mish: “What?”

Precious: “We didn’t use a condom, Mish.”

Mish: (laughing) “We’re married, Presh. We got tested. You honestly think I’d want to use a condom with my wife? Come on.”

Precious: (worried) “I don’t want a baby

Mish. Not now.”

Mish: “Okay then. I’ll get Ronza to bring us morning afters. Then you’ll have to get on a contraceptive.”

Precious just nodded at the idea, but was a bit hurt that Mish didn’t bother to ask her if she would actually want to get on contraceptives. Coming to think of it, he was actually making a lot of decisions without asking her and it was slowly coming to light. They got dressed for their traditional wedding and she put her thoughts at the far back of her mind.

Mish: (smiling) “Are you ready to go?”

Precious: “Yes. Let’s go, Ndhlovu.”

Mish: (laughing) “I can’t wait to hear you call me that again tonight.”

Precious just smiled and nodded. Her pussy was still burning from the sex they had. She knew it was going to get better, but when? They got into their limousine and headed to back to kasi (the township). Everything had already been prepared and

Thoko was already up. Much like her son, she couldn't sleep much at night. Of course, Thandi was still banned from joining in as a member of the family during the festivities. Thoko didn't even give her room to apologize at all. She was so hurt that her sister of all people decided to throw the darkest years of her life back in her face like that. It was a dark time – no lies. Meshack tried to not to dwell on Raymond's presence at his wedding, but for some odd reason, Meshack's happiness always lasted for a short while. The second ceremony started and this time around it was a party for everyone – the bride and groom included. Meshack had a drink with Ronza, Bigz and a few of his friends, while Precious had some fun with Debbie and Rachel.

Rachel: (excited) "So? Tell us what went down."

Precious: (smiling) "Hawu (Goodness), Rachel. I can't talk out of the bedroom."

Rachel: "Oh come on. We just want to know if it was good or not."

Precious: (smiling) “Well, all I can say is that Meshack really knows what he is doing. It hurt like hell, but he made sweet love to me. I mean, I didn’t even know that getting licked down there was that good.”

Deborah: “Oh, believe me, it is. You do know that you will have to return the favour, right?”

Precious: (frowning) “You mean I’ll actually have to suck his penis?”

Deborah nodded.

Precious: (worried) “I mean, he hasn’t asked for it.”

Rachel: “He doesn’t have to. It’s just a mutual thing. Very few guys aren’t into blow jobs.”

Precious: “How do you even know about all this? You’re still a virgin, aren’t you?”

Rachel: “Well, actually I have a boyfriend – we made it official a month ago. I didn’t want to wait any longer so I did it.”

Deborah: “Hehe, di tla bowa mo (you never cease to amaze me).”

Precious: “You’re one secretive girl.”

Rachel: “Come on, you were so busy with the wedding and I was waiting for the right moment to tell you guys.”

Precious: “Ah, anyway who is this mystery man?”

Rachel: “His name is Tony. We do the same course.”

Precious: “Wait. Tony as in white boy Tony?”

Rachel: (frowning) “Yes, but don’t say it like that.”

Precious: “Askies (Sorry), it’s just that I didn’t expect you to be into white guys. He seems like a nice guy, man. I am very happy for you.”

Rachel: (smiling) “Thanks, P.”

Deborah: “Me too. He had better treat you right.”

Rachel: “He does, hey.”

Deborah: “Seriously, though. What’s it like having sex with a white guy?”

Rachel: (laughing) “Bathong (Goodness), Debbie.”

As they were laughing and enjoying themselves, Rose walked up to them.

Rose: (clearing throat) “Apologies to interrupt you three, but I just came to congratulate the bride.”

Their smiles immediately left their faces.

Precious: (firmly) “Well, you congratulated. Is there anything else?”

Rose: (chuckling) “You think you’re so slick, don’t you? Like you’re the next best thing since sliced bread. Mish is playing you and you’re too stupid to see it.”

Precious: (annoyed) “Thank you for your meaningless congratulations. You can leave now, seriously, you can fucking leave now.”

Rose: “Well, then. But before I go, why don’t you ask your man over there what really happened that day you caught us in bed together? Ai, lena bana ba banyane (you small girls).”

She left them wondering.

Deborah: "Ai, some girls just don't know when to give up."

Rachel: "Don't worry about her, P. Trust your man. He told you the truth and so did she. Besides, you're married now. She's just bitter and jealous."

Deborah: "I'm with Rachel on this one. Let's go dance and forget about her."

Precious wanted to let it go, but deep down Rose had hit a nerve. They got dancing, while Mish was enjoying his drinks with his friends.

Bigz: "Seriously, though. How was it chowing a virgin?"

Ronza: (annoyed) "Seriously, Bigz? Why would you even ask about someone's bedroom affairs with his wife? We don't even ask you anything about your woman."

Bigz: "That's because I tell you everything."

Ronza: "It's not like we ever want to know, man. Stop being a perve."

Bigz: "So you're seriously not going to tell?"

Mish: (chuckling) "No, so stop asking."

While they were chatting, lo and behold, Raymond appeared.

Raymond: (smiling) "Gentlemen."

Mish instantly got annoyed and so did Ronza.

Bigz: "Eh, eh, eh, Viper. Last time I checked you were not invited."

Raymond: "Last time I checked everyone was invited. Ke kasi (this is the township), after all. May I sit?"

Mish: “No. You can leave, though.”

Raymond: “Okay then. I’ll say this while standing. I have a proposition for you, Mish.”

Mish: “Not interested.”

Raymond: “Oh, but I think you will be once I tell your wife over there that you fucked Cassandra the night before your wedding.”

Mish instantly got tense.

Raymond: “Oh, I see. Now you’re quiet. You must really love her, hey. But I am not such a bad big brother, Meshack, really. All I want is for us to finally get along.”

Ronza: “Get to it, what the fuck do you want?”

Raymond: "Ooh, so hostile. Okay, I want to join forces with you. We can be like David and Goliath in the Bible, you know."

Ronza: (chuckling) "Didn't your mother ever read the Bible to you?"

Bigz: "Or didn't your father ever teach you any manners?"

Raymond: "Don't talk about my mother. Besides, how could my father teach me anything when your Bozza over here killed him?"

Ronza: "You're such a bitter little shit, Viper. You were 23 by then. Or what's the problem? You still need your daddy to hold your little dick for you while you take a piss?"

Raymond: (firmly) "I should go before I ruin your little wedding."

Ronza: "You're just hurt because you could never afford one like this. Now, beat it."

Raymond: "Fine. Think about it, Mish. We wouldn't want you losing your new wife."

He left and Mish started getting agitated. He banged the table and everyone stared at them.

Bigz: "Calm down, Bozza, before everyone starts getting suspicious."

Mish: "That fucker just threatened me."

Ronza: "He's small fry, Bozza and you know it. He's just pissed because his businesses are starting to suffer. Not even that strip club of his is making money."

As they were talking, Cassandra appeared dressed much like a stripper would dress.

Mish: "Ah, fok (fuck), man. Can my day get any worse?"

Ronza: “How does he even know her anyway?”

Bigz: “Eish, well, she works for him.”

Mish and Ronza were irritated instantly.

Mish: “You hired strippers that work for my brother?! How much of an idiot can you be, Bigz?!”

Bigz: “Ah, sorry man, Mish. I only found out afterwards when I had to make payment. I didn’t know you’d actually fuck her.”

Cassandra spotted Mish and was about to run towards him.

Ronza: “I’ll handle this.”

He got up instantly.

Cassandra: (smilng) “Meshack, I – “

Ronza: “Whoa whoa, sesi (sis). Let’s take a walk for a minute.”

Cassandra: “But I want to speak to Mish – “

Ronza pulled Cassandra out of the tent very fast.

Ronza: “Look, cut your bullshit, okay. You know very well that he is getting married. So why the fuck would you make an entrance right here, right now?”

Cassandra: “I just wanted to say hi, that’s all.”

Ronza: “You think I don’t know your type, Cassie? You fuck men with cash and as soon as you’re done you fall for them and try to get rid of their wives? Leave and make sure you never come back. If you even try to do anything stupid, believe me, Mish will kill you without hesitation.”

Cassandra: “But, I – “

Ronza: “Yoh, you just don’t get the message, do you? Fuck off!”

Cassandra left with a broken heart, but she was also very angry and was a woman who just never gave up. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. Meanwhile Precious was asking herself who on earth Cassandra was.

Precious: “Did you see that girl?”

Deborah: “Ah, she is probably one of his groupies.”

Precious: “She looks more than a groupie to me.”

Deborah: “If you are bothered that much, ask Mish about it. He is your husband now, no secrets.”

Precious: “What about that guy dressed in that brown suit.”

Rachel: "Oh, Viper. Word is that he is Mish's brother."

Precious: (frowning) "Mish does not have a brother."

Rachel: "He does, but from another mother or something like that."

Precious knew that something was brewing between the two. She also knew that Cassandra was more than just a groupie. Perhaps she bit off more than she could chew?

“When we think of the past it’s the beautiful things we pick out. We want to believe it was all like that.” – Margaret Atwood

Two weeks later...

Things were really good between Mish and Precious. Apart from having sex pretty much whenever they got the chance, Mish was everything she could ever wish for. Back in Zululand, Georgina was still a mess and Glenda had finally accomplished the first phase of her plan. She had managed to get Ntsika and Njabulo into University of Zululand. They were so hungry for power and success, that they were secretly envious of one another. Glenda was brewing something that would soon be out of her control. Kumkani felt like he was losing the battle, but little did he know that he was much closer to finding Gatsha’s heiress than he actually thought.

It was the second quarter of the first Semester for Debbie, Rachel and Precious. Things were looking good for all of them and Deborah was finally engaged to Charlie. She had only one class that day and it was of a new module for that quarter. She

was not really feeling the class even before she even met her lecturer, but she most probably had Gatsha to blame for that. He had been keeping her up almost every night and the sex was starting to take a different turn. She had noticed what Thoko had warned her about; Gatsha had tendencies of waking up in the middle of the night and just stare in the mirror. At times she would find him drinking whiskey and watching tv in their bedroom. When the kids would come visit, it was a lot better for him as he would ensure that they play and watch movies until midnight. While she was trying to catch some sleep, her new lecturer walked in.

Lecturer: “Good morning, students.”

Precious was amazed at how she was able to smell his cologne all the way from the fourth row. She loved sitting in the front row, but because she was tired, she settled for the fourth row that day. She had never seen such a beautiful, chocolate man before. He was so well-dressed in his Italian suit. His beard was well taken care of and he really seemed pretty neat. The girls were drooling while she was in awe. His smile just evoked new feelings in her that not even Mish ever could. What was happening to her? She thought to herself.

Lecturer: “My name is Kumkani Mdhletse, Mr. Mdhletse or Kumkani to you. Which ever one you prefer.”

She was beyond shocked to see such a young lecturer. He didn't look a day older than 25.

Kumkani: “Well, shall we begin with our lesson for the day.”

As he was speaking, Precious felt some sort of a spark between the two of them. He was actually smiling at her. Maybe she was imagining things. Surely it couldn't have been a smile directed to her of all people in the room. She tried to ignore him, but his presence spoke volumes. After what seemed like forever, he was finally done.

Kumkani: “That's all for today, folks. I'll see you next week.”

She heard the murmurs amongst the other students.

Student: "He's so hot, chomi (friend)."

She was minding her own business while packing her bag. She didn't even realize she was the only one left in the class.

Kumkani: (smiling) "Don't I know you from somewhere?"

Precious felt instantly numb. How on earth could she see another man as good looking apart from her own husband?

Precious: "Excuse me?"

Kumkani: "Aren't you that lady who got married to Meshack Ndhlovu?"

Yep, she was soon famously known as the gangster's wife. That was a nicer way to put it.

Precious: "Oh, yes."

Kumkani: "Pity. Had I known you before I would have beaten him to it."

Precious couldn't help but blush.

Precious: "I have to go. My driver is waiting for me."

Kumkani: "Let me walk you out."

She didn't mind nor see it as anything wrong.

Precious: "Okay."

While she was walking out with him, she didn't really notice the stares amongst the other students. Once again, she was the pawn of envy and jealousy.

Kumkani: "So, tell me about yourself, pretty lady."

Precious: "There's not much to tell, really."

Kumkani: "Everyone has a story. I'd love to know yours."

Precious: (nervously) "Uhm, Mr. Mdhletse, I'm married."

Kumkani: "I know that, but are you happy?"

Precious didn't know what to say as she found herself staring into his eyes without any caution around her. She was about to respond until she felt Mish's hand firmly grab her.

Mish: (sternly) "Ekse (Hey)."

Kumkani: (smiling) "Oh

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you must be the Meshack Ndhlovu. The notorious gangster."

He had taken his hand out awaiting a handshake from Meshack, but Meshack just looked at him in disgust and pure anger.

Meshack: “I don’t shake hands with men who overstep boundaries. If you know who I am then surely you know who she is. She is a married woman – my wife.”

Kumkani: “Oh, she is a student of mine. I didn’t mean anything by it.”

Meshack: (clicking tongue) “Mxm. A re vaye (Let’s go).”

He grabbed Precious in a way that he had never done before. It was a rather tight grip.

Kumkani: “I’ll see you around, Precious.”

Precious didn’t even have time to respond. She could see the rage in Mish’s eyes. He didn’t say anything, but instead just opened the door for her and threw her into the car forcefully. He had never shown any violent behaviour towards

her, but at that moment, she was scared. Mish walked in and didn't say a word. He started the car and drove off. Precious was too scared to even ask, so she remained quiet and looked outside the window. They got home and he didn't even bother to open the door for her. She realized that perhaps she was in actual deep shit. She walked out and headed into the house, and found Mish pouring himself a glass of whiskey. She attempted to walk away, but he finally spoke.

Mish: "So, I send you to school and you cheat on me with lawyers now?"

Precious: (shocked) "Excuse me?"

Mish: "You think ke bhari nna ne (you think I'm a fool, don't you)?"

Precious: "Mish, I don't know what you're talking about, really. He was just walking me out."

Mish got so aggravated by Precious's honest responses, that he did the unthinkable.

Mish: "Ungitshela amasimba (You're bullshitting me)!"

He threw the half empty glass of whiskey right at Precious, only for it to hit her right in the forehead. It felt so surreal and she only realized after the glass broke on the floor that he had actually hit her. She felt warmth on her forehead and she slowly touched it with her shaky hands and noticed blood. That made her even more scared. She had just had her very first encounter with Meshack the monster. Mish had realized what he had done and regretted it instantly.

Mish: "Presh, I'm so sorry. I don't know what had gotten into me. I, -"

Precious: (scared) "Don't come near me!"

Mish: "Baby, please, I – "

Precious: “I’m going to get some air. Don’t follow me.”

Mish: “At least take the car keys, please. That way I’ll know you’re safe.”

He had begun driving lesson with her and she was not perfect yet nor did she have a license, but she could manage to drive a bit of a distance. She grabbed the keys in fear from his hands and ran out. She had forgotten that she was dripping in blood. Her main priority was getting out of Mish’s house – away from his presence. He was in a state of shock himself. He was in disbelief that he had actually hurt the love of his life. He found himself shaking with rage – angry at himself for doing what he had promised himself that he would never do. Precious drove like a maniac until she got to Thoko’s house. She punched in the pin and rushed out of the house. She didn’t even bother to knock, and just walked in. Thoko took one look at her and knew that Mish’s monster had finally come out.

Thoko: “Kids, go buy some ice cream. Gabby make sure you take care of them.”

Gabby: "Auntie, what happened to your face?"

Thoko: "She got into an accident. Now hurry up."

Gabby: "Okay."

They walked out and Thoko didn't waste any time.

Thoko: "Sit. I'll get my first aid kit. Pour yourself a glass of wine. You're going to need it."

Precious nodded in shock, she still felt like it could be a dream or something. She poured herself a glass of wine and gulped it instantly. Thoko came back within seconds and started treating her wound. Thoko was angry; at herself for not trying hard enough to get Precious not to marry her monster of a son and at Mish for allowing his monster to take over like that.

Thoko: "Are you okay?"

Precious nodded with threatening tears.

Thoko: “Did something happen?”

Precious: (sigh) “He saw me walk out of campus with my new lecturer and accused me of cheating on him with lawyers. Imagine Ma. He didn’t even bother to ask me for my side of the story. The next thing I knew he threw a glass of whiskey at me.”

Precious finally let the tears out. At that moment she knew she should have listened to her gut feeling – the gut feeling she had before she married Mish; the gut feeling she had when she found him in bed with Rose and started questioning her own actions. For even Ephesians 1:17 says “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.” That gut feeling was God’s way of telling her perhaps she was making the wrong choice and she should have listened to it.

Thoko: (sigh) “I knew this was going to happen. I just knew it.”

Precious: “I don’t know if I can ever continue like this, Ma, but now things are just so complicated.”

Thoko: “What do you mean?”

Precious: “I’m pregnant.”

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“The past teaches us a lesson, the present helps us in our decisions, the future helps us dream.” – Unknown

Thoko was beyond shocked and even more worried than she was a few minutes before then.

Thoko: “Are you sure?”

Precious: (teary) “Yes.”

Thoko kept quiet for a moment and then held Precious’ hand.

Thoko: “Do you want to keep it?”

Precious couldn’t even bear the thought of killing a child.

Precious: “Ma, I don’t even think I could ever kill an innocent child – my child.”

Thoko: (nodding) “Okay.”

She was trying to think of a way forward. She felt bad enough as it was for the poor girl and then – Mish suddenly walked in looking wasted. He had been drinking quite a bit. He noticed his mother’s rage in her eyes and looked down immediately. He knew he had failed her – both of the women in his life.

Mish: (looking down) “Ngiyaxolisa (I’m sorry), Ma.”

Thoko was bewildered, so much that she walked towards him and gave him one fat slap across his face.

Thoko: (livid) “Look at her, Meshack! Look at her!”

Mish slowly looked at Precious.

Thoko: “I warned you. I warned you when you said you loved her. Does that look like a happy woman?! Does it?”

Mish: (softly) Cha (No), Ma.”

Thoko: “You’re going to sit there right now and tell her everything. Tell her what happened to your father and why the fuck you’re such a monster. Maybe then she might forgive you and give you another chance.”

Mish: (scared) “Kodwa (But), Ma, why?”

Thoko: “Because she’s carrying your child.”

With that said Thoko walked away, leaving Mish on the spot. Mish looked at Precious and felt so broken, he couldn’t believe that he had actually hit her.

Mish: “Sthandwa sami (My Love).”

Precious started crying silently. The pain within her gut hurt like hell, it burnt as if it was ulceric and the fact that she was pregnant was even more painful for her.

Mish: "I'm really sorry."

Precious: "Speak. You have this one chance to convince me to take you back or else I'm walking, Mish. I'm walking and I am never coming back."

Mish was about to confess the truth about his father but little did Precious know that Mish knew everything about her – EVERYTHING.

Mish: (deep sigh) "I don't know where to start, Presh. My life is a mess, it always has been and it seems to be getting worse. My father was a monster. I witnessed everything and eventually also became a victim to his bullshit."

Precious kept quiet while the tears were streaming down her face.

Mish: “He used to beat my mother up so badly, that she now has scars to prove it. That is how he proved his love to her, that is how he branded her. He had a wife and children when he met my mother. She had no idea that he was married. Within a month of being together, he bought my mother a house and proposed. He even sent his uncles to my mother’s family for lobola – only then did his first wife and children find out that he was about to marry my mother. Being the bastard he was, he still went ahead with it. The first wife was upset for obvious reasons, but he was never actually married to her. My mother eventually had me and then all hell broke loose. I have done a lot of shit that I am not proud of, Presh, but I don’t regret killing him.”

Precious was so shocked, she hadn’t expected to hear those words from her own husband. Mish told her everything, from how he stabbed him to how he slit his throat and cut off his head. It was a gruesome scene to even think about, even though he did it to protect his mother. She felt sick to her stomach and wanted to vomit, but she refrained from that. Only then did she understand why he had sleepless nights and why he was a bit of a monster.

Mish: “That’s my story, Baby. I am sorry. I know it does not justify what I did, but that is who I am – who I really am. I can’t live without you, Precious, I would die. I know you don’t have any reason to forgive me, but I am asking you for one last chance. I promise I will do everything in my power to try and change and love you and our baby.”

Precious broke down. She wanted to leave, but how would she because she loved him so much. Worst part she was expecting his child already.

Precious: “I’ll only take you back on a few conditions.”

Mish: (hopeful) “Anything.”

Precious: “If you ever, ever pull a stunt like what you did today I will leave you, Mish. I was not raised as a punching bag and I refuse to become one right now.”

Mish: “I promise.”

Precious: “Secondly, you will attend therapy to deal with your shit. It’s not healthy and if you want to be a part of this child’s life, you will have to change. I cannot raise my child around a monster. You will have to change, Mish.”

Mish: “I’ll do it, Babes.”

Precious: “Lastly, you will keep no secrets from me – I mean no secrets. You’ll let me in on anything that you do – even finances. If you ever cheated on me before or when we got married, now is the time to tell me.”

Mish didn’t know if she was trapping him or what, but he would have rather risked everything at that moment rather than losing Precious forever.”

Mish: (sigh) “Okay. Yes, I slept with Rose that day, but she did seduce me. I won’t make any excuses for it, though. I’m sorry.”

Precious dried her tears immediately. Her hardened personality was finally coming out.

Precious: "Is there anyone else?"

Mish thought really carefully. He had the chance to come clean once again to his wife about Cassandra, but he chose not to."

Mish: "No."

Precious: "Okay then. And Mish, one more thing. If I ever find out that you did indeed lie to me today you will fucking regret it. I'm going out for a drive, don't follow me. I'll see you at home later."

She took his car keys and left Mish in a state of shock. No one had ever spoken to him like that besides his own mother. He was shocked to see Precious like that and asked himself if indeed he didn't create a monster out of his wife at that instant.

A few days later....

Mish had done everything in his power to try and be a good husband to Precious. He rubbed her feet whenever she came back home and cooked for her whenever he could. That's what guilt does to a person, especially when they're keeping more secrets. He even surprised her with a brand new Toyota Yaris the following day. She hadn't gotten her license yet, but was due to get her driver's license in two weeks. He was really trying and had maintained his promises to her. He was even attending therapy. It was the following week and she had gone to school as usual, it was time for her class with Mr. Kumkani. She was a bit early and little did she know that she would find him waiting for her in the parking lot. As soon as she said goodbye to Ronza who drove her to school that day, Kumkani walked out of his car and rushed to her side.

Kumkani: "Hey, Pretty lady."

Precious: (worried) "Kumkani, hi."

Kumkani: (frowning) "What happened to your face?"

Precious: "Oh, nothing. I fell in the shower."

Kumkani: “You do know that that is one of the famous excuses of abuse victims, right?”

Precious: (annoyed) “You don’t know me and I don’t know you. As far as I’m concerned you’re my lecturer. So, can we please leave it at that?”

Kumkani: “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to be pushy.”

Precious: “I’m married and I’m pregnant. Please leave me alone before you get me into more trouble.”

Kumkani: “What do you mean by more trouble?”

Precious decided to leave him standing right there and move into the lecture hall. Kumkani knew right there and then that there was more to Meshack Ndhlovu than met the eye. He was not that interested in him, but now that he had met Precious, he knew that something deeper was brewing behind closed doors. He hated seeing Precious looking like an abuse victim

and wanted something to be done. He had fallen for her instantly and couldn't stop looking at her ever since he met her. Apart from his mom telling him that he had finally met his soulmate, he had no idea that she would be married to a gangster. He walked into the class and carried on with his lecture. Unfortunately students started to talk and thought that Precious and Kumkani were into one another. He kept staring at her and his heart broke when he noticed that she was rather angry at him. Time passed and the class was over. Luckily for Precious, she had time to go see her friends at res that day, so Ronza nor Mish was not around, but little did she know that her husband had placed surveillance on her once again. Kumkani ran after her without a care in the world.

Kumkani: "Precious, wait, please."

Precious: "What do you want, Kumkani?"

Kumkani: "I would like to re-introduce myself and start afresh with you. I didn't mean to come across as annoying or needy."

Precious: (sigh) “Kumkani, look. My husband is not very happy about your sudden interest in me.”

Kumkani: “I get it and I wouldn’t be either if I were him. Look, I won’t bother you any further. Here is my card – whenever you want to talk. See you some other time, Pretty Lady.”

He smiled and winked at her and left. She knew that it was wrong to even consider calling him at all, but there was just something genuine about Kumkani. He had this weird aura about him and she wanted to know more of him. The more she saw him, the more she actually started asking herself if she was really good with Mish. While she walked to res, Ronza made the call.

Ronza: “Sho (Sure) Bozza. He was talking to her again. This guy seems to be really into your woman.”

Mish: (angered) “Dig up any dirt you can find on the bastard. I hate it when people just can’t go for their own women.”

Ronza: "Sho sho (Sure sure)."

Precious was about to walk into res accommodation, when Mish called her.

Mish: "Hey baby."

Precious: "Hey."

Mish: "How was class?"

Precious: "It was good, thanks, wena (you)? How is your day going?"

Mish: "It's going really, really well. I was just checking on you."

Precious: "Thank you."

Mish: "Did anything interesting happen to you today?"

Mish started doubting himself ever since he confessed to Precious, and the fact that she lied about Kumkani, made him start to transpire and spiral out of control.

Precious: "Nothing I know of."

Mish: "Okay then. See you later. Bye."

He hung up leaving Precious wondering if he wasn't actually spying on her. She decided to ignore that and walk to Debbie's room. She found Rachel there as well.

Precious: "Wassup Bitches."

Debbie and Rachel both frowned when they saw her.

Rachel: "What happened to your face?"

Deborah: "Did he hit you?"

Precious: "Guys, you two can be so dramatic, you know. I fell in the shower and hit my head."

Debbie: (frowning) "That's just an excuse."

Rachel: "I second that."

Precious: "You two are just too much. Anyway, I have good news for you. Let's go out for lunch."

Deborah: "Do you want me to cut him for you? Because I can do that."

Precious: (laughing) "How can he hit me when I'm pregnant, Debs?"

Rachel: (shocked) "Already? I mean isn't it a bit too soon?"

Precious: “I forgot to get on contraceptives and well, here I am. Four weeks pregnant.”

Deborah: “Congratulations, babe. I am happy for you, but on a serious note, he’s not abusing you, right?”

Precious just had to pretend. She couldn’t afford her friends being mad at Mish and knowing the truth just yet.

Precious: “I promise you.”

Rachel: “In that case then, let’s go out for lunch.”

Precious was just 19 and digging a deeper hole with her with each day that went by. At times when we pray for a Prince charming, we forget to pray for the right man. As the Bible says, be careful what you wish for. James 4:17 warns us “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” Precious knew that marrying Mish was not ideal, but she still went ahead with it. That would have been a great sin for her to carry as her own burden.

“The past is always tense, the future perfect.” – Zadie Smith

Mish had started to lose his mind so badly, that he had secretly been comparing himself to Kumkani. It got worse when he found out he was Gatsha’s lawyer, from a picture he saw with him on the internet. He could not eat or sleep much, which worried Precious a lot. He even started recording all her movements. He was practically stalking his own wife. Had he decided to be honest and let her make her own decisions, he would have probably not gone mad at all. Luke 16:10 says “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.”

Since Mish had realized that Kumkani lived in one of the Posh Estates in Pretoria East, Mooikloof to be precise, he decided to move from his house in Sunvalley to Equestria. It was his way of seeking validation from Precious. He knew that she could easily fall for him and thought that she was easily wooed by money. He wasn’t much of a straight thinker, though and that proved that he actually didn’t know his wife that well. He woke Precious up early in the morning before announcing a much bigger surprise.

Mish: “Good morning, baby.”

Precious: “Eish, Mish. It’s super early and ke (it’s a) weekend. Can’t you let me sleep for just a while longer?”

Mish: (chuckling) “This baby is making you lazy. Come on, get up, please. I have a great surprise for you. Actually, I have a whole day filled with surprises for you.”

Precious: (sulking) “Okay then.”

Mish smiled to himself as she got up and went to the shower. He then decided to overdo it and joined her in the shower.

Precious: “Ga wa hlapa, kgante (Didn’t you shower)?”

Mish: (smiling) “I thought I’d join you and give you some Mish loving.”

Precious just smiled knowing her husband's sexual appetite was really high. He had a tendency of being a bit rough, but ever since he found out she was pregnant, he had managed to be a lot more subtle and softer. He kissed her from the back of her neck as usual, and made trails down her spine using his soft hands. He rubbed her clit in circular motion as usual and within minutes, he rammed into her.

Precious: (moaning) "Oh, Mish..."

Mish: (moaning) "Fuck, baby, I love you so much."

Precious: (moaning) "I love you too."

Mish: "Promise me you'll never leave me."

Precious: "I promise."

Precious just assumed that it was his way of initiating talking during sex. She had no idea that Mish was slowly becoming the monster he promised never to become ever again. They finished getting dressed and headed out in one of his cars. Precious had finally gotten her driver's license. She was already enjoying the perks of being married to a gangster since she didn't even have to go through procedure like everybody else. She practically got her license without even being present at the testing centre.

Precious: "Where are we going, Mish?"

Mish: "Ra fihla (we're almost there), baby."

Precious: "But I'm hungry already."

Mish: "We'll get food where we're going."

Precious: "Okay geh (then)."

Within minutes, Precious was oddly surprised when Mish entered the complex using his own code.

Precious: (surprised) “Mish, ke code ya mang eo (whose code is that)?”

Mish: (smiling) “Ours, baby.”

Precious couldn't believe it, so of course she had to see it with her own two eyes. Mish opened the door for her and they walked in. She truly believed it when she saw him put the keys through the key hole. The house was too beautiful for her to even believe it was hers.

Precious: (surprised) “Mish, o (are you) serious?”

Mish: “When I married you, I promised you the world, and I meant every word.”

Precious: (excited) “Oh, Mish bathing (my goodness). This is a lovely gesture, but can we afford this?”

Mish: "Of course, baby. Don't you worry about a thing. Besides, I'll sell the house in Sunvalley and we'll be good to go."

Precious was once again a little hurt because Mish didn't feel the need to consult her with that part.

Precious: "Meshack, I thought you were going to discuss everything you plan on doing with me."

Mish: "Askies (Sorry), baby. I just wanted to surprise you."

Precious: "Okay. I love it. When are we moving in?"

Mish: "As soon as possible."

Precious: "Okay as long as we get some food first."

They headed out to get some breakfast. It was a good few weeks. That very same day Mish made sure that he give Precious another surprise, and told her that he had finally gotten medical aid and put her on as one of the beneficiaries. He didn't want his wife and child to suffer while he was alive. Kumkani had kept his distance for a while and the module had been finished for the quarter. He was intrigued by Precious, but he knew that their paths would cross one day. Precious was now 9 weeks pregnant

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and she and Mish had moved into their new house. Their happiness was short lived when security called the house. Unfortunately for Mish, he was not around.

Precious: "Hello?"

Security: "Ma'am. Sorry to bother, there is a lady here who insists that she needs to see Mr. Ndhlovu."

Precious: "What is her name?"

Security: "She says she is Cassandra."

Precious: "Okay, let her in."

Security: "Okay."

Within a minute, Cassandra was banging down the door. Precious opened it and she recognized her immediately from her wedding.

Cassandra: "Hi. Is Mish here?"

Precious: "No, he is not. Can I help you?"

Cassandra: "No, but your husband can."

Precious: "I don't follow."

Cassandra: "You can tell him that he'd better have some money for maintenance. I'm pregnant."

Precious was so shocked. How the fuck did that even happen? She thought to herself.

Precious: "How far along are you?"

Cassandra: "12 weeks. Baby, you're not considering staying, are you?"

Precious kept quiet while she was trying to internalize what Cassandra was telling her.

Cassandra: (chuckling) "Wow, you must be really desperate. The man literally fucked me the night before your wedding."

Precious refused to cry over Mish ever again. She realized that she had cried a little too much over the months, so she had had

enough of pain. It had barely even been six months since they got married.

Precious: “Thanks for your message, Cassandra. You can leave now.”

Cassandra: “You really think that I’m going to leave just like that? No fucking way. I’ll wait for him.”

Cassandra was one tall girl. Busty, had a great body, but was tall. Precious really didn’t care much for that. She was about to throw herself on one of their couches, but Precious got really mad. She knew where Mish kept one of his guns in the house – just behind the microwave. Precious headed straight there, grabbed the gun and pointed it at Cassandra.

Precious: “Get the fuck out of my house.”

Cassandra: (laughing) “Oh, honey. You wouldn’t dare. You don’t even know how to use it.”

Yes, she was right. Precious hadn't shot anyone before, but she had a mild idea of how a gun worked. She got so angry at Cassandra for violating her space like that. Within a split second, she shot Cassandra right in the thigh. She herself couldn't believe it and Cassandra screamed. Ronza and Mish were busy with their side hustle, so they had hired one of their younger members to keep an eye on Precious, but he was too busy having sex with one of the workers in the complex, that he forgot to keep an eye on her.

Cassandra: (screaming) "Aaah! You shot me! You fucking shot me!"

Precious: "You deserved it, bitch."

Within minutes, security ran into the house as they found the door open.

Security: "M'am, what's going on? Sizwe isibamu (We heard a gun)."

They took one look at her and decided to call the police – despite knowing who Mish was.

Security: “I’m sorry, m’am, we need to call the police. It’s standard procedure.”

Precious was calm, surprisingly. She was not remorseful or even scared to get arrested. Her mind was raging with so many feelings, thoughts and a tinge of regret. She was hyperventilating with pure rage towards Mish. All she could think of was the ultimate betrayal. She ignored Cassandra’s screams despite her bleeding on her white couch.

Security: “Ma’am, please provide us with towels, toe (please)!”

Precious took a glass of whiskey despite being pregnant and started drinking.

Precious: “The bitch walked up into my house with her shitty attitude and now she is bleeding all over my expensive couches. Now you expect me to help her?”

Precious started chuckling.

Precious: "I'm going upstairs to my bedroom. Call me when the cops arrive."

She took the bottle and went upstairs to her bedroom. She locked the door and started taking sips of the whiskey, completely ignoring the fact that she was pregnant. She called Mam'Thoko.

Thoko: "Precious, mntwana wami (my baby). Kunjani (How are you)?"

Precious: (deep sigh) "Ma, one of Mish's bitches came here just now telling me she's three months pregnant. Apparently he slept with her the night before our wedding. I shot her, so the cops are on their way to arrest me. Please let Mish know because if I do, I'll end up killing him."

Thoko couldn't make out if it was a joke or a sick dream she was having.

Thoko: "Precious, utheni (what did you just say)?"

Precious hung up and continued drinking. Mam'Thoko started panicking when Precious wasn't answering the phone anymore. Thoko was panicking and started calling Mish, but his phone went straight to voicemail. She called Ronza and his also went to voicemail. She called Bigz and same story. She knew they were up to no good and had gone back to their ways. She decided to leave Mish a voicemail message.

Thoko: "Hey, wena (you), Meshack! Your wife just got arrested for shooting your pregnant side chick. You had better hope and pray she doesn't sleep there for your sake or else unyile (you're fucked) boy."

The police came along with the ambulance and took Cassandra to hospital and Precious to the nearest police station. At that point Precious knew that her relationship with Mish had become beyond toxic. No one ever leaves after the first red flag.

“Toxic people attach themselves like cinder blocks tied to your ankles, and then invite you for a swim in their poisoned waters.” – John Mark Green

Precious had been broken beyond measure at that point. She was semi-drunk, pregnant and in a jail cell and not bothered one bit. The only thing on her mind was Mish’s betrayal. Not even Phillipians 4:6, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” could save her. She hadn’t realized what a mess she had been ever since she got married to Mish. She prayed less and actually focused more on Mish rather than herself.

She hadn’t grown, the way you’re supposed to when married to someone. If there is no growth in a relationship or marriage and there is too much doubt, then it is doomed and pointless to stay. She had turned into someone she just couldn’t recognize anymore; she had become a liar – to herself and to her friends. She had done everything for Mish instead of putting herself first at times. She knew deep down that after that incident it

was going downhill, but people in toxic relationships tend to be addicted to the drama.

She had convinced herself that she was basically nothing without Mish. He saved her from suffering and picked her up when she was down. He loved her when she didn't even know what love is, but sadly, even after their marriage, she still didn't know what love was. Mish was dishing out a lot less love and more deceit and lies and abuse to some extent. While she was in her cell thinking of Mish's betrayal, a familiar voice appeared. She smelled him even before he started speaking with his signature cologne.

Kumkani: (frowning) "Precious?"

Precious: (surprised) "Kumkani. Why are you always where I am?"

Kumkani: (chuckling) "It must be fate. Besides, I came to bail out a client. Why are you behind bars?"

Precious: (sigh) "I shot my husband's pregnant side chick in the thigh."

Kumkani: (frowning) "Where is he?"

Precious just lifted her shoulders.

Kumkani: "Wait. You're the young woman they were talking about? She was in your house, wasn't she?"

Precious: "Uh-huh."

Kumkani: "You could have pleaded trespassing, Precious. You know this. I dealt with it in my lecture last week."

Precious: "I know, but I just don't care anymore."

Kumkani: (shaking head) "I don't know why you even stay with a man who treats you like that. I'll be right back. I'll get you out of here."

She just sat there – unbothered, while Kumkani walked fuming to the police desk.

Kumkani: “Where is your station commander?”

Everyone knew that Kumkani Mdhletse was not one to mess with. He could make anything happen, even though he had just been a real lawyer for a mere two years.

Officer: “Oh, Mr. Mdhletse. He is out at the moment, but I could be of service.”

Kumkani noticed that she was trying so hard to flirt with him, but he was not even bothered.

Kumkani: “Get Precious Vilakazi out of that cell right this instant.”

Officer: “Oh, that one. We’d have to wait for Monday morning to get a bail hearing. You know the rules, Mr. Mdheltse.”

Kumkani: (angered) “Don’t tell me about the fucking rules, Officer. If you don’t get your station commander here right this instant, I will personally hold you liable.”

Officer: “Okay, okay. Let me call him.”

She called him and he sounded as if he was having the time of his life instead of being at work. As soon as he heard that Kumkani was looking for him, he came running.

Station Commander: “Mr. Mdhletse, I sincerely apologize. I was buying lunch.”

Kumkani realized immediately that he was lying to him by his half closed zip.

Kumkani: “Save it. I’m here to get Precious Vilakazi out.”

Station Commander: (frowning) "Isn't she Meshack Ndhlovu's wife?"

Kumkani: "And aren't you married? Because for a married man you sure have a lot of time on your hands."

Station Commander: (smiling) "Okay, okay. Officer Mavuso, get her papers ready. Bail set at R20 000."

Kumkani: "I'll pay it right after I come back from the ATM. Get it done."

Station Commander: "Sure thing, Mr. M."

Kumkani: "Oh and Commander. Next time you decide to fuck around during office hours, make sure you zip your pants up properly."

Station Commander looked embarrassed beyond in front of a few people standing in the queue and his colleagues. He zipped his pants up and didn't even look at Kumkani. He walked out and headed to the atm to withdraw some money, while Officer Mavuso sorted out Precious' papers. Within minutes, her processing was done and Officer took it upon herself to go and open for her.

Officer: "Mrs. Ndhlovu, you're free to go."

Precious: (frowning) "Is my husband here?"

Officer: (rolling eyes) "No, your boyfriend paid your bail. A re ye (Let's go) I don't have all day."

Precious got annoyed by her attitude.

Officer: "Ai, waitse keng (Oh, you know). Lena banyana ba ma yellow bone le nagana gore le ka tseya banna bo bohle ba (you yellow bones think you can take all the men in this world)."

Precious: “Hmm, Officer Mavuso. I’m pretty sure that my husband wouldn’t like the way you treated me while I was in here. I bet my “boyfriend” wouldn’t like it either. Perhaps I should fill him in before I get released.”

Officer: “Oh, hayi suster (no sis), I was just joking le wena (with you). Eish, ja neh.”

She saw Kumkani waiting at the desk already.

Kumkani: “Shall we go?”

Precious just nodded and the officer was relieved that she didn’t say anything to Kumkani. The last time one of them tried that stunt, they lost their job. Kumkani opened the door, much to the dismay of everyone in there. He noticed that Precious was not walking straight and he could smell the liquor on her.

Kumkani: (frowning) “We’re you drinking?”

Precious: “Maybe.”

Kumkani: "Precious, I know you're hurt, but you can't put your baby's life in danger like that."

Precious: "Kumkani, you really didn't have to bail me out, you know. Besides, why do you care?"

Kumkani: "Someone has to. Besides, I care because I..."

He realized that if he had said that he loved her, she would have gotten freaked out, so he just came up with something else.

Kumkani: "Because I can see that your future is too bright for you to ruin it like this. You're not even twenty yet and you just got arrested for attempted murder. How the hell do you think you'll get out of that one?"

Precious: (sigh) "I don't know, Kumkani. All I know is that I am raging right now and I am ready to kill him."

Kumkani: "Why don't you just leave him?"

Precious: "It's always easier said than done."

Kumkani knew exactly what she was talking about hence he wanted to save her so badly. Kumkani wanted to drive her home

but she didn't want to go there.

Precious: "Kumkani, I'd rather not go home if that's okay with you."

Kumkani: "Okay."

He drove her to his house and she was in awe. It was so big and so beautiful, and very elegant for a man. Something told her that he lived alone.

Precious: "You have a nice house. Your wife has good taste."

Kumkani: (chuckling) "I don't have a wife."

Precious: "Oh. Do you mind if I make a phone call? I left my phone at my house."

Kumkani: "Sure."

He handed her his cellphone and she dialled Mam'Thoko's number. She knew she must have been worried sick, even though she wasn't thinking straight. The alcohol and the hormones were a bit too much.

Thoko: "Thoko hello?"

Precious: "Ma, it's me."

Thoko: "Oh, thank goodness, Precious! Are you okay? Where are you?"

Precious: "I'm safe."

Thoko: "Hold on, Mish wants to talk to you."

She heard Mish cursing in the background, sounding like he was beating someone up.

Mish: "You did what?! I told you to keep an eye on her and my wife was sent to jail?! How the fuck could you be so stupid, Pilot?!"

Thoko: "Stop that! Your wife is on the phone."

Mish came running and took the phone from his mother.

Mish: (frantic) "Precious, where are you? Are you okay?"

Precious: "I'm safe."

Mish: "I sent Ronza to bail you out, but you weren't there. Apparently someone bailed you out already. Where are you so we can talk?"

Precious: (sigh) "I'm at Kumkani's house."

Mish became angered instantly.

Mish: (shouting) "Heh (huh)?! Precious, are you fucking with me?! You're my wife and you allowed that fucker to bail you out?!"

Precious: "I was your wife pretty much when you decided to fuck Cassandra and get her pregnant, wasn't I? Or maybe you have forgotten. It seems as if you tend to lose your memory lately."

Mish: "Precious, please, now is not the time. I have to talk to you."

Precious: "Save it for Cassandra. Don't call me."

Mish: “Precious – “

She hung up leaving him frustrated beyond.

Kumkani had gone to the kitchen to make Precious a strong cup of coffee.

Kumkani: “Here. It will get you sobered up in no time.”

Precious: “Oh, no. It smells awful.”

Kumkani: “Serves you right for drinking while pregnant.”

Precious: “Please, don’t judge me.”

Kumkani: “When you’re sober, you’ll feel really bad for saying that right now.”

Precious: (sigh) “Can I take a shower? I don’t like how I smell right now.”

Kumkani: “Sure. I know jail cells don’t smell nice at all. Come, I’ll show you to one of the bedrooms.”

They went upstairs and she was intrigued by how beautiful the artwork was on the walls. He took her to one of the bedrooms that had an en-suit bathroom.

Kumkani: “Everything is brand new and clean in here. I’ll get you one of my shirts to wear. Sorry I don’t have any female clothing for you.”

Precious: “That’s okay, thank you.”

She got undressed and took a shower. Slowly but surely reality hit her. She could have killed Cassandra. A girl that her husband decided to sleep with – willingly. Who had she even become? She started to feel bad – even worse for drinking while pregnant. She finished up and found a large Tshirt on the bed

laid out for her with a tiny note “Sorry, it’s the best I could do at such short notice. Be right back, make yourself at home, Pretty Lady.” She walked down the stairs and decided to look around the house. She saw quite a lot of photos of Kumkani with a few people, but none of him with anyone who looked like a wife or girlfriend. The furniture in the house was magnificent – more mature than what Mish’s taste was like. Within a few minutes he had gone back to his house with some Burger King.

Kumkani: “I see you’ve sobered up a little.”

Precious: (embarrassed) “Believe me I wasn’t raised like that.”

Kumkani: “I can tell. I brought you some food.”

Precious: “How did you know I’d be hungry.”

Kumkani: (chuckling) “I have a sixth sense. Besides, when my sister was pregnant, she used to eat all the time.”

Precious smiled and began eating. Only then she realized how hungry she was.

Kumkani: "Your husband was here."

Precious: (shocked) "What do you mean?"

Kumkani: "He was harassing my security outside because they refused to let him in. He has been blowing up my phone with calls. I might have to change my number."

Precious: "Oh, shit. I'm so sorry, Kumkani. I really didn't mean to get you wrapped up into my problems like this. Maybe I should leave before he does something."

Kumkani: (chuckling) "I know how to handle gangsters. You don't have to leave if you don't want to."

Precious nodded and continued eating again.

Precious: "Can I ask you something?"

Kumkani: "Sure."

Precious: "Is this what you do? I mean hook up with your students?"

Kumkani: (chuckling) "I don't know what you mean. This is my first year lecturing."

Precious: "Oh, now I feel bad for even insinuating."

Kumkani: "It's okay, Pretty Lady."

Precious: "Why do you even seem interested in a girl as damaged as I am?"

Kumkani: "Because you're special and very unique and believe it or not, I dreamt of you."

Precious: (laughing) “You’re slick with your tongue, hey.”

Kumkani: “I can do a lot more with my tongue.”

She felt instant vibrations down to her clit. His bold voice was sexy and enticing enough for her. That was the very first time she had looked at Kumkani, like really looked at him. He was a beautiful man. They had a moment where they looked into each other’s eyes and it was as if for the first time a man was looking at more than her beauty; he was looking into her soul.

Kumkani: (softly) “You remind me of someone; a very dear friend.”

Precious: “Oh, really...”

Kumkani: “Yes.”

Precious had no idea, but Kumkani saw a resemblance of Gatsha in her. He had no idea at that point that he was sitting with the person he had been searching for – Princess Buhlebendalo Ncube.

Precious: (clearing throat) “I’ve had a long day. I think I should take a nap.”

Kumkani: “Of course. Come, I’ll show you to your room.”

Kumkani made it seem so imminent as if she was already living there. He went up with her to the same room she was taking a shower in.

Kumkani: “You can sleep here tonight.”

Precious: “Do you mind keeping me company for a bit? I don’t normally sleep at stranger’s houses.”

Kumkani: (smiling) “Okay.”

The bedroom had a tv in it. She got into bed as it was winter time, so it was a bit chilly. He got in next to her and they started watching Cindy Kruger's Spirit on Nextfix.

Kumkani: "I actually love this show."

Precious: "Really? I never figured you to be one to watch such."

Kumkani: "And what kind of shows do I look like I enjoy?"

Precious: "I don't know, bo Law and order so."

Kumkani: (laughing) "Just because I'm a lawyer, doesn't mean I'm boring."

Precious: "Noted."

Kumkani: "Why do you like this show?"

Precious: “I’ve always been fascinated with mediums and all those kind of things. Apart from that, it makes me feel like I can heal. You know, after my mom’s passing.”

Kumkani: “I’m so sorry.”

Precious: “It’s okay. She was literally my only parent, but I’m okay now – I think.”

Kumkani: “I also never got over my father’s death. I mean, he died when I was seventeen, but you know, the wound just never heals.”

Precious and Kumkani actually had so much in common more than they actually realized. She loved Mish – dearly, but she didn’t have that kind of connection with him. He was her first, so she was basically hanging onto that. She knew that a man like Kumkani could have been able to give her nothing but the best; more money but also more happiness. He was real and Mish had lied enough, but that was still not enough for her to let go as yet. They ended up chatting until she fell asleep in his

arms. He found himself watching her sleep and admiring her beauty.

Kumkani: "One day you'll be mine, Precious Vilakazi. One day."

He referred to her in her maiden name because he just didn't validate her marriage to Mish. He knew that the guy was a mistake, and being the spiritual man he was, he was shown that she would be his wife. Lucky for her he was a patient man and a very god fearing man.

Kumkani: "Philippians 4:13 says; "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I have been through so much, Ms. Vilakazi. I know that waiting for you to be mine is a walk in the park. I'm praying for you."

He kissed her forehead and drifted off to sleep with her in his arms.

“When we are tired, we are attacked by ideas we conquered long ago.” – Friedrich Nietzsche

The next day, Precious woke up feeling a little bad, but nothing had prepared Mish for what was yet to come. She realized Kumkani was not in bed when she got up. She was about to go take a shower and face the world, when he walked in with breakfast on a breakfast tray; and also – half naked. Mish was good looking, but Kumkani had a killer body which left Precious drooling.

Kumkani: (smiling) “Morning, Pretty Lady.”

Precious: (blushing) “Morning.”

Kumkani: “I thought I’d make you a healthy breakfast. We can’t have a pregnant woman not eating properly.”

Precious: (smiling) “Thank you.”

He sat next to her in bed and they ate together. She wasn't used to such intimate moments. There was just something about Kumkani that separated him from Mish. While eating, Kumkani's phone rang and he answered it.

Kumkani: "Hello? Yes. Okay."

He hung up and looked at Precious.

Precious: "What?"

Kumkani: "Your husband is here again, harassing my security."

Precious: "I'm so sorry about that. Maybe I should leave."

Kumkani: "You'll leave after you finish your breakfast and take a good shower."

Precious: "I don't have anything to wear."

Kumkani: "I bought you something to wear yesterday already. Come, eat up and then take a shower. He won't do anything to you, I'll make sure of that."

Precious nodded and took a shower after eating. Once she was done, she found a beautiful, tight black Prada dress on her bed. Surprisingly it was her exact size. It was a good thing she hadn't started showing yet, so it would fit her perfectly. She smiled to herself thinking of just how thoughtful Kumkani was. Once she was dressed, he went back into the bedroom and was in awe.

Kumkani: (impressed) "You look amazing."

Precious: (blushing) "Thank you. I should really get going. I don't know how to thank you for everything."

Kumkani: "You don't have to go if you don't want to."

Precious was contemplating it for sure, but she had made vows and didn't want to be seen as a whore or anything as such.

Precious: "Thanks, but I don't want to give him or my in-laws the wrong impression about me or you. Before you know it, you could lose your job as a lecturer."

Kumkani: (nodding) "Spoken like a wise woman. I understand, but you'll owe me lunch."

Precious: "Okay."

Kumkani gently put his hand on her back as they walked out. Once they were headed to the gate, they both saw Mish and Ronza. Mish looked seriously pissed, but Precious didn't really care.

Mish: (angered) "Wena (You), Kumkani. Lerete ke wena (you dick). You think you can sleep with my woman, buy her expensive clothes and get away with it?!"

Kumkani: (chuckling) “It goes to show how little you think of your woman, Meshack. I don’t take advantage of pregnant married women. And trust me, if I wanted her to sleep with me, I would have.”

Meshack: (fuming) “Voetsek, sani (Piss off, boy)!”

Kumkani: “This is getting tiring. I don’t have time to fight with small boys. I’ll see you soon, Pretty Lady. Take good care of yourself.”

Kumkani smiled and hugged Precious just to see Meshack squirm from the other side of the gate. Precious was about to walk out and Mish stopped Kumkani, by throwing a small envelope towards him.

Mish: “Here is your bail money. I don’t do charity.”

Kumkani picked it up and felt really insulted. He then gave it to the two guards.

Kumkani: "Here is R20 000. You can each take ten. I also don't need your money, Meshack. Bye for now."

Mish was so angered, more especially for the fact that Kumkani was not easily angered like he was. He wanted to charge at him, but Ronza stopped him.

Ronza: "No, Bozza (Boss). You can't do that. Not here and most definitely not now."

Meshack tried to calm down. He didn't even open the door for Precious. He went in at the back, while Ronza went in and sat at the Driver's side.

Mish: "Wa tsena or bjang (Are you getting in or not)?"

Precious gave him one look and opened the passenger door next to Ronza and sat there, making Mish worse.

Mish: (infuriated) "Die vrou o ntlwaela masepa (This woman is full of shit)!"

Precious paid no mind to him while he was shouting and yelling, even cursing at her.

Mish: (furious) “How the fuck could you do that, Precious?! Why didn’t you call me or just let her go?! You just had to shoot her and land yourself in a jail cell! Now you’re fucking your own lecturer?! I pay for your fees and this is how you repay me?! Answer me, dammit!”

Precious: “Mish, wa rasa (you’re making noise).”

Mish: (shocked) “Askies (Excuse me)?”

Precious: “O nkutlwile (You heard me).”

Mish got so angry that he grabbed her throat from the back, but before he could even grip his arms around her neck, she opened the door while Ronza was driving and fell out of the car.

Ronza: “Shit! Mish, mara keng ka wena (what is wrong with you)?! She’s pregnant for fuck’s sake!”

Ronza had to stop the car and Mish quickly got out. Everyone was watching as they were shocked. Precious quickly got up and started screaming.

Mish: “What the fuck are you doing?”

Precious: “I dare you. Come near me and I’ll scream and tell the whole world you’re trying to kill me.”

Mish: “Okay, askies (I’m sorry). I’ll shut up just please get in the car.”

Precious: (chuckling) “So you can kill me when no one’s watching? I don’t fucking think so.”

Ronza: “People are staring, Precious. Before you know it we’ll be all over social media.”

Precious: "I don't give a shit!"

Ronza: "Fine. What do you want?"

Precious: "Give me the keys. I'm driving and the two of you are sitting at the back."

Mish: "What?!"

Ronza: "Quiet, Mish! Fine."

He handed her the keys and they did as instructed, leaving people wondering what was happening. Precious didn't start the car and stared at them from the rearview mirror.

Mish: "O nyaka eng bjanong (What do you want now)?"

Precious: "Put your guns on that seat."

Ronza: “Just do it, Mish. Ke lapile nna yoh (I’m tired).”

They both put their guns on the seat and she drove off with them. She took the normal route to their house, but stopped underneath the bridge just minutes away from the house.

Mish: (irritated) “Keng bjanong (What now)?”

Precious: “Get out. Both of you.”

Ronza opened his door without any hesitation, while Mish was about to argue.

Mish: “I’m not getting out of this fucking car. Drive us home now!”

Precious took one of the guns and pointed it at Mish, who was beyond shocked.

Precious: “Wa tswa or bjang (Are you getting out or what)?”

Mish got out cautiously.

Mish: “Bona (Look), baby. I didn’t mean to sound so harsh. I mean, we can talk about this.”

Precious: “You think you’re so clever, hey. You think you can order me around, kick me around and beat me up like I am your little shit bag! It stops now. You’re going to tell me what the fuck is going on right now or else, I’ll blow your head off.”

Mish: “You wouldn’t dare.”

Precious shot Mish in the left thigh, causing him to scream in agony.

Mish: (screaming) “Aaah!”

Ronza: (shocked) “Precious, what the fuck?!”

Precious: “Today, you’re going to learn to respect your wife wena (you), Mish. Now, I won’t ask again. Where the fuck where you yesterday? How come Kumkani had to bail me out instead of my own fucking husband?”

Mish: “Stop this, Precious! You’re behaving like a desperate bitch right now.”

Precious became so infuriated by that, she shot him in his right thigh, and he fell down screaming in pain once again.

Ronza: (shocked) “Fuck, okay! We had to go do a job because we’re basically broke.”

Precious: “What are you talking about?”

Mish: Aaa! Ronza, don’t sell me out, bra.”

Ronza: “You’re the reason we’re in this shit right now. Bona (look) Precious, your husband has been overspending. Ever since the wedding. The honeymoon, the car he bought you – the gifts and even the new house. We’re flat broke and we needed to get back on our feet or else other members wouldn’t have a salary anymore.”

Precious: “So what did you do?”

Ronza: “We did what we do best – we went on a heist.”

Precious was in too much shock. As soon as Ronza said that she immediately felt a pain in her stomach. She held her stomach briefly and cried out in pain.

Precious: (screaming lightly) “Aah!”

Ronza: (worried) “Are you okay?”

Precious: “I’m fine.”

Mish: “You want to kill my baby, Precious? Is that it? You don’t want the baby and now you’re going rogue on me because you’re secretly hoping that you lose it?”

Precious was hurt that Mish didn’t show even the least amount of decency or remorse concerning the whole Cassandra issue.

Precious: “O nale molomo (You talk too much), Mish. I don’t give a shit what you do with Cassandra. From now on, you run everything by me – I mean everything. Ronza, I’d like to have a look at your books ASAP, please.”

Ronza: “Eish, your uncle used to do it for us. With him gone, everything is a mess.”

Precious: “I’m good at Math. I’ll take a look.”

Ronza nodded.

Precious: “One more thing, Mish. I’m in charge now. I mean it. If you so as to even think of fucking me over again, it will be the end of our marriage. Just because you’re paying for my fees doesn’t mean you own me.”

Precious got into the car, leaving Ronza chuckling internally and Mish deeply upset.

Mish: “You can’t leave me out here like this.”

Precious: “Why not? I was in jail why you were too busy going on heists. Call Cassandra or one of your bitches to take you to hospital. I’ll see you at home.”

She got into the car and drove off. Ronza was actually impressed rather than angry. He found the whole scene so amusing that he started laughing.

Mish: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, what the fuck is so funny?”

Ronza: (laughing) “Ah, Bozza. You created this monster. You really didn’t think that she’d be crying forever, did you? You fucked up and you can’t even admit it.”

Mish: “Hayi fok (fuck) man. She’s my wife! Mine! I am the head of the household and she is supposed to submit to me!”

Ronza: “After everything, you still haven’t learnt shit? Come on, Bozza. If you don’t step up and change your ways, you’re going to lose her. Do you honestly think that she won’t fall for that Kumkani? He has money – more money than you.”

Mish kept quiet for a second and let it all sink in.

Ronza: “When you made those vows, you vowed to love and protect and to be faithful, but you failed to do that. Now, how do you think that baby will survive if the mother is forever stressed? Come on, Bozza. Get your shit together. She is too young for all this. I did warn you.”

Mish knew that Ronza was right. He did call a spade a spade – always, no matter how much it would burn to hear it.

Mish: “Fine. I’m bleeding out. Call Bigz to come and fetch us.”

Ronza: “I would, but my phone is in the car. I guess we’re walking.”

Mish was so angry, but knowing Ronza and how he felt, he really didn’t care much for his anger. While they took a walk back to his house, Precious entered the complex. The security guards were even afraid to look at her, but she really didn’t care. Anger and hurt are dangerous emotions, much like jealousy and envy. Continuous disappointment ends up in resentment; regret; denial and tons of anger. Precious walked in and noticed the blood was still right where she left it. She recalled the whole scene in her mind and she knew that it just wasn’t her. She wasn’t in her right state of mind. She basically blew a fuse. James 4:31 says; “For man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.” The saying “hell hath no fury like a woman scorned” goes a really long way. Mish was yet to realize how he fucked with the wrong woman. She didn’t even bother changing her clothes, as she really liked the

dress. It reminded her of Kumkani for good reasons. She made herself some food and after about half an hour, Ronza walked in with Mish around his arm. Mish gave Precious an evil look, but she really didn't care.

Precious: "Oh, you're back. Finally."

Ronza: "I'll go get the first aid kit so that I can start working on his bullet wounds."

Precious: "While you're at it, please bring me the books so I can start looking through them so long."

Ronza: "Sho (Sure) Boss lady."

Mish looked at Precious and hated the woman she was becoming, but she honestly felt so good about it. She loved having power over him – just as he liked having power over her.

Mish: (annoyed) "You're enjoying this, aren't you?"

Precious: (sigh) “The only thing I’ll enjoy is a peaceful pregnancy without you in my face.”

She switched on the tv and she made headline news.

Precious: “Oh, look, I’m famous.”

Reporter: “It is said that Mrs. Ndhlovu shot Ms. Cassandra Filies with the intent to kill, upon learning that Mr. Meshack Ndhlovu impregnated Ms. Filies the night before his wedding to Mrs. Ndhlovu. Mrs. Ndhlovu is also a 19 year old law student at the University of Pretoria. Which brings one to question: will she be the one who’ll be getting her husband out of prison when the time comes?”

Precious was deeply annoyed. She knew it had Cassandra written all over it. Her face was splashed across all social media platforms. A hashtag was even started in her name #DesperateGangsterWife. She looked at Mish unimpressed.

Mish: "I'll fix this, Presh. I promise."

Precious: "You do that."

Ronza came back with the kit and some alcohol to numb the pain and disinfect the wound. He also gave Precious the books.

Precious: "Thank you. I'll be in the bedroom if anyone needs me."

Ronza nodded at her and she walked to the bedroom.

Mish: (cursing) "Fuck! Cassandra ungiwaela amasimba (is full of shit)!"

Ronza: "You have two pregnant women in your life right now. Your brother will be on your case as well very soon."

Mish: "How dare she implement my wife like that?! I'm about to kill that whore!"

Ronza: “No, you can’t do that. Not now. There’s too much heat at the moment. Wait for everything to die down. You just have to make sure that the case gets thrown out of court.”

Mish: “I can’t believe I’ve been so stupid.”

Ronza: “What’s done is done, Bafo (Bro).”

Mish: “Not exactly.”

Ronza: “O ra bjang (What do you mean)?”

Mish: “I could get Bridget. That way Precious will finally unleash all the anger she has been carrying and I’ll be in her good books again.”

Ronza: (laughing) “You still don’t know women, do you? Besides, Bridget has a lot of dirt on you, Bozza. You can’t risk it.”

Mish: "I'll just have to make sure she doesn't talk. If Precious finds out that I have known the truth about who she really is, then I'll lose her for real. I can't lose her, Ronza, especially to a guy like Kumkani. All my life I have never been scared of losing any bitch, but my wife is my most prized possession. I have never had to compete, but this Kumkani guy is making me feel the pressure."

Ronza: "Take these pills and sleep a little. We'll sort out everything tomorrow."

“You are not a rehab center; it is not your job to fix everyone.” -
Unknown

While Mish ended up passing out on the couch, Ronza took it upon himself to sleep in the spare bedroom. That way, Precious wouldn't kill Mish. Precious was busy looking through the financial records of the gang and she was beyond stunned. Of course Thoko and her friends had been calling non-stop trying to reach her amidst the whole social media saga, but she wasn't bothered. She had switched off her phone for five hours, while working on the records of the company. She couldn't believe that a man as focused as Mish was so reckless with money.

The only stable thing at that moment was the taxis. The Chesa Nyama as well as the bottle store was cracking, as he wasn't even stocking as much as he used to. She knew that things needed to change – drastically. She decided to go through her phone and peruse a few messages of interest. She came across a particular number on her WhatsApp that she didn't recognize. “I hope you're safe, Pretty Lady. I miss you and I thank you for gracing this bed with your amazing scent. Now I can't stop thinking about you and something tells me I'll be sleeping here

for a while. I hope you're okay amidst the whole social media thing, but don't you worry. I sorted it out. Just make sure you watch the news tomorrow morning at 8. Call me when you get the chance. K." She smiled to herself. That message actually warmed her heart in ways that she really needed to feel at that moment. She felt that weird cramp again, just like she had hours prior, but it quickly subsided. She took a shower and decided to try and sleep, but she found Mish in bed on his side.

Precious: (angered) "You don't think you'll be sleeping here tonight, do you?"

Mish: "Eish, Precious. I'm wounded, in pain and just exhausted. Can't we just fix this? We promised each other that we'd never go to bed angry."

Precious: "We also promised one another that we wouldn't lie to one another."

Mish: "Eish, Presh, please."

She felt that weird cramp once again and frowned as she held her stomach, leaving Mish worried.

Mish: "Is my baby okay?"

Precious: "I can't deal with you right now. If you don't leave, I'll leave."

Mish: "Fine. I'll sleep on the couch then, just to make sure that you're okay."

She ignored him and got dressed right in front of him. As wounded and in pain as he was, his penis really did respond to his wife's beautiful body. Ever since she fell pregnant, she glowed a whole lot more and her hips were a bit wider.

Mis: "I'm really sorry, baby. I know that sorry doesn't fix anything, but I regret it each and every day. I don't love Cassandra, but she is obsessed with me."

There is something about a man's weak apology after cheating. It just weakens the woman's mind and hits right at your soul.

Precious: (teary) “Did you use a condom?”

Mish: “Yes, which is why I don’t understand why she would say that she is pregnant. I swear, if she is then it isn’t mine.”

Precious: (teary) “How many times?”

Mish: “What?”

Precious: “How many times did you fuck her?”

Mish knew that he wasn’t at liberty to answer that, but in his mind he had been replaying the whole scene. Only then he had had his own “oh shit” moment in silence. He had so many rounds with her that he completely forgot if he used condoms during all of them. How could he have been so stupid? He put his wife’s health in jeopardy.

Precious: “I thought as much.”

Mish: “Wait, baby, it’s not like – “

Precious: “Switch off the light before you sleep.”

She ignored him and got into the covers. It only hit her when he said his lousy “I’m sorry” that he had cheated on her for real. He disregarded their vows even before they had even taken them. It was so messed up and she knew it too. Her cramps were starting again, but she tried to ignore them until she went to sleep. She was woken up by Mam’Thoko shouting at Ronza in the kitchen.

Thoko: “Kunini ngi founa (I’ve been calling)! Uphi ena (Where is she)?!”

Ronza: “Eish, usalele (she’s still sleeping), Ma.”

She heard the footsteps as Thoko knocked once and opened the door. She found Mish with bloody bandages on his thighs and wasn’t even bothered about him. Precious had been

feeling the cramps on and off all night, but that morning they didn't subside. She tried to hide it but her face had given everything away.

Thoko: (worried) "Oh, my baby. uRight (Are you okay)?"

Precious: "I'm fine, Ma."

Thoko: (holding her face) "Yini (What is it)? Why do you look so pale?"

Precious: (frowning) "I'm okay, Ma."

Thoko: "No, you're not. You're burning up. Come, go take a shower and I'll make you something to eat."

She tried to get up, but the cramps were getting worse. As she got up from the bed, Thoko gasped in shock and so did Mish.

Thoko: "Oh, Nkosiyami (my goodness)."

Precious: “What is it?”

Mish: (worried) “You’re bleeding.”

She turned around and looked at the spot where she slept. She saw a lot of blood. She looked behind her and saw blood on her pants and then it hit her. She didn’t say much and let the tears flow down silently. Thoko tried to remain strong, but her heart just couldn’t take it. The whole scene reminded her of the time Shadrack kicked her so hard that the foetus she was carrying dropped right onto the floor. She wasn’t even six months pregnant yet. It was her baby girl. She never healed from that.

Thoko: (crying) “Come, let’s get you to the hospital.”

Precious stunned them both with her response.

Precious: “Let me take a shower first. I’ll meet you in the kitchen.”

They were both so shocked and speechless as they watched her slowly walk to the bathroom. She locked herself in there and cried. She tried not to make noise, but even the most silent sobs make the most noise.

Thoko: (upset) "This is all your fault, Meshack."

Mish: (crying) "Ma, I really am sorry. I didn't want her to lose the baby."

Thoko: "Haven't you learnt anything from your father, Meshack? Don't you remember how he made us suffer? How he made ME suffer? Is that what you want? To turn the poor child into an old woman before she even reaches 21?"

Mish: (crying) "No, Man. I love her."

Thoko: "You don't know what love is, Meshack. Let her go. I mean it."

Mish: “Ngiyaxolisa (I’m sorry), Ma. But this time, I won’t listen to you. I love Precious, I can’t live without her. I am going to fix this – just have hope in me.”

THoko: (crying) “You broke that girl beyond repair. Let her go, Meshack. It’s the right thing to do and you know it.”

Mish: “Ma, have faith in me. Just like I saved you from uBaba (dad), I can save myself from becoming the monster I am right now. I helped you long ago, why don’t you have faith in me right now?”

Thoko knew that things were bad at that point. Mish was becoming manipulative, just like his father. He was using his mother’s trust and past experiences as a crutch and an excuse for her to trust him again.

Thoko: “Okay.”

Precious took her time and changed her clothes. She put a pad on and walked out. Her emotions could not be hidden, but she

was unbothered at that point. She knew right there and then when she was standing in the shower; seeing clots coming out of her that her baby was being excreted out of her body. Life was a bit unfair, she thought. She partially blamed herself for drinking the previous day. She hadn't been pregnant for very long and already that gift was taken from her. She hadn't realized at that point that she had forgotten how to pray. Perhaps then she would have received her answers.

Mish: "I'll go get the car ready."

Precious: "I don't want you near me. Mam'Thoko will take me."

Mish was deeply hurt. It was for the very first time that he saw so much hurt in her eyes. The last time he saw that was when her mother passed away. He didn't even feel the need to argue and make things worse.

Mish: "Okay. At least let me call your doctor and tell him to expect you."

Precious: “You can do that while we’re on our way. Can we please go, Ma?”

Thoko: (faint smile) “Of course Ma.”

They walked out and Mish was overcome with hurt; regret and sorrow. How could he let things become so bad? He promised her the world only for him to shatter it. He dialled her doctor and briefed him on the situation. Ronza walked in and found Mish crying. He had never seen him like that.

Ronza: (worried) “Eh, Bozza (Boss). What now?”

Mish: “It’s time for me to sort a few bitches out – starting with Cassandra.”

Ronza: “What are you thinking?”

Mish: “If that child really is mine, uzomuhlansa (she’ll vomit that child).”

Ronza: (shocked) “No, Bozza. Are you thinking what I think you’re thinking?”

Mish: “It’s her fault all this bullshit happened. She will regret ever messing with me.”

Meanwhile, Precious couldn’t even utter a word in the car. She was actually – emotionless. She didn’t know how to feel actually. Anger, grief, hurt, sadness; those were the tip of the iceberg compared to how she was feeling. Thoko couldn’t even comfort her because she knew that nothing she said or did would ever make it okay. They got to the hospital and the doctor was indeed expecting her. She was wheeled straight to the emergency room along with Thoko by her side. There was no time to change her, so they did what they could.

Doctor: “Mrs. Ndhlovu, I know you’re a bit nervous, but please try and remain calm. I have to check you via sonar scan first to see what’s happening in there, okay?”

Precious just nodded without saying a word. The doctor got busy

put the famous cold gel on her tummy and began with his work. Immediately his facial expression changed. Thoko noticed while Precious's eyes were glued to the screen. She couldn't hear any heartbeat or see any foetus that looked like a half bean. She knew from the screen that her baby was no more.

Thoko: "What is it, doctor?"

Doctor: (clearing throat) "Precious, may you please tell me how long you have been bleeding? Estimated?"

Precious: "I'm not sure. I had cramps on and off yesterday and the day before, but this morning I woke up with blood on my bed. When I went to take a shower, clots were coming out of me. Spare me the speech, doc. Tell me; is my baby gone?"

Doctor: "I'm afraid you just had a miscarriage, Precious. Seems to me that it was caused by stress. I am terribly sorry."

Precious refused to cry, while Thoko's tears were streaming down her face.

Precious: "So, what now?"

Doctor: "Well, we have to take you in for a womb scrub. It won't hurt much, but we just need to make sure that all the remains are gone. That way we prevent any infection or further damage to your uterus."

Precious: "Okay."

Doctor: "I'll get the process started. The process is a bit costly without medical aid, I'm afraid."

Precious: (frowning) "What do you mean?"

Doctor: "Your medical aid has lapsed, Mrs. Ndhlovu."

Precious: “Call my husband and tell him how much you will need for the procedure. He will send the money immediately.”

Doctor: “Okay.”

Thoko: (teary) “I am so sorry, my baby.”

She didn't have any words to spare, but all she knew was that Meshack Ndhlovu, a man she fell for was the reason for her hurt and he needed to pay. Deep down she still loved the bastard, which made it even more harder to let go. Meanwhile, Kumkani was very happy. He was so happy, that he decided to call his mother, Zandi.

Zandi: “Hello, my boy. Unjani kodwa (How are you)?”

Kumkani: (chuckling) “Ma, I am not a boy anymore, you know.”

Zandi: “To me, you'll always be my boy even when you're sixty.”

Kumkani: "Are you sure you'll be alive by then?"

Zandi: (chuckling) "Don't get too big for your pants. Now, tell me, how are you, really."

Kumkani: "Yoh (Wow), Ma. You won't believe this. She spent the night at my place."

Zandi: (frowning) "So soon? Kumkani, your father and I never raised you to sleep with married women."

Kumkani: "Relax, Ma. We didn't even kiss. It's a long story, but bottom line is that I have never felt like this about any woman before."

Zandi: "That's what happens when you meet your soul mate, my son. That happened to your father, and his father, and those before him."

Kumkani suddenly felt as if his insides were on fire. He felt a sudden urge to go to the toilet.

Kumkani: "Eish, Ma. Suddenly I'm not feeling too well. My stomach is on fire."

Zandi: "That is your soulmate. Something is not right with her right now. Call her and find out."

Kumkani: "Okay, I'll talk to you later."

Zandi: "Oh and Kumkani. Take it slow with her. Remember what happened last time?"

Kumkani: "Yes, Ma. I will. I love you. Bye."

Zandi: "Love you too."

They hung up and he went straight to the toilet. He was quite a healthy man so he didn't understand why he would pass such

hot stools all of a sudden. He decided to call Precious, and luckily she answered.

Precious: "Hello?"

Kumkani: "Hey. It's me, Kumkani. Are you okay?"

Precious: "No. I'm in hospital."

Kumkani: (worried) "Which hospital? What happened? Did he hurt you? Is your baby okay?"

Precious: "Pretoria East Hospital. No, and no. Listen, I have to go. We'll talk later."

She hung up before he could even say anything further. He was so panic-ridden. One thing was for sure – he had to go and see what was wrong with her. He finished his business in the toilet and took a quick shower. His emotions were all over the place, he was overcome with sudden sadness that felt like grief. His mother would tell him often that when he met his soulmate, he

would feel whatever she was feeling. If she was in pain then he would feel it too. It was rather dangerous to have a tie like that on earth, more especially when the men in his family consummate their love with these women. Usually, their love ends in either tragedy or they remain stronger than ever. He got into his car and drove straight to the hospital. He was a no nonsense man and anyone who stood in his way would feel his wrath. He got to the front desk of the emergency room and started asking.

Kumkani: “Good morning, Nurse. I am looking for Precious Vi – I mean Precious Ndhlovu.”

Nurse: “I’m sorry, are you family?”

Kumkani: “No, I’m her lawyer. Are you going to tell me where she is or not?”

Nurse: “Room 305. Third floor.”

Kumkani didn't even bother saying thank you. He felt that waiting for the lift would take eternity and rushed up the stairs. Within a minute, he had arrived. He asked the nurses at the nurse's bay and they gladly assisted him. He found her alone in the room; Mam'Thoko had gone out to get her something to eat.

Kumkani: (knocking softly) "Hey."

Precious noticed him and refused to cry. Her eyes were glistening with tears, but she refused to cry.

Precious: "Hey."

Kumkani: "May I come in?"

Precious: (nodding) "Sure."

Kumkani: "How are you? I mean it's a dumb question to ask someone in a hospital bed, but it is common decency."

Precious: (crying) “I don’t know what happened, Kumkani. I felt cramps yesterday after fighting with Mish and I fell out of the car. I mean, maybe that was the cause of it all. Perhaps I killed my baby.”

Kumkani: (frowning) “Wait a minute; you fell out of the car? Njani (How)?”

Precious: “It’s a long story, but he wanted to lash out at me and I threw myself out of the car.”

Kumkani felt so much pain in him as if he had lost his own child.

Kumkani: “Precious, when are you going to leave that man? He is not good enough for you. I’m not saying I am, but at least give yourself a chance to see who he really is from a distance.”

Precious: “It’s easier said than done, Kumkani. He picked me up when I had nothing. He paid for my fees and looks after my

niece and nephews. How does one overlook all that for one mistake?”

Kumkani knew by her words that she was broken beyond repair, as Thoko said, but he had hope.

Kumkani: “Listen, I don’t need you stressing. We’re not even over the first semester as yet and I need you to ace your modules and pass, Precious. You don’t have to worry about the charges against you anymore.”

Precious: “What do you mean?”

Kumkani: “I sorted it out. Watch the news later on at 8. I’ll leave you to rest but I’ll come by a bit later on. I have a few things I have to sort out. Take care of yourself and if you need anything, let me know, Pretty Lady.”

Precious: “Thank you. I will.”

He kissed her on the forehead and walked out. He found Mam'Thoko right at the door.

Kumkani: "Sawubona (Hello), Ma. Goodbye, Ma."

He walked out hastily like someone on a mission. Thoko knew immediately who he was. She recognized him from a few articles on the web and in a few Newspapers. When we pray we need to be careful. Whenever you pray for a man, be specific. Had Precious actually waited for a sign – a proper sign from her ancestors and from God, then she would have realized that Mish was not the one for her. A woman once said that you don't marry the first idiot that calls you beautiful. That's a recipe for disaster. Being young and vulnerable, you may see the way out – the light at the end of the tunnel, but getting there is a mission and a half for you. That was Precious. She loved Mish, well, she thought she loved him. He was becoming even more dangerous by the day and so was she. Toxicity isn't something you're born with at times; it is something that you're turned into – made to become; a learned behaviour that isn't easily removed.

“A deceitful man will go as far as to trample all over a woman’s reputation and spirit, in order to prove to his ex-love that he was faithful. The irony, is he is still in love with his ex and the new woman in his life doesn’t even realize it.” – Shannon L. Adler

Abuse comes in many forms and what Precious was experiencing was several levels of abuse. Cheating or adultery hits home for lots of people – more especially women. A lot of them are either in relationships with or married to men who just can’t make up their minds. They want to have their cake and eat it too. Selfish people turn into narcissists and those are the worst kind of cheaters. They get you to love them and do everything you want them to; once they got you hooked to them, they start showing their true colours and hurt you in the process. Once it becomes easier to hurt you, they strive to break you and at the same time you become too broken to leave. That is because they themselves cannot stand to even live with themselves and add innocent people to their own misery. Control becomes the order of the day for a narcissist and everything becomes about them – even when they have done you wrong. It’s a vicious cycle that breaks the victim even more than the perpetrator. Once the victim decides to leave,

chances of surviving are even slimmer than when they had the chance to leave before. Meshack's father was like that with his mother and in turn Meshack had turned into one type of monster no one expected. Precious was dozing off while in her hospital bed right after Kumkani left. While Thoko was sitting next to her, she saw Kumkani on the news.

Thoko: (Shocked) "Precious! Bona (Look)."

Precious managed to wake up and watch tv. She was stunned to see Kumkani on tv.

Precious: "Please turn up the volume, Ma."

Thoko turned up the volume and they listened attentively.

Kumkani: "I am pleased to let the world know that all charges against Mrs. Precious Ndhlovu have been dropped. Ms. Cassandra Filies was trespassing and attacked Mrs. Ndhlovu right in her home. As anyone would have done, she protected herself against the perpetrator. Please be advised that I

personally will take a stand against any hate mail or any hate speech, more especially the person who initially started this hashtag against her.”

Reporter: “Mr. Mdhletse, what about the rumour concerning Mr. Ndhlovu impregnating Ms. Filies?”

Kumkani: “As you stated, it is just a rumour.”

Reporter: “Is Mr. Ndhlovu fine with you being her lawyer? I mean word is that you are also her lecturer. Is it safe for me to say that you two might have something going on?”

Kumkani: “I have no knowledge of Mr. Ndhlovu’s feelings and as far as our relationship is concerned, no it is not safe for you to say anything. Don’t forget, you have a job to protect. Need I remind you that you signed a declaration when you started this job? As far as I’m concerned you’re not a gossip journalist, but you sure love sensasionalism.”

Reporter: (embarrassed) “Oh, Mr. Mdhletse, I didn’t mean it like that. What people would like to know is, are you single?”

Kumkani: (annoyed) “Clearly they didn’t teach you anything where you obtained your degree. Stick to the facts, Ms. Khumalo. Or else you’ll cost this news platform a whole lot of viewers. Now, if you’ll excuse me, we’re done here.”

Kumkani left the stage, leaving the reporter so embarrassed. Precious was rather chuffed about Kumkani’s initiative to save her from embarrassment and most importantly, to save her from a criminal record. What she wanted to understand was how he managed to do it. Thoko noticed how deep in thought she was.

Thoko: “He is one of a kind, isn’t he?”

Precious: “I guess so, Ma.”

Thoko thought of a way of getting Precious to try and get it on with Kumkani. That would obviously mean betraying her son,

but that seemed like the only way to save Precious from that whirlwind of madness. While she was trying to sleep for a while, Mish walked in – fuming.

Mish: (fuming) “So it’s like this now, Precious?!”

Thoko: “Meshack, uyarasa (you’re noisy).”

Mish: “No, Ma. Ima kancane (wait a minute). Wena (you), Precious. Why is this guy all over you now? First he bails you out then takes you to his house and buys you expensive clothes and now, uci the le case (he got your case thrown out). Uyam’nyobisa (are you fucking him now)?”

Thoko: (shocked) “Meshack Ndhlovu! You will not speak to your wife like that – especially not in my presence! Uyangizwa (You hear me)?!”

Mish was fuming so much, his mother’s warnings fell on deaf ears.

Mish: “It’s because of him, isn’t it? You fucked him and decided to kill my baby, angithi (isn’t it)?”

Thoko: (angered) “Hey, wena (you), Meshack – “

She was about to get up and slap him back to his senses, but Precious stopped her.

Precious: “Myeke (leave him), Ma. Meshack, akere wena o lenyora (you’re the boss, aren’t you)? You failed to tell me and your mother that we were going to go hungry because of your stupid fucking choices! You chose to have an expensive wedding – you chose to buy me a car. YOU chose to sell the house in Sunvalley and YOU chose to buy us a house in Equestria. YOU chose to go around sleeping with whores, angithi (isn’t it)? Maybe Rose is also pregnant for all we know because you can’t even seem to be sensible enough to wear a condom.”

Mish: (angry) “Uyangijwaela (You’re fucking with me), Precious!”

He was about to get closer to Precious, but she wasn't even bothered.

Precious: "Come closer – I dare you. Come, hit me. Isn't that what you're good at? Keep behaving like a dumb fuck, Meshack and I swear, I'll be in Kumkani's arms before you even know it."

Mish: (shouting) "So uyangifebela vele (you're actually whoring around)?!"

Precious: "Akitsi (I don't know). Since you know everything, why don't you tell me? I'm about to save us – save all of us. You made stupid choices and you still want to walk around like you own me, Meshack. As of next year, you won't have to pay for my studies anymore – that's if you and I will still be married."

Meshack knew then that Precious was not about to mess around and cry over him anymore.

Mish: “O reng (What are you saying), Precious?”

Precious: “I’m saying exactly that. Since you think you can own me, I’ll get a job in the mean time or apply for a bursary. You don’t have to do all of that.”

Meshack noticed how unbothered Precious was. She had had enough of his bullshit and it hurt him – big time.

Mish: (softly) “Presh, let’s talk about this.”

Precious: “I’m done talking. I’m lying in a hospital bed after losing my baby. Now do your mother and I are a favour and fuck off. I need my rest.”

When a woman becomes real disrespectful, that is when she has had enough. She might still love you, but she doesn’t care about you anymore. At that point, Mish saw that Precious was capable of anything – probably more than he was and that was shit scary. He looked at her and then at his mother. The two

most important women in his life were very angry at him and he had no control over himself nor his actions anymore.

Precious: “O sale mo (You’re still here)? Should I call in security?”

That hurt like a bitch.

Mish: (hurt) “That won’t be necessary. I’ll leave.”

Precious: “Sharp.”

He walked out with so much sorrow in his heart and then in a split second it transformed into anger. He walked out and found Ronza waiting for him outside the car, having a smoke.

Ronza: “And then, Bozza (Boss)?”

Mish: “It’s time to pay Cassandra a visit.”

Ronza: "What about Viper?"

Mish: "I don't give a shit about Viper."

Ronza: "Okay. Let me call Bigz, for back up."

Mish: "Sharp."

Ronza called Bigz and they all got into the car and headed out to Cassandra's place. Mish was not saying a word throughout the whole ride. He had heard that she was out of hospital after the bullet wound incident. Raymond was not very happy to hear about that and took it as another way of getting revenge on his brother. He noticed that Precious was his soft spot and by the look of things their marriage was in shambles within less than a year of marriage.

Mish: "Ronza

let's go up. Bigz, be on the look out for any drama."

Bigz: "Sure, sure."

Mish and Ronza walked in and the security guard couldn't even stop them. They knocked on her door and being very careless, thinking that it was either Raymond or one of her friends, she just told them to come in. Even the door was unlocked.

Cassandra: "Come in."

She got startled when she saw Mish and Ronza walk in. There were a pair of crutches next to her on the couch, and her right thigh was draped in a bandage.

Mish: (hardened) "Hello, Cassie. Lovely to see you again."

Cassandra: (worried) "What are you doing here? How did you even get past my security?"

Mish: "You should know better than to ask me that kak (shit). Wena what were you doing at my place the other day? What did you do for my wife to shoot you?"

Cassandra: “What’s the point? The charges were dropped. How convenient.”

Mish: (chuckling) “Okay then, Miss Smarty pants. Tell me, are you really pregnant – with my baby?”

Cassandra became hesitant at first, but spoke eventually.

Cassandra: (hesitant) “Of course.”

Mish: “Well then. You do know what this means, right? You decided to tell my wife first without coming to me first. Now, as you know my wife just lost her baby, so I wouldn’t dare have a baby with someone like you. You ruined my marriage already.”

Cassandra: (worried) “What are you talking about, Meshack?”

Mish: “In plain and simple English, I can’t let you have this baby. Ronza, ke nako (it’s time).”

Cassandra was so fearful, she actually regretted lying to Meshack. She wasn’t carrying his child, but his brother’s child and now, Meshack was about to end the life of that innocent soul.

Cassandra: (scared) “Wait! I lied, okay! It’s not yours – it’s Ray’s baby.”

Mish: (chuckling) “Even better. I’m saving this baby from a whole lot of misery.”

Ronza pinned her to the couch, while Mish took off her jeans and underwear and spread her legs. She became even more frightened when he wore gloves and took out a small plastic bag from his back pockets.

Cassandra: “Mish, please. Don’t do this – I’m begging you! I only did what I did because I love you. I just wanted you to love me, Meshack! I’m begging you!”

Mish: “Do you know what these two pills are, Cassie? I mean you’ve been in the game long enough, hey. You have had what? Five abortions already? Why do you want to be so selfish to let this one live while you killed the others? Anyway, these are misoprostol pills. They have to be inserted in the vagina, and then they do the job. Don’t worry, you’re not very far so you won’t have to worry about too much pain. It will be over in no time.”

Cassandra cried while Mish put the pills deep inside of her, without any remorse.

Cassandra: “Ray already knows. I told him about the baby.”

Mish: “Well then untell him. You’re a smart girl. I hope I never see you again after this.”

Ronza let go of her while Mish walked out and threw the gloves in a nearby dustbin and they drove off with Bigz. Cassandra had no idea what she had gotten herself into by falling for a monster like Mish. Raymond was a monster, but Mish was worse. According to him, she ruined his life and everything in it. If it wasn't for her confessing, he and Precious would still be alright. He had no idea what his wife was planning for him, and had even less of an idea of what Kumkani had up his sleeves. Kumkani had gone back to his house to do some digging on Meshack. He already had compiled a file of all his transgressions and arrests; some of which he was never even arrested for. Meshack was so used to buying cops off and getting away with murder. He couldn't stop thinking about Precious, and at that he wanted to get closer to her. He had a plan; a plan that might jeopardise everything Mish had worked for. A plan no one had seen coming, but before he could execute his plan, he took a drive to a church in Mamelodi, the church where Mam'Thoko used to go to. He did a lot in his spare time; including a lot of pro bono work. One of the Pastors was accused of money laundering, so he had offered to take the case on for free. Little did he know that the Ncube ancestors had led him there for a reason. He walked in and found Mma Moruti (Pastor's wife).

Kumkani: “Dumela Mme (hello, ma). My name is Kumkani, I’m your husband’s lawyer.”

Mma Moruti: (smiling) “Oh, yes. Le kae, Ntate (How are you, sir)?”

Kumkani: “I’m fine, thank you.”

Mma Moruti: “Please, take a seat. I’ll bring you some cookies and tea.”

Kumkani could never say no to an old woman’s kind gesture.

Kumkani: (smiling) “Thank you. Please also bring all the necessary documentation I have asked for.”

Mma Moruti: “Certainly.”

While Kumkani was perusing through the photo’s on the wall in the lounge, he was rather stunned to see a picture of someone who looked just like Lehumo. Gatsha would often tell him

about Lehumo and he would show him pictures of them together, so he had a good idea of how she looked. She hadn't aged a day in her life, but looked rather tired in her picture on the wall at Mma Moruti's house. He took out his phone and searched for a picture of Lehumo, and he matched it with the one on the wall. He was in so much disbelief. Mma Moruti came back with the tray of tea and biscuits and found him staring at the picture.

Mma Moruti: (smiling) "We take pictures of almost everything and everyone we come across."

Kumkani: "Who is this woman? She looks so familiar."

Mma Moruti: "Oh, that's Belinda. Poor soul. She died a year ago, but her daughter is still alive. You'll meet her one day if she decides to come back to church."

Kumkani was a bit saddened that Lehumo had passed away, but he was hopeful that he would find Princess Buhle.

Kumkani: "This daughter of his, does she live here?"

Mma Moruti: "Oh, no. She recently moved to the suburbs with her husband."

Kumkani: (frowning) "Husband?"

Mma Moruti: "Yes, Precious married a gangster, but we are not here to judge. Only God knows our hearts."

It suddenly hit him. He only knows of one Precious who is married to a gangster.

Kumkani: "This Precious, are you talking of Precious Ndhlovu?"

Mma Moruti: "Yes, the very same one you were talking about on tv. I must say, that man has gotten her involved in something shady. That girl was the sweetest girl I had ever met. I guess it is true what they say; all these sweet girls love rough guys."

Kumkani had finally cracked his case, a lot sooner than he thought. He had found the heir to the Ncube throne. Something just seemed a lot offish for him. He had a strong hunch that Meshack was hiding a lot more than met the eye. At least he was one step closer to taking her back home to her homeland. The problem now was only one; how was he going to tell her that she was the Princess of Zululand and sole heir to the kingdom?

“There comes a point in your life when you realize: Who matters, Who never did, Who won’t anymore, And who always will. So, don’t worry about people from your past, there’s a reason why they didn’t make it to your future.” – Adam Lindsay Gordon

Precious didn’t even tell Mish that she was getting discharged, but as always he had hired another one of his boys to keep track of her every movement. She wanted to head back home so that she could write her last test before the school holidays. She needed to ace her studies so that Meshack would back off. She walked in with Mam’ Thoko to find the shock of her life.

Precious: “What the fuck, Mish?”

Mish: “Hi, baby. I didn’t know you’d be here so soon.”

He knew very well that she would be coming home, hence he had brought the cat out of the bag for her to find.

Precious: “Bridget.”

Bridget was tied to a chair, with blood oozing from her nostrils and one eye half shut. He must have been giving her a bit of a beating.

Thoko: (shocked) “Meshack, you don’t beat women up. She is the mother of those children. Think about them.”

Mish: “Ma, this has got nothing to do with you. Please, khaume kancane (wait a minute).”

Thoko knew that there was nothing she could say or do to calm him down. Mish looked at Precious and noticed how angry she was getting and he was loving it. He craved seeing her unleash her anger onto someone else that was not him. He had somehow convinced himself that she would go back to being sweet old Precious.

Precious: “Where did you find her?”

Mish: “Oh, Ronza found her. She had made a nice cosy home for herself in Kzn.”

Thoko was hoping that Precious would speak some sense into Mish, but she did the opposite.

Thoko: “My baby, please tell him to stop this nonsense.”

Precious: “You have some nerve, Bridget. Do you know how stressed you left me? You took all the money my mother left for me and you didn’t even leave one dime. You even left your children for me to look after and not a single note! Imagine that – a whole 19 year old is left to look after three kids! How fucked up could you be?!”

Bridget: “Please, I’m so sorry. Greed took over me. I’ll do anything for your forgiveness.”

Mish: “What do you want to do to her, Presh? She nearly ruined your life. I mean, I am the one who came in and saved you. If it wasn’t for me, you would have been on the streets or

doing something else for money. She stole from you. How do you want to punish her?”

Mam'Thoko was stressed to the core, hyperventilating in silence, watching the whole movie unravel in front of her. Many people have told her that her son was capable of evil deeds, but she never thought he actually did them. Precious on the other hand, was overcome with hatred and rage, Satan had taken over her body and she was about to commit a crime of an odd kind. She took a look at all the tools that Ronza had in his hands, and grabbed a pair of pliers.

Precious: “You look like you could use some body modifications. I want you to stare into the mirror one day and never forget what you did to me.”

While Bridget tried begging, Precious began. She hadn't even used pliers before, but she was a pro and she had turned Mish on. She started pulling each of her thumbs and pinky fingers apart. Bridget was screaming so much, leaving Thoko in so much shock, she couldn't even speak. Precious then proceeded to taking out a few of Bridget's front teeth.

Bridget: (crying) "Please! Please, don't do this. Meshack is trying to turn you into something you're not. I know the truth – I know why he actually married you. The truth about why he won't even leave you."

Mish: "Shut the fuck up, bitch."

Precious: (frowning) "What truth?"

Bridget: "The truth about you and Hosea. You're – "

Before she could even finish her sentence, Meshack knocked her out by hitting her at the back of her head with his gun.

Precious: (worried) "What is she talking about, Mish?"

Mish: "Are you going to believe anything she says? Come on, she is desperate. She is lucky enough she is still alive."

Precious: “Whatever, take her to her house she shared with Uncle Hercules. Don’t you dare kill her, you hear me?”

She was calling the shots and Mish was loving it. He had no idea she was about to be in full control of his gang by the end of the weekend. While Mish and Ronza took Bridget out of the house, Precious started mopping the floor by getting rid of all the blood. Thoko was just standing there in shock.

Thoko: “Look what he has done to you. You are a God fearing child, a child of God, man, Precious. You are no killer, no torturer.”

Precious: “Ma, I am what I am now. I’m sorry to disappoint you.”

Thoko: (crying) “I can’t deal with this right now. I’ll call you.”

She upped and left, while Precious was just plotting her big plan in her mind. She decided to call Rachel and Deborah and interest them in making some money. She started cooking for

them and had one of Mish's expensive wine bottles at hand. She was on a mission to piss him off, but most importantly, to make him aware that she was the boss now. She was not completely unaware that Bridget had the secret that would make her end Mish in a heartbeat. After cooking up a feast that included mashed potatoes, creamy spinach, lamb shank and roasted lamb chops, she took a shower and awaited her friends while sipping on Mish's expensive cognac. She wasn't really big on whiskey, but she felt like a bit of a bossy bitch, so she felt as if it would suit the mood. While watching tv, sitting on the exact couch that Cassandra bled in, she received a call from Rachel and Debbie.

Precious: "Okay, the pass code is 2634."

She hung up and they arrived a minute later.

Debbie: "Oh, friend. Are you okay? Whats this we were of you being arrested and suddenly losing your baby?"

Rachel: "Someone is looking for some serious clout by making you a celebrity."

Precious: "I'll tell you guys all about it later. That's not why I called you here."

Debbie: "Hao, okay. Why did you call us here then?"

Precious: "Take a seat while I pour you two some wine."

Rachel: "Hmmm

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it smells so delicious in here."

Precious: "You can have all that food after we discuss some important business."

They both looked at Precious and realized she actually looked different.

Debbie: "Wait, did you dye your hair?"

Precious: “Oh, I cut my hair and dye-ed it grey. You like it?”

Rachel: “We were so lost in the moment and worried about you, we didn’t realize.”

Yep, she had managed to cut pretty much all of her hair off and dye what was left grey. She did it quite well and it suited her features.

Debbie: “Nonetheless, you look so different, but gorgeous.”

Rachel: “Mish must be loving the new you. And what’s the deal with your hot lecturer?”

Precious really didn’t want to get into that. She handed them their glasses of wine and got straight to the point.

Precious: “As you both know, Meshack ke legenza (is a gangster).”

Debbie: (shocked) “I honestly thought that was just a rumour.”

Rachel: “Wait, you mean, actual gangster? Like killer gangster?”

Precious: (sigh) “Yes, like killer, hijacker, heist gangster. Anyway, I’d like you two to join the crew, provided that you will get paid quite a hefty amount for your efforts.”

They were both so shocked and pretty much dumbstruck.

Debbie: “Tell me you’re joking. Precious, I’m not a gangster, I mean I don’t even know what a gun feels like.”

Precious: “Okay, I can see you’re not taking me seriously. So, here is the 411 – the full story on what happened and why I am doing this.”

They listened attentively as she told them everything from what happened with Cassandra, to shooting her in the thigh, to

spending a few hours in jail, to losing her baby. She briefed them about Kumkani as well. Of course they cried together and then looked at her in severe shock.

Rachel: "Oh, my goodness. And you're still staying?"

Precious: "You can ask me that a few months later when I ask you how it's going with Tony. The truth is, men can fuck you over – badly. Mish fucked me over, and it is high time I took charge of this business. I just need to make enough to finish my degree and then live my life. Isn't that what you guys want? I mean Debs, you and Charlie could start a whole new life afresh after this whole thing. We're giving ourselves four years max."

They really seemed quite interested.

Precious: "What do you say?"

Debbie: "I mean I get it; Rachel would be doing all our IT jobs and hacking, but what would I be doing?"

Precious: “You’re going to handle all our books. You’ll have to create a suitable paper trail for us of course, while I survey all kinds of businesses we could open in order to launder the money. We can’t put the money in a bank account – well, only some of it. What do you guys say?”

Debbie: “I’m in.”

Rachel: “Well, my parents basically told me that they won’t be able to pay all my fees as of next year, so I’m in too.”

Precious was ecstatic. She was very delighted that her first phase of her new plan was in place.

Precious: “Okay, good. I’m very happy you agreed, because the gang is coming in about half an hour or so.”

Debbie: “So you mean to say that we’re going to be dining with gangsters?”

Precious: (chuckling) “Well, if it makes you happy putting it like that then yes, we’ll be dining with gangsters.”

Rachel: “I’m nervous.”

Precious: “You’re one of them now, so don’t be.”

They continued chatting away and talking about their new ventures. She told them what she did to Bridget, and of course they had no idea she even had it in her. Thirty minutes later, there was a knock on the door. It was a few of Mish’s crew who had responded to her message.

Precious: “Debbie, Rachel, this is Snakes, Pilot, Ganja and Ghandia.”

She had only met them briefly, but she introduced them so well as if she knew them all.

Rachel: “Oh, Ganja and Ghandia look so much alike.”

Precious: “They’re twins. Gentlemen, may I interest you in a drink? You do know that my husband loves only the finest – finest wine, finest whiskey, finest cognac and of course – the finest bitches.”

Snakes and Pilot weren’t sure whether to laugh or not, but Ganja and Ghandia being the funny guys laughed so hard it even amazed Precious.

Snakes: “I’ll have what you’re having.”

Precious: “Cognac it is.”

Pilot: “Does boss know we’re here?”

Precious: “Don’t worry, Pilot. I’m not angry at you. I chose to shoot that bitch and even though you weren’t watching me – it’s okay. Believe me.”

Ghandia: (laughing) “Boss married one hell of a feisty woman.”

Two minutes later, Mish, Ronza and Bigz walked in. As soon as Mish noticed his men seated around the table with Precious and some of her friends, he became alarmed, disturbed, but most importantly – pissed.

Mish: “What the fuck is going on here, Precious?”

Precious: (smiling) “Oh, hey, honey. Come, sit you guys. You’re about to miss the family meeting.”

The tables had turned, much to Mish’s dismay. It was game on.

“When the past calls, let it go to voicemail. It has nothing new to say.” – Mandy Hale

Mish was really getting irritated. He hated being side tracked and saw as if Snakes, Pilot, Ganja and Ghandia were turning against him. They knew everything about him and he thought that they had been dishing out all information about him to his wife.

Mish: (annoyed) “Ngithe kuyenzakalani lana (I said, what’s happening here)?”

Precious: “Goodness, Mish. Sit, we’re waiting on you three so we can start eating. I made lamb shank, just the way you like it.”

She smiled at him in such a devious way. He hadn’t seen her smile in such a long time that he thought she was clearly up to something.

Mish: (angered) "I won't stand for this – "

Ronza was always clear minded. He always preferred to analyse the situation first before exploding. That way, you give a person a long rope to hang themselves.

Ronza: "Bozza, leave it. Let's sit down and eat."

Mish was annoyed but decided to listen to Ronza, his voice of reason.

Precious: (smiling) "That took you long enough."

Ronza: "What are we celebrating, Boss lady?"

Precious: (chuckling) "Boss Lady. Funny but I like it. Well, we're celebrating a new venture. A new way of how this whole crew is going to work."

Mish: (puzzled) "What do you mean?"

Precious: “I’ll explain later. Shall we pray?”

Mish was very impatient and he knew he had no right to basically be mean to her after what she had just been through. He couldn’t even understand why she seemed so happy after losing their child. He partially blamed her for the loss. They all joined hands and Precious decided to lead the prayer, something she hadn’t done in a very long time.

Precious: “Dear God, our Father in heaven, we thank you so much for this wonderful day. We thank you for being able to enjoy such a pleasant meal, for we know others do not even have the luxury.”

While she was praying, she could sense that Mish had his eyes open, staring at her, so she decided to continue with her eyes open, while staring right at Mish.

Precious: “Oh, Modimo wa rona (Our God), I ask that from now on, things become even better than ever – more especially after what I have been through these past few weeks. I know, I

may have lost my baby, but you will bless me with even more babies. I ask that you bless others with the spirit of faithfulness, kindness, gratitude, and allow them to appreciate what they have before they lose it.”

So many puns were intended in her prayer, and she got Mish so tense, his eyes were bloodshot. She was enjoying it, because he hated looking like an idiot in front of his crew. Everyone knew him as the man who had everything under control, so he wouldn't dare hit her in front of them.

Precious: “We ask this in Jesus’ Mighty name. Amen.”

Everyone: (except Mish) “Amen.”

She had her eyes fixed on him just as he had been watching her.

Precious: (smiling) “Let’s dig in. Bon Appetite.”

Ronza: “I like the new look. It suits you.”

Precious: (smiling) “Thanks, Ronza. At least someone was able to notice.”

Mish knew that it was a jab directed at him.

Mish: (tense) “When did you have time to even do that? Did your boyfriend send you a stylist?”

Everyone could sense the tension from Mish, but Precious kept her cool.

Precious: “By my boyfriend, you mean Kumkani. No, he is not my boyfriend. He is my lawyer – the only person who managed to get me off the hook for shooting your side piece. But, I am willing to move on with life if you are.”

Everyone was rather shocked at how Precious was responding to Mish. He was so tense, and rather shocked himself, that he decided to keep quiet.

Precious: “Anyway, since we’re all here. I may as well get started. I took a look at the books and I must say, you guys are slacking for all time gangsters. I mean, how long have you been in the game? Eight to ten years? What have you achieved so far? By now all of you and by all I mean ALL of you were supposed to have his own empire. By empire I’m talking taxis, chesa nyama’s, bottle stores, clubs, but yet you are all stuck in a ditch you started in. All you ever do is buy expensive clothes, buy your bitches expensive clothes without even worrying about the future. I mean I am sure all of you want to have wives and children at some point in your lives, isn’t it so?”

Rachel and Debbie were shocked, but they really liked the person Precious was becoming. She was flowing as a woman in power. She was loving it so much, that even the men were attentively listening to her, much to Mish’s dismay. He didn’t even give himself the chance to listen to his wife’s brilliant plan.

Precious: “Yes, I know everything. I know how your Bozza blew nearly all of your cash and now you went on a little heist for old times’ sake while I was in a jail cell.”

They all looked down – except Mish and Ronza. Ronza was quite impressed with Precious but he didn't want to make it obvious.

Precious: “Yes, he is your Bozza, but surely you have all been in the game so long that you all deserve the same respect and recognition that he has from all of you. He wasn't supposed to spend all of the money on our wedding and OUR lifestyle. You are ALL in on this, so you need to make decisions – together. If you keep going on like this, you will be doing hijackings and heists all your lives. We don't want that, we want to steal just enough to be able to build an empire and live a good life.”

She had sold it.

Ronza: “So, what is your plan?”

Precious: “I'm glad somebody is interested.”

She said that looking at her husband.

Precious: “I came up with a few adjustments. What you have left in your petty bank accounts won’t be able to sustain your lifestyles, so you will have to make minor adjustments. You will have to start doing big heists – not the small ones you are used to doing like going after local rich drug lords. Hijackings are for kids and they most certainly don’t pay. And we are not into killing the youth with drugs – that’s Viper’s style. We’re not about that life. You guys are now going to have to start going big or go home. I’m talking serious heists; cash in transit heists, bank robberies and if you pull it all off, you might as well go for the Reserved Bank of South Africa.”

Mish couldn’t possibly think that his wife was into such shit, so he laughed out loud, making everyone else wonder.

Mish: (laughing) “This is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. We’re not equipt for that kind of shit, Precious. You of all people aren’t equipt for that.”

He was very condescending, but she kept her cool. Surprisingly, everyone else was quite intrigued.

Ghandia: “How do you suppose we do all that, Boss P?”

Mish’s smirk immediately disappeared as soon as he heard Ghandia call his wife Boss.

Precious: “I’m glad you asked, Ghandia. Well, meet my lovely and oh, so gorgeous friends Deborah aka Debbie and Rachel. Rachel is a computer genius, currently studying IT. She can hack anything that has signal – even those without. Debbie here, is a master of numbers. She is so good at anything that contains numbers, I am pretty sure she dreams of numbers.”

Ganja: “So, where do they fit in?”

Precious: “You see, Rachel here is our hacker, so we get her the best of the best technology. Everytime you go on a heist, she’ll be here with us ladies on the other line, making sure that no camera in sight will be able to notice you. You will leave no mark at all and you will be able to hack into any system of any place you decide to rob. Debbie here, will cook some books for us. Obviously you can’t put the money in the bank and you most certainly cannot hide millions in your houses, so she is

going to create ghost accounts and businesses for us – all of us. Actual businesses.”

Her plan was solid and she had sold it on a silver platter.

Bigz: (chuckling) “That is the best plan I have ever heard.”

Ronza: (smiling) “You did well by marrying her, Mish. She is going to take us to new heights.”

Mish: (annoyed) “This little plan won’t work.”

He really had to go there.

Precious: “Excuse me?”

Mish: “Where do you think we’ll find the money to buy all this equipment you need?”

Precious: “Well, you currently have about R1 million in your joint account and I bet that will be enough to buy all we need. If you’re going to have a negative mindset then you might as well stick to owning a small car wash and a few taxis, and you can kiss this house goodbye. I’m pretty sure no where will want you then.”

She had hit a nerve, a nerve Mish had been trying to let die all evening. Mish got up and was about to charge at her, leaving Rachel and Debbie stunned.

Mish: (enraged) “Ungijwaela amasimba (You’re full of shit), Precious! Who the fuck do you think you are?”

Bigz: “Ah, no man, Bozza. We don’t hit women, aowa (no).”

Snakes: “He’s right, Bozza. Calm down. This doesn’t look good.”

Ganja: “Even those pretty ladies look shocked and shaken.”

Ghandia: “How do you expect her to even sleep next to you when you’re always ready to charge at her?”

He realized his whole gang was on Precious’s side.

Mish: (sigh) “Fine. I’ll calm down.”

Precious: “Maybe you should take a walk, my love.”

Mish: (snappy) “Don’t fucking tell me what to do!”

Ronza: “Mish, man.”

While Ronza was trying to calm him down, there was a knock on the door.

Mish: “Who else did you invite?!”

Precious: “No one. I’ll get it.”

Ghandia: "Let me rather do it."

Ghandia got up so fast and opened the door. Everyone, including Precious was very shocked to see who was there.

Ghandia: "Ekse (Hey), Mr. Lawyer. Go vayang hier (what's going on here)?"

Kumkani: "Hi. May I come in?"

Mish was even more irritated, but Ronza held him firmly. He just gave Precious a look and she wasn't even bothered.

Kumkani: "Good evening to you all."

Rachel: "Hey..."

Debbie: (whispering) "Man, he's hot."

Ronza: “O batlang mo (What are you doing here)?”

Kumkani: “I came here with a proposition.”

Everyone looked at him with anticipation.

Kumkani: “I’d like to be your lawyer – free of charge.”

Mish: (clicking tongue) “Ke tlwaediwa masepa mo (I’m being mind fucked here).”

Ronza: “Why would we want that?”

Kumkani: “Well, because of this.”

He handed him a file which he handed to Precious to have a look at.

Kumkani: “It’s all the evidence the state has against you. They are going to take you down – all of you. Including all the women in your lives. I would just love to take on the biggest case in the country should shit hit the fan. Judging by the way you’re living life, you most certainly need a legal eagle by your side.”

Mish: “What makes you think I can trust you? Aren’t you the fucker who’s after my wife?”

Kumkani: “Think about it, Meshack. I’m not after anyone. That would be very disrespectful and it is most certainly disrespectful of you to say such about her. Anyway, think about it and give me a call. Sharp.”

Precious and pretty much everyone was stunned at how big the file is. The file contained contained information about Mish and his crew that very few people knew about. So much information that dated back to when he started being a gangster – even deep, dark secrets about a few members, including Mish murdering his father along with the docket that went missing and Snake’s rape case which was apparently a whole lie. Ganja and Ghandia were once caught transporting

weed valued at over R2 million at the airport and the docket also went missing – but it was there in the file they received from Kumkani.

Bigz had hijacked a mafia boss a few years before and the docket also appeared in the file that Kumkani handed them. Ronza had quite a large number of felonies against him, as well as Pilot. They all asked themselves the same question: “What the fuck was happening?” Kumkani had them right where he wanted them. He wanted to be a member of the gang – silently. That way he could keep an eye on Meshack and Precious as well. He had no idea that she was joining the crew as the lady boss. That made everything harder for him since he really cared for her. She was no longer the real Precious. She couldn’t possibly return to Zululand and rule it while being a gangster wife. Something had to change and he was going to do just that.

“I have memories – but only a fool stores his past in the future.” – David Gerrold

Mish was spiralling out of control slowly, but surely. Everyone had left and Precious had put the dishes in the dishwasher and cleaned up, while Meshack was staring at her.

Mish: “So this was all part of your plan, huh?”

Precious: (sigh) “Keng bjanong (What is it now)?”

Mish: “You’re turning my gang against me – my own gang, Precious. Who the fuck do you think you are? They don’t call me Bozza for no reason.”

Precious: “I’m your fucking wife. If you were a real boss you would have taken their feelings and finances into account when you started doing that shit. You like acting like the world owes you, Meshack. Well, news flash, it doesn’t owe you shit. And I also don’t owe you shit. Remember what you promised me

when we got married? You promised me the world. Is this part of you giving me the world? You constantly annoying me and swearing at me, threatening to hit me? I don't need this shit and if you continue, I might just take you up on your offer."

Mish: "What offer?"

Precious: "I'll become Kumkani's girlfriend. Since it is what you're dying to see."

Mish: (angered) "You wouldn't dare."

Precious: "Try me. Be a fucking man and grow the fuck up. We have a heist to plan."

She headed to the bedroom and realized he was following her.

Precious: "O nagana gore o ya kae (Where do you think you're going)?"

Mish: "I'm going to bed."

Precious: "I'm sleeping alone tonight. Don't even try to force me to sleep with you."

She walked away leaving Mish feeling like utter nothing. She really didn't have time to start a fight anymore. She was over that. She got into the shower and got in bed, she decided to call Kumkani.

Kumkani: "Pretty Lady."

Precious: (smiling) "Hey. Are you busy?"

Kumkani: "Never too busy for you. What's up? Miss me?"

Precious chuckled but deep down she was actually missing him."

Precious: "Uhm, I wanted to ask you something."

Kumkani: "Shoot."

Precious: "Did you have anything to do with the evidence you handed to us earlier on tonight? I mean no one had ever been busy building a case against Meshack until you came along."

Kumkani had to lie himself out of that one.

Kumkani: "No, I had absolutely nothing to do with it. Do you honestly think I'd want to throw you under the bus like that?"

Precious: "No, I don't think so."

Kumkani: "Good, I'd like to ask you something."

Precious: "Yes?"

Kumkani: "Do you have any knowledge of where your parents originate from?"

Precious didn't really find the question odd. Everyone knew she was an orphan.

Precious: "No, not really. All I know is that they come from Zululand. My father died when I was a baby. There's not much I know about him."

Kumkani: "Okay. I can help you find some information if you'd like."

Precious: "You'd do that?"

Kumkani: "For you, anything."

Precious: "I'd really appreciate that, Kumkani. Thank you so much."

Kumkani: "You're welcome. I'll see you tomorrow on campus."

Precious: "Okay. Goodnight."

Kumkani: "Night, Pretty Lady."

She was about to sleep until Mam'Thoko sent her a WhatsApp reminding her about her cleansing appointment the following day. She had to get cleansed since she had lost her baby. It was culture. She figured Mam'Thoko was afraid to face her after seeing her rip a few of Bridget's fingers and teeth out. She decided to sleep and had a really odd dream of her mother. She visited her with Gatsha by her side, she was just crying without saying a word. She got up in the morning and forgot about the dream, as she was worried about the test. She hadn't studied much, but she was sure to ace it. She got cleaned up and dressed and was about to walk out until she saw Meshack waiting for her in the kitchen.

Mish: "Hey."

Precious: "Hi."

Mish: "I figured I could drive you to school today."

Precious: "There's no need for that. You bought me a car, remember? Unless you want it back."

Mish: "Come on, Presh, I'm trying here."

Precious: "I don't need you to try anything, Meshack. I need you to man up and own up. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a test to write."

Mish: "Good luck."

She walked out, closed the door behind her without even responding. She really didn't need such drama so early in the morning. She got into her car and drove off to campus. She parked her car and found Kumkani on her walk to class. That man always looked so good in a suit.

Kumkani: "Morning."

Precious: "Good morning."

Kumkani: "So, did you guys think about my proposal?"

Precious: (chuckling) "What makes you think that I am involved in any decision making that involves my husband's gang?"

Kumkani: "Well, it looked to me like you were having a very serious meeting over dinner, but I apologize for jumping the gun."

Precious didn't want Kumkani knowing that she was now in charge of everything. She valued his opinion and didn't want him to lose the respect he had for her.

Precious: "It's okay."

Students were starting to stare again, but they didn't even whisper as always – not one bit.

Precious: “It’s nice to see that they’re not staring as much today.”

Kumkani: “They won’t even dare to do that ever again. I told you, I get shit done.”

She wondered what on earth he did because even her hash tag went missing on social media. She sat at her usual spot in the front and one of the students walked by and said something intentionally.

Student: “Ja neh, some bitches are lucky. Ba bolediwa (they get gossiped about) and a lawsuit gets thrown. Must be nice getting fucked by two powerful men.”

She turned around and looked at them, but she immediately kept quiet when they noticed how pissed she was.

Precious: “I’m sorry, I thought you were trying to say something?”

Student: “Nna (Me)? Aowa
no.”

Precious: “Well the next time you try and say shit about someone, at least speak loud enough and own up to it. And for your information no one is getting fucked here, but feel free to put your pussy on the table. I mean, it’s a free country, right?”

The student and her friend immediately became sour and moved seats, leaving Precious annoyed. Kumkani took out papers and started on the first row, where Precious was sitting alone.

Kumkani: “Ignore them.”

He winked at her and proceeded to hand out papers for each row. She wrote her test and once she was done, Kumkani went straight to her without wondering what everyone was saying.

Kumkani: "Can I take you out for lunch?"

Precious: "How about dinner? I have to go for some cleansing ritual. You know, since I had a miscarriage."

Kumkani: "Oh, I'm so sorry about that."

Precious: "Don't apologize. It was a good think if you ask me."

Kumkani: "We can meet some other time, then."

Precious: "I can meet up with you straight after. Your place?"

Kumkani: "Okay. No problem."

Precious: "Sharp."

She smiled at him and walked out. She ignored everyone who gave her funny looks and proceeded to her car. She drove off and headed straight to Mam'Thoko's house. She found the kids playing outside and a sangoma in the house having tea with her.

Precious: "Dumelang (Hello)."

The sangoma immediately frowned when she looked at her, like she was seeing something odd on her side.

Thoko: (frowning) "Precious bathing (Goodness), ga wa apara skirt le tuku nyana (you're not even wearing a doek or a skirt). And when did you even cut your hair?"

Precious: "Askies (Sorry), Ma. I rushed to campus since I had a test to write."

Thoko: "Eish, Gogo Bubesi, ngiyaxolisa (I'm so sorry). Let me go get her a skirt and doek."

Gog'Bubesi: "That won't be necessary. Please, let's proceed to the spare room."

Precious nodded and walked on. They had to take off their shoes and sit on the floor. Gog'Bubesi started getting her bones ready.

Gogo Bubesi: "Igama ngubani (What is your name)?"

Precious: "Precious."

Gogo Bubesi: "Isibongo (Surname)?"

Precious: "Vilakazi."

Gogo threw the bones and immediately shook her head.

Gogo Bubesi: "This is strange."

Thoko: (worried) "What is it?"

Gogo Bubesi: "I can't seem to find anything from her roots. My child, you don't have any Vilakazi ancestors. Something is not right here. Your name and surname are not yours."

Precious: (shocked) "What do you mean?"

Gogo Bubesi: "I mean they don't belong to you. Ask your husband to tell you the truth. Your grandmother as well."

Precious: "I really don't follow. Am I not here to get cleansed?"

Gogo Bubesi: "You are, but I had to check in on your life."

Precious: "Ai, is there anything else you see?"

Gogo Bubesi: "Your husband, he is not yours to have."

Precious: "Continue."

Gogo Bubesi: "He is not your soulmate, even though your soulmate is right under your nose. You need to be careful of what you have decided to do with your life. You are going on a very dangerous road and only your soulmate can save you, but in turn you have to save yourself."

Precious didn't understand a word she said and she really wasn't interested. She only had Kumkani on her mind.

Precious: "Okay. I'll do as you wish. How do I get cleansed?"

Gogo Bubesi: "You just take these herbs and bathe with them twice a day, for a week. You'll be fine afterwards. Drink this one as well, also for seven days. It will cost you R500."

Precious: "No worries, my husband will pay for everything."

Speaking of her husband, he walked in right after that.

Mish: "Sanibonani (Hello)."

Precious: "Let me leave you to it. I'll see you some other time, Ma."

Thoko: "Okay. Bye."

Mish: "Ema nyana wena (Wait a minute), where are you going?"

Precious: "To meet up with my girls. For lunch. You can have me followed if you wish, since it is your specialty."

She left him standing there.

Mish: "Ai, I'm sorry about that. Is she sorted?"

Gogo Bubesi: "Yes, she is, kodwa (but) you need to sit down."

He sat down and she started throwing the bones again and she shook her head.

Gogo Bubesi: (shaking head) “A war is coming your way, mfana wami (my boy). Your wife is not your soulmate, but she will be able to save you – if you change your ways. You need to learn to respect and love her for what it is worth – or else death will be knocking on your door.”

Mish: (frowning) “What are you saying?”

Gogo Bubesi: “I’m saying take good care of her while she is yours before you lose your own life. Her ancestors are very angry with you. You need to do the right thing and tell her the truth about who she is.”

Mish became startled immediately.

Mish: “I don’t know what you mean.”

Gogo Bubesi: “You know exactly what I mean. Fix your mess, Meshack, or else you’ll join your father in the grave.”

“A boomerang returns back to the person that throws it.” –
Vera Nazarian

Someone once said that revenge is a dish best served cold. It runs deeper than we think, really. Mish was losing his mind and sadly for him it was only the beginning. Precious had managed to talk some sense into his crew by showing them that Mish was the boss yet they all started this crew – together. Why would one want to do all the dirty work when they could all gain the same profits? He had enough problems to last a life time; his crew had turned against him, his wife had gone rogue and he had just been told that death is right around the corner. 2 Corinthians 7:10 says; “For Godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas a worldly grief produces death.”

Meshack had promised Precious things he failed to produce, within less than six months of marriage. He deflowered a Princess; someone else’s soulmate. He convinced her that he would be there for her and he would respect her. Their marriage was broken before it even began – when Mish couldn’t stay faithful to his fiancée and when he failed to be

honest. It is so easy to say those three powerful words; “I love you” and yet people fail to adhere to the consequences that come with the words. Mish became distraught from the moment he left his mother’s house. He drove just fine, but his spirit was tainted; hurt and just not alright. He found himself driving to Ronza’s house, where he found the whole crew there. It made him even more edgy as he thought they were plotting things against him. Paranoia was the order of the day for Meshack Ndhlovu.

Ronza: “Sho sho Bozza. Dintshang (What’s up)? O sa go stressa jou vrou (Is your wife still stressing you out)?”

Mish: (firmly) “Ronza, go vayang mo (what’s going on here)?”

Ronza: “Niks (Nothing). We’re just chilling.”

Mish: “Oh, and you didn’t care to inform me about your little chillas?”

Ronza: "Check your phone. I called you and you never picked up."

Mish checked his phone and immediately realized that Ronza was telling the truth.

Mish: (apologetic) "I'm sorry. I haven't been myself lately and it seems as if everything is getting worse."

Ronza: "You honestly thought I'd do you like that? What makes you think we'd want to sideline you when your woman came up with such a great plan for all of us? Come on, Mish, you should know better."

Ronza was right. Mish should have known better. He of all people knew Ronza would never even try anything against him.

Mish: "I'm sorry, Mfo (Bro). I'm losing my mind."

Ronza: "I'd also lose my mind as well if my wife was that mad at me. Come, sit down. Let's have a drink."

They went towards the rest of the crew who were more than happy to see Mish.

Ghandia: (smiling) "Hey, Bosso ya di Bosso (King of Bosses)."

Mish: "Sho, Ghandia."

Ganja: "You look like shit."

Snakes: (shaking head) "Nc, nc, nc, females. This is why I just hate marriage."

Bigz: "What do you mean? You're married, remember?"

Snakes: "Ja, but not by choice."

They all laughed.

Pilot: “For a father of four you sure do despise marriage. I mean you have your wife everywhere – your WhatsApp DP, your Facebook Profile Picture even your Instagram.”

Snakes: “Let me tell you something; my wife hates being hidden – even when we were dating. She hated that. She told me from the beginning that if I was about to hide her like she was some old dish rag, then we should just call it quits. How could I leave a woman that beautiful? She was the most beautiful girl at school and everyone wanted her. So, I did what I did and she got pregnant and I had to marry her. I don’t regret it one bit, but marriage is just too much at times.”

Bigz: “I know what you mean.”

Ganja: “Nna a ke ready (I’m not ready). I like my space, my freedom nje.”

Ghandia: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, utlwa fela (listen to you). How do you even say that when you always sleep with Olivia at night?”

Ganja: (shocked) “Hai hai (no, no), man. How do you even know about her?”

Ghandia: “I’m your twin. I know everything about you.”

Ganja: “Bottom line is that Olivia makes me happy, I mean she makes me breakfast and supper, she washes my clothes, she even makes sure that I get up on time. When I am sick, she makes sure I get medication and gets me in bed early.”

They all laughed – except Mish.

Ghandia: “Then do what’s right and wife her.”

Ganja: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, if you want me to wife her, then wena why don’t you wife Pabi?”

They all chuckled.

Ronza: “Ai no man, gents. You don’t just marry a woman for fun. You have to be willing to stick by her when the going gets tough – you know, stick by your vows. Those aren’t just words, they are promises.”

Pilot: (chuckling) “Since when are you a pastor?”

Ronza: “I’m a sensible man. If we’re going to do this then we have to do it right. We all need to know who our women are. Once we go in, no more fucking around. I mean it.”

They knew that Ronza was right, besides, he always had one girlfriend.

Snakes: “I second that. I mean we can’t be bringing women in and out of our lives when we’re about to be the most notorious gangsters in the country.”

Ronza: “Exactly, Mish did a good thing. Even though we might be basically broke right now, he knew what he wanted and went for it. We all fuck up – all of you know that. The key is

learning from it. Mish, I know, it seems so tough right now, but you gotta get yourself checked, man. We don't beat our women – more especially those we love. We treat them gently, with love and respect and care. We don't embarrass them in front of our friends and we never treat them like shit in such a way that they end up in another man's arms. Remember, a shoulder to cry on – “

Ghandia and Ganja: “Becomes a dick to ride on.”

Pilot: “Ronza has a point, though. I mean, you kind of did treat her like shit.”

Snakes: “No wonder that Kumkani guy is so all over her.”

Bigz: “If I were you, I'd do literally anything to win uThembalami's (my hope's) heart back.”

Mish was sitting there in silence and his tears started streaming down his face. He hardly cried, but those tears felt so hot it was as if they were made of acid, digging their way through his

cheeks. His chest felt like it was closing up, while his stomach was in knots. He buried his head in his hands when he realized how much he actually fucked up. Ronza patted him on the back and the rest all got closer to him.

Ronza: "It's alright. Let it all out. Crying is not a sign of weakness, my man."

Snakes: "Yeah, we got your back, bro."

Bigz: "Always."

It actually felt good for Mish to hear some words of encouragement. His crew tends to act like idiots, but they dished out the uncensored truth to him. From that day onwards, he vowed to try and be a better husband to Precious, the husband he had promised her he would be. Meanwhile, Cassandra was in a rut of her own. After Mish and Ronza left her flat the previous day, she started getting cramps and bleeding. She had no choice but to call Raymond and tell him she was not feeling well. She knew that the doctor would tell Raymond the truth about her condition sooner or later, so it

was time for her to confess. She was lying in her hospital bed, crying when Raymond walked in looking very serious.

Raymond: "Hi."

Cassandra: "Hi."

Raymond: "How are you feeling?"

Cassandra: "Not too well."

Raymond: "You want to tell me what really happened?"

Cassandra: (sigh) "I had told Mish that the baby was his and he actually believed me. He came to my place and he shoved some abortion pills into my vagina. Even after I told him the baby was yours – he still didn't believe me."

Raymond became so angry, since he had been dying to have a child of his own for so long. He and Mish were very much alike; they blame other people for their own misfortune.

Raymond: (angry) “How dare he kill my unborn child?! Nawe (you too), how dare you lie to him and tell him that the baby is his, Cassie?! Don’t you ever learn?!”

Cassandra: (scared) “I’m sorry, Viper. I didn’t mean it that way.”

Raymond: “You never mean anything, do you?!”

Cassandra: (crying) “Raymond, please!”

Raymond: “I should have listened to my mother. She always said loving a whore has always been a bad idea – even in movies.”

He left her crying her eyes out in that hospital bed while he thought of plotting revenge against his own brother. It’s always

easy to think of killing someone, but Raymond had no idea that killing his own brother also meant dying himself.

Meanwhile Precious had quickly gone to her house to take a shower. She started with her treatment immediately. She drank a cup of the medicine given to her and also took a bath using the other. Thank goodness it didn't smell at all, since she had a date with Kumkani. She put on a rocking Versace Maxi dress with Gucci Sandals. She wasn't bleeding much anymore, which was a good sign. She just needed to get away from the house, from Mish. She even lied to him saying that she was going to meet up with her friends. That was the start of an even more toxic relationship. She had no idea what Kumkani was planning; in her eyes, he was doing a great thing trying to help them, but she was also falling for him – hard. She got into her car and drove off. Minutes later, she called Kumkani while she was at the gate.

Kumkani: "Alright. The pass code is 2578."

She punched it in and gained access. He came running down the stairs to walk her in. He even opened her door just like the gentleman he was.

Precious: (smiling) "You really didn't have to, you know."

Kumkani: (smiling) "Hello, Pretty Lady. Can I get a hug?"

Precious: (blushing) "Sure."

That was the first hug they had ever shared. He was rather tall, much taller than Mish

so she had to tip toe to reach his neck. She inhaled his gorgeous scent in the process. There was just something different about everything Kumkani did. She had compared him to Mish on numerous occasions in her mind. They broke the hug and he held her hand as they walked to his house. She was sober that time; so she was able to focus on everything. He opened the door and allowed her to walk in first.

Kumkani: "Welcome to my humble abode."

The place still looked the same, but a little different to her that time. Kumkani had gone all out with scented candles almost everywhere in the house. He had dimmed the lights for a perfect atmosphere. Lunch was already set on the table, with one of his most expensive bottles of wine.

Precious: "Wow, Kumkani. This is so beautiful."

Kumkani: (smiling) "A beautiful set up for a beautiful lady."

Precious: "You actually made it look like it's night time."

Kumkani: (chuckling) "Yes, it's lunch with a dinner feel. I don't want your husband to get the wrong idea, although I can't seem to hide my feelings from you."

He came closer to the nervous Precious, she stared deep into his eyes and him in hers, he gently held her face and kissed her forehead. Precious was somehow expecting more, but Kumkani was a real gentleman.

Kumkani: "Please sit."

He pulled the chair for her to sit and she sat gladly.

Kumkani: "May I pour you some wine?"

Precious: "Yes, thank you."

He poured her a glass of wine and one for himself. He sat in his chair and asked her to hold hands with him so that they could pray.

Kumkani: "Father God, I thank you so much for this wonderful, blessed, brand new day of life. I thank you most importantly for bringing me this beautiful, magnificent guest. I know you work in mysterious ways, dear Lord, but I ask that you put every plan in place. Everyone has their own destiny and I ask that you fulfil my prayers. For you do say to us in Mark 11:24; "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." I thank you once

again for making all this possible. I pray in Jesus Mighty Name. Amen.”

Precious really felt that prayer, and most importantly she loved that Kumkani was a real man of God. He had a personal relationship with God, unlike Meshack. Ironically, Meshack was named after the Meshack in the Bible, but he really didn't pray at all.

Precious: (impressed) “I have never heard a man pray like that before.”

Kumkani: (smiling) “I'm not just any man, Pretty Lady. I'm Kumkani. Stick around and you'll get to know me.”

Precious: “What I mean is that, the last time I actually heard a powerful prayer like that was when my mother was alive. My husband doesn't really pray much. I guess I have gone astray a bit.”

Kumkani: "Ecclesiastes 3:1; "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." You have been through a lot, Precious. Believe me when I say I don't judge you at all. I'm not perfect either, I have been through hell myself."

Precious: "May I ask what kind of hell?"

Kumkani: "Let's enjoy our food first and then I'll tell you all about it, okay?"

She nodded while they enjoyed the delicious food he had made for them. She had no idea he could even cook so well. Mish could cook, but not like Kumkani. He was a bit of a master chef compared to Mish.

Precious: "Where did you learn how to cook like this? My goodness, this is the best steak I've ever had."

Kumkani: (smiling) "Thank you. My father was a chef, so it's just one of those things that travel in our genes."

Precious: "Was?"

Kumkani: "Yes. He passed away when I was 15."

Precious: "I'm so sorry to hear that."

Kumkani: "It's okay. I know it was his time and I made peace with it. He is with me everyday, that much I do know."

She was amazed at how mature he was and how she wished to be okay with her mother's death like he was. They had dessert and by that time she was a bit full.

Precious: "That was the best meal I have ever had. Thank you so much, Kumkani."

Kumkani: "My pleasure."

Precious: "Let me help you with the dishes."

Kumkani: “Nonsense, I’m going to put them in the dishwasher and give you all my attention. I’ll be right back.”

She smiled as he kissed her forehead once again before leaving with the dishes. She poured herself another glass of wine and decided to look at the photos he had in the house. There was one big painting on the wall; she could easily recognize Kumkani even though he seemed much younger, then there were two elder people who looked like his parents and one woman next to him whom she assumed was his sister. The resemblance was striking. A few of the other pictures were of him and his mother, and the sister and a daughter who looked a lot like him. She frowned as she thought that perhaps he had a child. Kumkani walked towards her and put his arms around her from behind. She loved feeling that sense of security around him. She could tell he was a very intimate person and loved affection.

Kumkani: “I see you’re looking at the old me.”

She wasn’t sure what he meant by that, but it sounded deep.

Precious: "Kind of. Who's this cutie?"

She was pointing at the little girl.

Kumkani: "Oh, that's Phumeza, my sister's daughter."

She breathed out a sigh in relief, causing Kumkani to laugh.

Kumkani: (laughing) "You thought she was mine because she looks like me, right? I get that a lot."

Precious: "I was just a bit surprised."

Kumkani: "Would it have made any difference if she was mine?"

Precious: "I don't think so. I mean, I don't even know what you and I are doing."

He slowly turned her around as he put his hands on her waist.

Kumkani: “You and I are two people who are getting to know each other. I know you don’t believe me, but you’re my future wife, the woman who has captured my heart, the woman of my desires. You’re the one who God has carved specially for me. I saw you in my dreams long before I met you, Precious. Believe me when I say this; you will be mine soon enough.”

She just thought he was making a speech, you know, the kind men make when they haven’t slept with you yet. She smiled at him as he captured her once again with his beautiful eyes. Kumkani grasped the moment with both hands as he leaned closer and planted his soft lips on hers. She responded as their lips went along with the same tune, their tongues responded to each other’s soft, wet touch. Their tongues were gliding together in each other’s mouths. She had never felt so much electricity through her body by just a kiss. She felt her nipples erect underneath her dress and her pussy sending signals. His hands did the right thing, as they stroked her back, she felt like she was in heaven. Kumkani broke the kiss and Precious was still in cloud nine with her eyes closed.

Kumkani: (smiling) "Are you okay?"

She opened her eyes and stared at his glistening eyes.

Precious: "I have never been kissed like that before. I'm not even sure if I am really okay."

Kumkani: (chuckling) "Don't worry, you will still get to see and feel a lot more of me, I promise."

They sat on the couch and then her phone rang. It was Mish.

Precious: (sigh) "It's my husband."

Kumkani: "Take it."

Precious: "I can't tell him I'm here. He'll lose his mind."

Kumkani: "If you don't answer, this is the first place he'll look at for you. You strike me as someone who is smarter than what she looks. Be calm and talk to him."

She answered.

Precious: "Hello."

Mish: (nervous) "Hi, baby. uGrand (are you okay)?"

Precious: "Yes, I'm fine. You?"

Mish: "I'm okay. I, uh, was just calling to find out if you're okay."

Precious: "Oh."

Mish: "Look, I'd like to cook you some dinner tonight, if that's okay with you."

Precious: “Yes, uhm, sure.”

Mish: “Rachel already told me you’d be home a bit late, but I’ll wait for you.”

Her friends were pretty loyal to lie like that for her.

Precious: “Okay then.”

Mish: “I sent you some cash in case you guys might want to go out.”

Precious didn’t even look at her phone. She didn’t notice he had put some money in her account.

Precious: “Thank you.”

Mish: “Okay, I love you.”

That was the most awkward conversation she has ever had with her own husband. She didn't feel right saying it back while she wasn't so sure anymore if she meant it or not.

Precious: "Bye."

She hung up and looked at Kumkani.

Kumkani: "That was the most painfully awkward conversation between a couple I have ever heard. Are you two okay? I don't mean to pry."

Precious: "No, you're not prying at all. We've just been going through a lot, I guess."

Kumkani: "Well, if by a lot you mean abuse, I hope you either fix it or you leave. No man should treat a woman like that. 1 Corinthians 7:3; "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband."

Precious: “Kumkani, you say all the right things, you do all the right things. What exactly are we doing?”

Kumkani: “I told you, you’re my future wife. I know right now you belong to someone else, but I’m a patient man, Pretty Lady.”

Precious felt a bit confused, but decided not to push it any further.

Precious: “You always say that you’re a patient man and that you have been through a lot yourself. What do mean by that exactly?”

Kumkani: “You strike me as someone who has a good knowledge of the Bible. Are you familiar with 1 Peter 5:8?”

Precious: “1 Peter 5:8; “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Kumkani: “Exactly. Well, sit back and relax and I’ll tell you my story.”

Precious sat back and relaxed as Kumkani told her to, while anxiously awaiting to hear; who Kumkani actually was.

“Forget the past, forgive yourself, and begin again right now.” –
Anonymous

Precious sat on that couch, anxiously waiting to hear what Kumkani had been hiding about his past. She asked herself if it could have actually been worse than Mish’s? He took a sip of his wine, took a deep breath and started talking.

Kumkani: “I come from a very traditional family. By traditional, I mean they do or did everything by the book. This was more my father, but my mother had always tried her best to allow us to do everything we wanted to do, you know, to be free. My father had a whole life set out for me; he wanted me to be the best of the best. I attended the best schools and started grade 1 at the age of 5. I participated in almost every extra mural activity there was. Partially, this made me depressed. I was hardly happy, until I met Jessica. She was like the light at the end of the tunnel, you know. My sister is ten years older than me and she had already been married by then, but I on the other hand, was just 14. I really liked her so much, but my dad really disapproved. He did everything in his power to stop our relationship, until I started rebelling. I had to let go of her to

please him, but I was not happy at all. Nonetheless, I did right by him by attending school and still doing all my extra mural activities. You should see all the trophies I have, you'd swear that's the reason why I have OCD. Everything of mine has to be extra perfect. Anyway, he died when I was 15, and even now, I still feel like his shadow. I feel like I just wasn't good enough for him. I went to varsity and to my surprise, Jessica was there. I started studying law and I met Mr. Nkatha there, and I worked under him ever since."

Precious: "Did you and Jessica ever get back together?"

Kumkani: (sigh) "Yes, immediately when we found each other again we didn't waste any time. We became lovers again and became an instant hit. We loved each other so much, words can't even describe our relationship."

She could tell the topic still hurt him deeply. He became emotional as he spoke of her furthermore.

Precious: "Then, what happened?"

Kumkani: “During my second year, she fell pregnant. My mom seemed like she was totally for the relationship, I mean she was genuinely happy for me. Until my uncle, my father’s brother came out with the truth.”

Precious gulped with a tight knot in her throat as she awaited the rest of the news.

Kumkani: “It turns out Jessica was my half sister. My father had been against the relationship all along knowing very well that he was her father. He had her a year after I was born – with another woman. Can you believe that? I had a sexual relationship with my own blood sister.”

His words came deep within from a pain he had buried long ago. Precious just sat there as she held his hands while tears were streaming down their faces.

Kumkani: “It was devastating, you know. For her, it was the worst. She couldn’t handle it. That very same day she found out, she felt like what we did was an abomination, but we didn’t know. I tried reaching her all afternoon but to no avail. I

then heard as I was on my way to campus that she had jumped off the 7th floor of her res. She killed herself and our child. I was never the same ever since. It took me a while to get over it and I don't even know how I got over it actually."

That was rather traumatic. Precious really felt for him. The last time she saw a man cry like that was when Mish told her everything about his past. It seemed very painful to see a man cry, in her mind.

Precious: "1 John 4:19; "We love because he first loved us. You did nothing bad, Kumkani. You really just fell in love with a woman, a woman you had no idea you shared blood with. It's okay to cry, but blaming yourself should stop now. You really cannot live your life being subjected to so much hurt. I'm terribly sorry you had to go through that."

Kumkani: (teary) "I'm just glad she is at peace. Right after she died, that evening I couldn't sleep. She visited me then and a few nights after that, telling me that she is at peace with herself and she didn't blame me. I had to go through months of therapy before fully healing. I never dated ever since."

Precious: “Is it true that you really dreamt of me before you even met me?”

Kumkani: (chuckling) “Yes, one of these days, I’ll explain everything. It’s getting rather late, perhaps you should go home before Meshack starts getting suspicious.”

Precious’s facial expression changed immediately. She felt as if he was trying to get rid of her. He noticed her displeasure and held her chin.

Kumkani: “Precious, don’t take it the wrong way. Even though I have fallen madly in love with you

I cannot have you right now – not while you still belong to him. I want to do things right by you. And by that, I mean I need to have you when you are yourself completely, when you have healed from whatever he has done to you and when you have let go – completely. 1 Corinthians 7:9; “But if they cannot exercise self- control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. Remember that.”

He kissed her passionately once again, and she felt those electrifying emotions and feelings throughout her body. He broke the kiss and looked her in the eye.

Kumkani: "As I said, I'm a patient man. I'd rather have you by my side every night, but I'd rather have you knowing that I didn't take you from someone else."

Those words were truly powerful. He was a man of honour and even though it did hurt him to let her go to be with another man, he understood that she was still young and her mind could get easily swayed. He needed a wife, a proper wife who loved him for him and not as a rebound. He still had to tell her the truth about her being a princess, but that would just throw off everything he had been working on. Little did he know that Precious was now the master mind of everything.

Precious: "Okay. I understand."

Kumkani: "Thank you. Come, let me walk you out."

They walked out hand in hand and he opened her car door for her and she got in. he gave her another peck on the lips before she drove off.

Kumkani: “Don’t forget to delete all our chats. I might be your lawyer now and I don’t want to step on Mish’s toes just yet.”

Precious: “Don’t worry about that. I’ll talk to him. Bye.”

Kumkani blew her a kiss and she drove off. She couldn’t get her mind off Kumkani. It was as if she had fallen in love all over again. She wasn’t this happy with Mish, was she? She couldn’t really tell. Perhaps she should have taken things slow, but Kumkani was all on her mind. She got home to an amazing surprise.

Precious: (surprised) “Mish...”

Mish: “Hey. Would you like to take a seat?”

Mish had prepared a whole meal for her. He was dressed in a gorgeous Tuxedo and there were candles almost everywhere. That setup was a lot similar to Kumkani's. The house was bursting with gorgeous aromas. Mish had gone all out for his wife. He had even shaved his beard and he looked really good. And he smelled good too.

Precious: "Okay."

He pulled her chair for her and became startled instantly as she sat down.

Mish: "Interesting perfume. Is it new?"

Damn, she thought. She couldn't allow him to catch her out before she even did anything with Kumkani.

Precious: (nervous) "Oh, no. Tony, Rachel's boyfriend was with us. He gave us all hugs. His cologne is quite strong as you can tell."

She had become a great liar. Mish was not really convinced, but he let it go for the sake of trying to fix things with his wife.

Mish: “Okay.”

Precious: “What’s all this for? You never do this.”

Mish: “This, my darling wife is all for you. Firstly I’d like to apologize for being such a dick towards you. You didn’t deserve the treatment I gave you after all, you have been nothing but good to me. You are truly god sent, Precious and I cannot see myself without you. Whenever I think of you leaving me, I become jealous. I get overcome with this strong urge to make you stay with me, and I know that is just not healthy. I have decided to face my demons and to try and be a better husband. I know, you losing our baby was the worst thing to ever happen to you – to us. It was my fault. I take full responsibility for it, I stressed you out and I should have never lay my hand on you. I am willing to make this work, if you are. I believe that people do deserve second chances, and even though I messed up badly, I believe that you and I could still make this work.”

Precious: “I really don’t know what to say, Mish.”

Mish: “Please, let me finish.”

Precious nodded.

Mish: “Secondly, I am deeply sorry for letting you even go to jail in the first place. I should have been available. I allowed that bitch to worm her way into our lives and she disrespected you in the process. I didn’t mean to be reckless with our money, I just wanted to give you the best. The truth is, once I found out about Kumkani, I started going mad. I didn’t even know what was happening to me. I started comparing myself to him and I felt like I was going to lose you to him. I didn’t want that to happen, I married you out of love, and not by any means to control you. I’m sorry for bringing up me paying for your fees. It was uncalled for and you didn’t deserve that. Lastly, I am truly sorry for the way I reacted about your proposition – especially in front of both our friends. You are one amazing woman, and a very smart one too. You came up with something I could never come up with. You managed to think of a plan that would save us all out of this dire situation. I felt threatened, as if you wanted to take away what I took so long to build. I am willing to

give it a try and let you lead us. You are just what I need in my life. And yes, Kumkani can be our lawyer, but he must not get too comfortable with you. You're my wife and he must know his place."

Mish had said a mouthful to Precious. She was shocked and didn't even know what to say. Perhaps he was dying or something since they were going on their first heist organized by her the following day.

Precious: "Are you dying or something? What have you done with my Mish?"

Mish: (laughing) "It's me, baby. It's all me."

Precious: (teary) "I have missed you so much, Mish. That is the honest truth. I hate fighting with you all the time. What you have done now means the world to me."

Mish: (smiling) "Is there anything you'd like to add? Or confess maybe? I promise you, I won't hold it against you."

She somehow felt like he was trying to trap her. He might have done something great for her and said some really nice words, but she still didn't trust him. Not one bit.

Precious: "Nope. Nothing at all – except that I love you. I still do and I'm willing to work it through."

Mish smiled and got up to kiss her. That cologne still unsettled him a bit. He inhaled it for a while so he could keep it in mind. He knew that she would slip up one way or another.

Proverbs 18:22 says; "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favour from the Lord." Perhaps Mish was on the road to redemption, or maybe he was trying to make amends before meeting his death – only time would tell.

“Love is friendship that has caught fire.” – Ann Landers

Precious and Mish had a pleasant dinner and a rather peaceful night's sleep. They managed to have one night without fighting one another and Mish slept in their bed. He still couldn't get that scent out of his mind, he was so sure that he recalled that cologne from somewhere. He felt betrayed deep within because he knew men's cologne from a mile away, and by the look of things, that one smelled expensive. He went through Precious's phone while she was taking a shower, but he didn't find any messages from Kumkani.

He decided to let sleeping dogs lie – for a little bit. Early Sunday morning, the crew came to start the initial part of their plan. Precious had purchased all the gadgets that Rachel would need and their basement was going to be their new warehouse. It was perfect. She had purchased a few new machinery for the guys; new guns of all kinds, protective gear such as bullet proofs and specialized balaclavas, even face shields for specific missions. They had their own set of attire and so did she, Debbie and Rachel. They all wore black, and man, they looked so good. The attire just brought out all

muscles they thought the guys never had. Except for Snakes and Pilot – who were on the thin side, but nonetheless, they all looked handsome.

Precious: “Rachel, is everything set?”

Rachel: “Yes, everything is set. I have set up all tech and they will need to wear their wires at all times in order for us to communicate.”

Precious: “Good. Are you ready, boys?”

Ghandia: “Sho sho (Sure sure), Madam Leader. Lead the way.”

Precious felt so proud; not once did she think that she was a criminal.

Precious: “Okay, then. Rachel, put the map on screen please.”

Rachel: “Sure thing.”

Precious: “As you can see this is the map of the Mall of Africa. You have in front of you all the rooms and shops of the mall; all of the technology in place; the alarm systems and the cameras. I’m not too worried about that right now, as you are about to rob the cash truck that is going to retrieve money from a few of the stores there in about an hour from now.”

Ganja: (frowning) “But it’s too early in the morning right now. I mean, won’t we be noticeable?”

Precious: “With all those things on, you still think you’d be noticeable? Come on, it’s a clean job – no one gets killed. I mean no one. Once everything is set, Rachel here will operate the robots for you until you are able to reach the bridge. You’ll find the other car there, so you will change in the car as you’re driving back. You have to get out of the kombi and into the one waiting for you under the bridge. No mistakes, guys. We can’t risk losing R5 million.”

Snakes: “What about the cops? Security is so tight there ever since that lady took off with the SBV money few years ago. They’ll be alerted immediately.”

Precious: “That’s why you have cellphone jammers in the car. The moment you step out, you have to switch it on. We’ll lose communication with you for the whole duration until you get back into the car. Pilot will be the driver – for every mission. He’s excellent at it. Make sure that you don’t put Bigz in charge too much; he should be there to scare the guards – to contain the situation. If any of them resist, knock them out. Shoot only if you feel your life is in danger, but don’t aim for the head nor the chest – please. We’re hustlers – not murderers.”

The guys all looked at her impressed.

Ronza: (smiling) “Who knew we’d have a woman leading us for missions?”

Precious: “Watch it, Ronza.”

Ronza: (chuckling) “I’m just playing.”

Mish: "Can we pray before we go?"

Everyone stared at him in shock.

Mish: "Yini (What)?"

Bigz: "You never pray before a mission."

Mish: "I've had a change of heart. In case I lose my life, it's better for my wife to know that I did pray."

Precious felt a tinge of guilt as Mish said that. She already felt like a cheater.

Precious: "Come on, let's all hold hands and close our eyes."

Mish surprised them all by leading the prayer.

Mish: “Nkulunkulu wethu (Our God), our Loving God, we come before you as your children. We’re not perfect lord, so please, forgive us for we’re about to sin. We are not mocking your work nor your existence, but we ask you to give us a chance to fulfil our wishes. One day, we shall repay you and do right by you for all of this. Please protect us and bring us home to our wives and girlfriends. We pray this in Jesus’ mighty name. Amen.”

It felt as if everyone was at peace after Mish’s prayer.

Snakes: “My wife always says; Modimo ga lebale bana ba gae (God never forsakes his children). Great prayer, Bozza. Now, let’s go.”

Precious: “Mish, wait.”

He turned around and she did the unexpected. She gave him one passionate kiss for the road.

Precious: (smiling) "Let's make a new rule; we kiss before and we kiss after."

Mish: (smiling) "Deal."

Precious: "You come back to me, okay?"

Mish: "Okay. I love you."

Precious: "I love you too."

And so the Fantastic Seven walked out ready to go do their own heist. Of course they couldn't keep up with leaving the complex full of security almost everywhere with balaclavas and gear on everyday, so they would probably have had to get a bigger house.

Debbie: "Aren't you scared?"

Precious: “No, of course not. Mish has been doing this his whole life. Be careful what you say; they can hear us.”

Rachel: “Testing, can you hear me?”

Ghandia: “Loud and clear, Beautiful.”

Little did Rachel know that Ghandia had an eye for her and Ronza had quite the eye for Debbie. He was a quiet guy and did everything at the right timing. He found it hard to trust his current girlfriend at the time, but as soon as he saw Debbie – he knew that she was the one for him. They had similar personalities too.

Ganja: “Eh, Pabi o go bolaile wena (Pabi is going to kill you).”

Ghandia: (chuckling) “I told you, man. I wasn’t sure if she was the one for me. But now, I think Rachel might be the one for me.”

Snakes: “Rachel o jola le lekgoa wena (is dating a white guy). What makes you think she’d be into a joker like you?”

Ghandia: “The same reasons why Chanel married you.”

Ronza: “Enough playing, let’s focus on the mission at hand.”

Bigz: “Relax, Ronza, we’re just having some fun talk. Besides, we’re not there yet.”

Ronza shook his head.

Mish: “Whatever you do, don’t fuck around with Precious’s friends, man. She won’t like it and I won’t either. Any woman you decide to get with now, becomes your wife. We can’t afford bringing in different bitches into the crew.”

Snakes: “Mish is right.”

Ronza: “Very right.”

Pilot: “Keng o kare o ratile o mo one so (Why do I get the feeling you like one of them)?”

Ronza: “Like I’d ever tell.”

Bigz: “Well, I saw Ronza looking at – “

The signal went dead for a while.

Debbie: (Worried) “What’s happening?”

Rachel: “The signal went dead.”

Precious: “Relax, Ronza is probably telling Bigz to stop running his mouth. He probably cut it on purpose. They’ll be back in a moment.”

Rachel: "Well, since they can't hear us, how did it go with you and Mr. Mdhletse?"

Precious: (sigh) "I don't know, really. It was so good, guys. I mean we kissed. I have never been kissed and touched like that before."

Debbie: "Don't tell me you gave it to him."

Precious: "No, of course not. Besides, I'm still on treatment, remember?"

Debbie: "Well

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you're old enough so I won't tell you that it is a sin. I mean you're married and it's practically cheating."

Precious: "Since when do you judge?"

Debbie: "I'm not judging, I'm just stating a fact. I just think that you should re-evaluate yourself before you jump into bed with Kumkani."

Precious: "Okay then, Pastor Deborah."

Rachel: "They're back on."

That was code for them to stop the gossip. Meanwhile in the van, Ronza had switched on the signal jammer, so that Bigz would stop talking about the one he likes. He didn't think it was that obvious.

Mish: "Alright, we're almost there."

Bigz: (excited) "Yesses, I can't wait. Go tlo nkgá nou so (It's about to get stinky)!"

Snakes: "I don't know why you always get excited whenever we do a heist."

Bigz: "Don't act like you don't like the adrenaline rush."

Ghandia: "I just love the smell of money."

Pilot made a turn at the corner and headed to the parking lot. He made sure to wear a cap and shades so that the camera wouldn't recognize him. They drove in and waited for the guys in the cash in transit van to walk out.

Ronza: "We're in."

Rachel: "Okay. I have already disarmed the cameras."

Mish: "Now we wait."

There was one guard outside the van as usual, while two went in to go and collect the money. The guys were quiet and so serious, while Pilot was having a smoke. The two guys walked

back to the parking lot with four bags and loaded them in the van.

Bigz: "This is it."

Ronza: "Ema nyana, bhari ke wena (Wait a minute, you idiot). They are supposed to have six bags. One is still coming."

Bigz: "Oh, right."

Mish: "You need to calm down. Your wife is overworking you."

Bigz: "Eish, o kare wa mo itse, Bozza (It's as if you know her too well, Boss). Nkile mang a betha seven rounds ka mo (Whom of you have ever had seven rounds)?"

They all laughed while the two guards came out with the last bag.

Ronza: “That’s our queue, boys. Balaclavas on and remember, no shooting unless it’s necessary.”

They all walked out except for Pilot who had the ignition on. The guards noticed them running towards them and held their guns up, but they were outmatched. Ghandia, Ganja, Ronza, Bigz, Snakes and Mish all had big guns on them – rifles to be exact. They were dressed for the occasion and wouldn’t leave empty handed.

Bigz: “Eh, man voetsek, voetsek, voetsek (piss off, piss off, piss off)!”

Mish: “I wouldn’t shoot if I were you. You want your wife and kids to see you come home unharmed or in a coffin?”

Ghandia: “We just want the money, bras. Besides, ga se tshelete ya mmao (it’s not your mother’s money). O nyaka go swela zaka e seng ya gao (you want to die for money that’s not even yours)?”

One of them shook his head as he got on his knees.

Ganja: “Good boy. The rest of you – on your knees.”

The three of them were all on their knees.

Ronza: “Hands behind your head.”

They did as instructed, while Bigz and Mish had the guns pointed at them; Snakes took out strappers and strapped their hands behind them. Ronza, Ghandia and Ganja carried the bags, while Snakes ensured that no one was coming out of the mall or into the parking lot. He was checking out for any third parties or security.

Ghandia: “Bags are loaded. A re vayeng (Let’s go).”

Mish: “Pleasure doing business with you, gents. Stay safe and co-operate.”

They all rushed back into the van and Pilot drove out in rather normal speed.

Pilot: "We're on our way Boss Lady."

Precious: "Good job, 5 minutes is really not bad. Do not take the toll gate. You know the drill. The rest of you – get changed and put the clothes in the large bag at the back. The other kombi will be waiting for you under the bridge as we discussed. Let me know if you foresee any problems ahead."

Pilot: "On it."

Ghandia: (excited) "Shit! Bona di robot di re bulella fela (Look at how the robots are just opening for us)! I swear, ko mo nyala die baby (I'm going to marry that girl)! Rachel! Ko go nyala san (I'm going to marry you)!"

Rachel looked down blushing. She had completely forgotten about Tony since the fallout between them. She kind of liked Ghandia, he had that thing about him for her.

Rachel: "Uh, You'd have to ask me first."

Ghandia: "Will you marry me then?"

Rachel just giggled and blushed.

Bigz: "We've never had such an easy heist before! E bile ke tshogile (I'm even scared)."

Mish: (chuckling) "That's what happens when you marry a smart woman."

Bigz: "I wish my wife was that smart."

They all burst out in laughter.

Snakes: "O bhari Bigz (You're an idiot)."

Bigz: “Ah, at least ke honest (At least I’m honest).”

They got to the bridge and did as instructed.

Precious: “Don’t forget to remove the number plates and hide the car in the bushes. Someone will come pick it up later.”

Ronza: “Rodger that.”

They took all their bags and guns and got into the second van and drove back to Mish’s house. Within minutes, they had arrived without looking suspicious. They walked into the house carrying the bags and headed to the basement. They were so excited and happy; with much adrenaline still rushing through their veins.

Ghandia: (excited) “Yes! Ha ha! Re manyora (we’re the bosses)!”

He was so happy, he and Bigz took two bags and threw the cash out right there on the table. Mish walked towards his wife and kissed her.

Precious: "Thank you for coming back to me."

Mish: "I made a promise and I intend to keep it."

Debbie got so shocked as well as Rachel, they had never seen so much money in their entire lives.

Ganja: "Can we at least celebrate before we talk business?"

Ronza: "I second that."

They walked out and headed to the kitchen, while Ghandia stopped Rachel.

Ghandia: "You didn't answer my question."

Rachel: (blushing) “You didn’t ask me properly. You know, with the ring and on your knee.”

She actually thought that Ghandia was bluffing, but he was dead serious. He got on his knee and held her hand. He didn’t have a ring of course, but he was serious.

Ghandia: “Rachel, ever since I laid eyes on you; I couldn’t help but notice your beautiful melanin skin and those gorgeous purple glasses. I know, I’m a joker, but this time, I’m serious. I have never felt like this about a girl in all my life. Sorry, you’re not a girl – you’re a woman. Will you marry me?”

Rachel: “But you don’t know me.”

Ghandia: “Love, we have a whole life time to get to know one another. Be my Bonnie and I’ll be your Clyde – without the funeral of course.”

Rachel: “Okay, but no guns.”

Ghandia: (smiling) "No guns. Just you, me and our choc-caramel babies."

She smiled at him.

Rachel: "Yes. I'll marry you."

Ghandia was so happy. It was a rather odd day filled with surprises and happiness. He got up and kissed her so passionately. They walked back upstairs hand in hand.

Ganja: "And then lona (you two)? Please don't tell me ne le betha one mo dimo ga zaka asseblief (don't tell me you were fucking on top of the cash, please)."

Everyone laughed leaving Rachel embarrassed.

Ghandia: (clicking tongue) "Mxm, hai wena sani. We're engaged."

Precious: "You we're serious, kgante?"

Ghandia: "Hao obvious."

Mish: "Well in that case congratulations!"

While everyone was congratulating the new couple for their crazy move, Ronza handed Debbie a glass of wine.

Ronza: "Here you go."

Debbie: "Oh, thank you. How did you know I like red wine?"

Ronza: "I'm a very observant guy."

Debbie looked down shyly.

Ronza: "You're very beautiful, Deborah."

Debbie: (blushing) “How sure are you that my name is Deborah and not something else?”

Ronza: (chuckling) “Like I said, I’m a very observant guy.”

Things were looking up for the gang, with their first successful heist with Precious in charge. Mish was happy, even though he was doing some digging; love was booming for Rachel and Ghandia, and Ronza and Debbie. All in all, the gang was slowly coming back together and forming a real family this time. Trouble was looming behind the scenes; a bitter brother was about to strike; while Kumkani was praying that his soul mate find her way to him. A sibling was about to make a comeback and turn their lives upside down. Sibling rivalry was about to be the order of the day. They say it’s about to be a bumpy ride, but for the Fantastic 7 and their wives, it was about to be a very long and bumpy road with very high hills ahead.

“The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing.” –
Blaise Pascal

Three weeks later...

It had been a great few weeks for the gang. Ghandia and Rachel got married a week later after he proposed. His parents didn't even know that he was a real gangster, but after forking out R100 000 in lobola and giving her a R300 000 wedding, they were more than happy to hand their daughter over. Money speaks volumes; that's one thing people forget. Precious had been meeting Kumkani in secret for lunch dates every now and then. She had become sloppy, because Mish had started recognizing that she would come home with the same cologne smelling on her clothes again. He had been trying to maintain his calm, but to make matters worse, she wasn't sleeping with him – at all. He had grown agitated once again, even though Kumkani hadn't slept with Precious yet, she was dying to.

He became so swamped with work and the thesis he had been working on for his masters, that he started seeing her less. Zululand people were also stressing him out, as he was trying to

find a way to tell Precious the truth about her true identity. Well, on the other hand, Precious was calling the shots – she made sure that the guys knew that there was no place for side pieces; bitches; whores – you name it. Only wives; trustworthy wives were able to get a view of what they were really up to. No one tells anyone outside of the family about what they actually did for a living. So, Ghandia was no married to Rachel; Ganja finally married Olivia; Snakes had been married for 8 years to Daphney; Bigz was married to Lerato for almost 5 years and Ronza married Debbie. Yes, she dumped Charlie for Ronza after actually finding out he was cheating on her. turns out he had paid lobola to someone his family approved of, so she took the shot and couldn't have been happier. And so there they were – the fantastic 7 with their wives. It was supposed to be a blissful new chapter for them, but with so many women; envy and jealousy become a new thing and everyone compares themselves and their husbands to one another.

Debbie had gotten so good with cooking the books that they managed to start a legit business; starting with increasing their number of taxis and each of them had a chesa nyama and car was as well as a bottle store. That way; no one would question them on where they had gotten the money. They were prominent business men by then and all of them were living in

the suburbs – even though some preferred living in the township. Which woman would agree to let her husband keep her in Mamelodi while the rest moved to the Suburbs? Mish and Precious moved out of their Town house in Equestria to their own compound in Savannah – right next door Silver Lakes. Rachel and Ghandia as well as Ganja and Olivia also lived in the same compound; while Ronza and Debbie lived in Silver lakes. Snakes and Daphney lived in Moreleta; while Bigz and Lerato lived in the furthest part of Pretoria East.

Pilot on the other hand was also recently married to his new girlfriend, probably out of peer pressure. He really wanted nothing to do with the suburbs, but of course, his wife forced him to move out of Mamelodi, so he bought Mish's Equestria house from him. Of course, the new wife, Chantel was just as young as Precious and quite mouthy. She liked the lavish lifestyle – the over the top kind and she was quite the rough rider too. Precious' basement was fairly big enough for all of them and all the equipment fit very well in there. They hosted most of their parties there as well. She was on good terms with Thoko and so was Mish, but Mish had been acting weird lately. They were hosting a party that day at their house and the whole crew was invited of course. Little did they know that drama was about to arise.

Precious: “Rachel, please get the salads. Debs, please get the gravy. You know Mish loves gravy.”

Debs: “Ai, I remember how we had to wait for the gravy just because he felt the food was dry at the last braai.”

They all laughed – except Lerato who was busy checking out her nails.

Rachel: (laughing) “I still don’t know how you manage with a man like Mish, shame.”

Daphney: “I’ll grab the meat along with Chantel.”

Olivia: “I’ll grab the drinks.”

Precious: “Your specialty.”

As they were about to move out, Lerato was just still sitting there fixing her nails.

Precious: (annoyed) "Lerato, we could use a hand, you know."

Olivia: "Yes, more especially since you didn't cook or do much."

Lerato: "Oh, I didn't know we keep tabs around here. Besides, you seem like you have it all under control."

Chantel: (irritated) "Yoh, die teef (Goodness, this bitch)."

Lerato: "Excuse me? I don't speak village."

Of course, Chantel was so angry, she wanted to grab a knife and cut Lerato right there and then.

Rachel: "Chantel, don't!"

Precious: (angered) “You know Lerato, you’re the only one here who doesn’t pull her weight. You get annoyed everytime you’re around us. I really am tired of your shit. If you don’t want to be here, then next time don’t bother pitching up.”

Lerato: “Oh, sorry, Boss Lady. I really didn’t know that you were calling the shots for us women as well.”

Olivia: “We really don’t have time for drama queens, Presh. If you still want to be part of this gang, grab the pap and rolls on your way out.”

They all walked out one by one leaving Lerato to decide on her own if she still wanted to be part of the gang or not. They walked out and found the men on the patio.

Ganja: (frowning) “And then? Dintshang o le rooi so (Why are you so red)?”

Olivia: (annoyed) “It’s that bitch, Lerato. She just enjoys being a bitch every fucking time. I seriously don’t know how you do it, Bigz.”

The men laughed – except Mish.

Bigz: “Trust me, I myself don’t know how I manage either.”

Lerato walked out with the pap and rolls in her hands after a short while. The ladies were still a bit pissed at her and she noticed.

Lerato: (clearing throat) “I’m really sorry about my behaviour, guys. I really am. It’s just that, I never really had any girlfriends growing up, you know. Bigz knows that, don’t you, sweetie?”

Bigz: “Ja.”

Precious: “You’re old enough to act right, Lerato. We can’t afford tantrums every fucking time we meet up.”

Lerato: “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

She did apologize, but Precious knew that she wasn’t being true.

Ghandia: “Anyway, can we pray before we eat, please?”

Rachel: “I second that.”

Precious took the lead and prayed for the food and they began to eat. Mish was quiet all along, barely interacting or saying anything.

Precious: “Anyway, since we’re all here. I think it’s high time I tell you our big plan. We have two more minor heists to pull and then the final one will be the Reserve Bank. If we pull that one off, then we won’t have to do anymore heists. We start our own corporation – a property development company. All of us will have to pull our weight – all of us. Since Debbie, Rachel and

I are still in varsity, we won't be active that much, but we all need to work together to make it work."

The men were really keen on this idea.

Ronza: "I like it."

Lerato: "I just have one question though."

Chantel: "What's new?"

Lerato: "I mean, why a property development company and not something that will include us ladies like a salon or beauty spa or something?"

Precious: "Well, Lerato, that's because the company will help all of us. If we start creating a salon, that's the most obvious business every gangster starts whenever they try something legit. If we start a company in which all of us will be involved, then we'll all have a job title. If you want to work in a salon,

then you'll have to wait until we're actually all millionaires and then Bigz can buy you one."

Lerato seemed rather annoyed, yet she was practically the only one without a job and any vision whatsoever. She was the only one who made comments and who second guessed Precious's decisions out of the whole gang. That is exactly how envy starts – when you feel jealous that another person gets all the attention instead of you, then you have a problem.

Lerato: "Well, I'm just saying that we're always working and if we're not then we're talking about work. When will we ever go on holiday or something?"

Ronza: (annoyed) "You mean WE all do the work here, while you just enjoy the benefits. Besides, if we didn't work how the fuck would you afford all your hair, nails and fucking weekly facials?!"

Snakes: "Okay, Ronza, chill, please."

Ronza: “No, man, die kind wa khenya (this chick is annoying).
Eh, Bigz, kgala motho wa gao (talk to your woman).”

Ronza was hardly one to retaliate or get angry, but Lerato really pissed him off. Bigz on the other hand hardly ever wanted to tell her to keep quiet. He just wasn't bothered.

Bigz: “Lee, baby, kao kopa toe (I'm begging you, please).
Behave.”

Lerato sat back down and folded her arms.

Pilot: “Please, continue, Boss Lady.”

Precious: “Thank you. Anyway, this coming Monday is time for us to do our first bank robbery.”

Ghandia: (excited) “Yes! Finally!”

Snakes: “Will we be able to pull it off?”

Precious: “We have new equipment now and you know how technology gets advanced nowadays. We’ll be fine. Just as long as you all stick to the plan. You’ll go in there early in the morning so that you won’t have to hold off a lot of people. The security guard is already in on it and remember, no shooting unless it’s necessary.”

Pilot: “I like the way you think.”

Ronza: “Mish, you’ve been awefully quiet. uGrand (are you okay)?”

Mish: “Oh, uhm, ja. Just have a lot on my mind, that’s all.”

Ronza: “Alright.”

Precious’s phone rang and she answered it and briefly spoke to the person.

Precious: “Yes, hold on. Baby, it’s Kumkani. He said he’d like to see us quickly, if that’s okay with you?”

That was the perfect time for Mish to confirm his suspicions.

Mish: “Yes, yes. Let him come in. He’s our lawyer after all which makes him family, right?”

Precious looked at him suspiciously and spoke to Kumkani over the phone.

Kumkani: “Sure, you can come in.”

Within a few minutes, Mish suddenly got up and fixed himself as he prepared to smell Kumkani’s scent, while Kumkani walked in and greeted everyone.

Mish: (smiling) “Sho, KK. Come in.”

Kumkani: (frowning) “Oh, thanks, but I’m not staying for long. I actually came by to see how things were going.”

Precious: “Oh, everything is going just fine, thank you.”

Kumkani: “Oh, and I actually came by to ask for your financial records.”

Everyone became a bit startled.

Precious: (frowning) “Why?”

Kumkani: “Oh, I need to keep tabs on your businesses, etc.”

Precious: “But we already have an accountant for that.”

Kumkani: “Who?”

Precious: “Debbie.”

Kumkani: "I don't doubt her skills and expertise but as y oru lawyer, I need to make sure that everything is on par. But if it's a problem, you don't have to."

Mish: (interrupting) "No, no, it's okay. We trust you, I mean, you're family, right?"

Mish intentionally got closer to Kumkani and patted him on the back. And there it was, the mysterious cologne he had been smelling on his wife for the past few weeks. His facial expression immediately changed as he gave Precious one look and then he looked at Kumkani.

Mish: (serious) "Interesting cologne you got there. Givency?"

Kumkani: "Oh, thanks. Actually, it's Prada."

Mish: "Hmm, you know, my wife has the exact same perfume, although I haven't seen her spray it on herself."

Kumkani put two and two together, but he wasn't bothered much because he wasn't doing anything wrong with Precious – except for having secret lunches with her and occasionally kissing her.

Kumkani: "Okay."

Precious on the other hand became a bit nervous, but tried hard not to show it. The rest of the gang kind of put two and two together, but remained quiet. They all knew that Mish could blow a fuse just as much as Precious could.

Precious: (nervously) "I'll go get the books."

Debbie: "I'll help you."

Mish: "Sure, babe. You do that."

Ronza: "Kumkani, how about a drink before you leave?"

Kumkani: "Oh, no thanks, I'm actually in a hurry."

Ronza: "Come on. One won't hurt. You're always so serious."

Kumkani sat down and had a drink with them while Mish stared at him the whole time. Kumkani knew how to keep his cool. Not once was he nervous for himself, but he was worried about what Mish might do to Precious once he left. Precious was in the basement, freaking out when Debbie walked in on her panicking.

Precious: (panicking) "Fuck, Debbie, he knows!"

Debbie: "Knows what? What did you do?"

Precious: "Nothing, well, nothing bad."

Debbie: (frowning) "Talk."

Rachel walked in a few seconds later and locked the door behind them.

Rachel: “Whatever you did, Precious, you’d better hope and pray Mish doesn’t kill you tonight.”

Precious: (teary) “I swear, I didn’t do anything. All I did was have lunch with Kumkani and kiss him a few times. That’s it.”

Debbie: “Shit.”

Rachel: “Yeah, shit. What were you thinking?!”

Debbie: “Ronza was telling me how Mish was behaving really strange the past few weeks and how he kept crying and telling him that you smelled like a man. Now he recognizes the cologne.”

Precious knew then she was in deep shit.

Rachel: “What are you going to do?”

Debbie: “She’s going to give it to that man of hers just the way he likes it – all kinds of ways – all night long.”

Precious: “How when I haven’t slept with Mish in three weeks.”

Rachel: “Mara le wena (But you though). Monna ga timiwe seshebo (You don’t deny a man pussy).”

Precious: “What else was I supposed to do? I was going through a lot.”

Debbie: “You’d better forget about that “lot” and focus on him right now. Once we leave, it’s going to be a war zone in here. Figure it out, pick your best lingerie. No time to panick right now. Let’s get the books before he suspects anything. Take a sip of some whiskey and calm the fuck down.”

Precious nodded as she took a sip of strong whiskey and they headed out. She tried to maintain her cool. The last time she

checked she wasn't even that scared of Mish anymore, but she had no idea why she was panicking so badly. As they walked out, Mish was making casual conversation with Kumkani, while Kumkani was – unreadable.

Mish: “Yes, so you should bring your girlfriend or wife over next week. We’re going on a vacation if you’d like to join us.”

Kumkani: “Sure.”

Mish: “So, which is it? Wife or girlfriend?”

Kumkani: “Girlfriend.”

Debbie: “Here are the books.”

Kumkani got up quickly.

Kumkani: “Thank you. I’ll be in touch.”

Mish: "Don't forget about next week, okay?"

Kumkani: "Sure, enjoy the rest of your day. Bye."

As he walked out, Mish looked at Precious.

Mish: "Are you okay, babe?"

Precious: "I'm fine."

Mish: (smiling) "Woza lana (Come here),"

She walked towards him as he opened his arms. He put her on his lap and gave her the most passionate kiss they had had in weeks. That was part of his stunt and well, part of him acting so funny.

Mish: (smiling) "I love you."

Precious: (nervously) "I love you too."

Snakes: "Okay, enough with the lovey-dovey stuff, bathing (goodness)."

Ganja: "Yeah, you have a bedroom for that. Ten bedrooms in fact."

As the rest were laughing, an old face made it's way to them. A car approached their house as it parked right outside.

Debbie: (frowning) "Who's that? Is that?"

Leah: "Hey bitches! Miss me?"

Rachel: (angered) "What the fuck?"

Leah rushed towards Rachel and hugged her like nothing was wrong.

Leah: (smiling) "Did you miss me?"

She looked really frail and thinner than what she was.

Precious: "Leah, long time. What are you doing here?"

Leah: "Are you kidding me? I came to visit my friends and my twin sister."

Debbie: "Whose car is that?"

Leah: "Oh, that's my Uber ride. He's waiting for payment. Would you be so kind, Rachel?"

Rachel got so angry and did what she never used to do. She slapped Leah so hard she nearly stumbled backwards, leaving everyone including her husband Ghandia in shock.

Rachel: (angry) “You must be fucking joking, right?! You didn’t even make time to come to my wedding nor honour my wedding invitation at least or give me an explanation for your absence and now you pitch up here expecting me to pay for your Uber?!”

Leah: “Bathong (Goodness), Rachel. Why are you being so mean?”

Rachel: “Fuck you!”

Ghandia: “Ema nyana (Wait a minute), Babes. Calm down.”

Ronza: “I’ll pay for the Uber. You’ll say what you came here to say and then fuck off.”

Ronza walked out to pay for the Uber, while Rachel was beside herself crying hysterically in her husband’s arms. Leah was unapologetic even, she tried her best to hide it, though.

Olivia: "Are all your parties like this?"

Chantel: "No, but you know how it gets with family."

Mish: "Okay, talk Leah. You see how you have upset Rachel?"

Leah: (sigh) "Look, I'm sorry I didn't make it to your wedding, okay? I've been going through so much. I failed my whole semester and mom and dad practically disowned me. I had to hustle for even a place to stay in Jo'burg."

Precious: "Mara (But), Leah, not even a message or anything to your sister? That's so wrong, dude."

Leah: "Like I said, Miss Perfect, I have been dealing with a lot."

Mish: "Hey, wena (you). You won't speak to my wife or any of our wives like that."

Leah: (shocked) “Eh, you mean all of you are married now? I mean even you, Debs? Wow, what is this? The Gangster Wives Club or something?”

Debbie: (irritated) “I think it’s time for you to leave.”

Leah: “But I don’t have anywhere to go.”

Ronza: “We’ll get you a motel or something for tonight only and then you’d better beat it. You have done enough damage already.”

Leah: “Wow, you guys are surely the pits, hey. I mean seriously, Debbie? You married Ronza? Of all people? Did Mish give you an upgrade now?”

Debbie: “On second thought, we won’t be paying for any Motel or Hotel for that matter. You have a big mouth – you’ve always have. So, I’m pretty sure you’ll make a plan for a place to stay.”

Leah: “Okay, I didn’t mean it like that, Debs, come on.”

Debbie: “Fuck off before we call security.”

True colours always come out whenever people are angry. Leah was soon to discover that those friends she once called weak, were now not ones to mess with. She was in a desperate situation, owing the wrong people money and was then on drugs. She needed a way out – desperately and she would do anything to get it. Proverbs 6:34 says; “For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge.” They chased her out and so the party came to an end just like that. Precious and Mish were now left alone in that big house of theirs. She was beside herself to say the least and needed to make Mish trust her again. So, she took Debbie’s advice and went to take a shower. She put on her lingerie and walked down the stairs to find Mish sitting in his study, drinking cognac in the dark. She switched on the light and he was a bit startled. She was dressed in her red two piece lace lingerie, with a lace kimono.

Precious: “Are you busy?”

Mish: “N.. No.”

Precious didn't hesitate as she walked closer to him. She got on top of him and started kissing him while she was grinding on top of him. He didn't push her away as his body responded immediately.

Mish: (moaning) "Fuck, baby. I missed you so much."

Precious: "I missed you too."

On her side, she could say she was no longer in love with Mish, but she still loved him. She was no longer really attracted to him sexually, but she did what she had to do to make him stay; because she loved being in power more than anything at that moment. The love of money is the root of all evil, but combined with the love for power, that's a dangerous combination. She got off him and took charge as she took his pants off. His rock hard shaft was staring her right in the face. She rubbed her hands up and down his dick as he looked at her with so much pain in his eyes, but it was masked by all the pleasure and desire. She put her warm mouth on his cock as she started to suck on it. His hands caressed her head and slowly aided her as she kept on sucking. His head was tilted back, as he enjoyed the

pleasure, with tears running down his face. He was full of regret as he knew that she was cheating on him with someone he could never compare himself to. He knew he was the cause of all their problems, but that didn't take the pain away. She stopped sucking him; took off her lingerie until she was fully naked before him. She got on top of him and slid his dick into her.

Precious: (moaning) "Oh, Mish..."

Mish: "Fuck, baby. Do you love me?"

Precious: "Of course I do."

Mish: "I want to hear you say it."

Precious: "I love you."

Mish got her off him and turned her around as he entered her from behind. She screamed in pain mixed with pleasure, as he was trying to get rid of all the pain and rage he was feeling. He

used to get rough whenever he was angry or stressed, and that night was one of those days. He rammed into her and forgot for a second that he was supposed to make love to his wife – not fuck her.

Mish: “Say you love me!”

Precious: “I love you!”

Mish: “You love me who?”

Precious: “I love you, Mish!”

He came after a few minutes, roaring like a lion.

Mish: “Fuck!”

He pulled his dick out and put his pants on. He didn’t even offer to wipe her like he always used to do.

Precious: (getting dressed) "That was amazing, baby."

Mish: (chuckling) "Was it?"

Precious: (frowning) "Excuse me?"

Mish: "I'm no fool, my love. I know why you decided to have sex with me after three weeks of not giving me any."

Precious: "I don't get it, Mish. I was still healing from the miscarriage."

Mish: "Were you still healing when you were fucking Kumkani?"

Precious: (shocked) "I didn't do anything like that. I hate it when you accuse me."

Mish: “I must say, your pussy is a lot tighter for someone who fucks around. How many times a week did you fuck him? Once, twice?”

Precious: “I never slept with him.”

Mish: “You could’ve fooled me. I recognize that cologne.”

Precious: (teary) “Mish, I swear I never slept with him. I only went out for lunch with him a few times.”

Mish: “Hmm, wena na (you go girl).”

Precious: “Where does this leave us?”

Mish: “I made a vow to you – til death do us part.”

Precious breathed out a sigh of relief.

Mish: “But as for him – he’s done.”

Precious: “What do you mean?”

Mish: “I’m going to get rid of him – permanently.”

With that said, Mish walked out – leaving his distressed wife all alone in the study. All our choices have consequences; it was about to become a shit storm – for all of them.

“There is no charm equal to tenderness of heart.” – Jane Austen

While Precious was dealing with her own demons, something bad was about to happen to the rest of the gang. Ganja and Ghandia lived in the same compound, so they were safe. Ronza and Debbie went home, while Rachel was crying and went to her house with Ghandia. Ronza was driving and even though his house was not that far to Mish’s house, it didn’t take long for the drama to unfold. As he was driving he noticed a black Mercedes Benz SUV approaching him. The more he sped, the more the Benz did the same.

Ronza: “Baby, I don’t want you to panic, okay?”

Debbie: “What’s going on?”

Ronza: “Give me my gun in the compartment.”

Debbie did as she was told, shakily.

Ronza: “Whatever happens – don’t panic. When I say go down, you go down, okay?”

Debbie nodded.

Ronza: “Dial Precious.”

She did as instructed.

Debbie: (scared) “She’s not answering.”

Ronza: “Try Mish. Fuck, forget it. Try Bigz.”

She dialled Bigz and put him on loud speaker. His eyes didn’t let the car out of his sight. Luckily Bigz answered.

Bigz: “Ronza, I was just about to call you, man.”

Ronza: "What's up? I'm being followed."

Bigz: "Me too."

Ronza: "Let me conference call Pilot and Snakes."

They both answered too.

Ronza: "Pilot, Snakes, you're on a conference call. I'm being followed and so is Bigz. What's your status?"

Pilot: "This motherfucker has been driving behind me ever since I left Mish's place. Whenever I overtake, he does the same."

Snakes: "I'm about to shoot a motherfucker."

They all described the same mode of cars.

Ronza: "It has to be Viper. He's the only dumb fuck that would follow us all on one night with the same cars."

Snakes: "I'm trying to lose him."

Ronza: "Okay, he's approaching my side. Get ready guys. Rachel, take your seat down and open the window for me."

Debbie did as instructed and as expected, the driver of the Mercedes next to Ronza, rolled down his window. They were about to shoot, but he was a sharp shooter. Gun shots were fired, while Rachel was screaming. Their car was luckily bullet proof, but he had to shoot them. He shot their tires and managed to shoot the driver in the head. He lost control and fled over the bridge. They could hear gunshots and women screaming on the conference call. He pulled over on the side.

Ronza: "Pilot, Snakes, Bigz. What's your status?!"

Bigz: "I managed to lose him."

Snakes: "Me too."

Chantel: (screaming) "Fuck! Pilot has been shot!"

Snakes: "Oh, Fuck, Daphney is bleeding! We have to get her to hospital. She's pregnant!"

Ronza: "Okay. Chantel, can Pilot drive?"

Pilot: "Sho, but I don't know if I'll be able to make it."

Ronza: "Where are you?"

Pilot: "Silver Oaks."

Ronza: "I'm on my way. Snakes, get your wife to hospital. We'll meet you at Die Wilgers."

Snakes: (worried) "On it."

Ronza did a U-turn and rolled the window back up.

Ronza: "Debbie, baby, it's okay. The worst is over."

Debbie: (scared) "Okay."

Ronza: "I need you to be strong. Call Precious until she picks up."

Debbie nodded shaking and called Precious. She was sound asleep and had put her phone on silent, while Mish was woken up by a call from Viper.

Mish: "What do you want?"

Raymond: "You remember the saying "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh?"

Mish: "It's not a saying it's a verse, you idiot."

Raymond: "Okay, Mr. Smarty pants. You killed my child – right in the womb

so I'm going to eliminate every member of your crew and you'll be last. Who knows what I'll do to your precious wife? Maybe I'll wife her too."

While he was chuckling, Mish hung up in annoyance and saw 8 missed calls from Ronza's number. Ronza never called so many times. That was a sign of trouble, so he called him back.

Ronza: "Mish, man. Kgale ke founa (I've been calling)."

Mish: "Sorry, I didn't hear my phone. I just got a call from Viper. What's happening?"

Ronza: "That fucker organized an ambush. I was shot at and so was Bigz, Snakes and Pilot."

Mish: “Fuck! Are they okay?”

Precious got startled and woke up.

Precious: “Mish, keng (what is it)?”

Mish: “Ema nyana (Wait a minute).”

Ronza: “Pilot got hit and so did Daphney – in the stomach.”

Mish: “Fuck! And she’s pregnant. Okay, we’ll meet you guys there.”

Ronza: “No, let Precious, Debbie and Olivia come. We guys are coming to your house to do some brainstorming.”

Mish: “Sharp.”

He hung up the phone and stared at his nervous wife.

Mish: "Pilot and Daphney were shot. They're in hospital."

Precious: "Oh, shit."

Mish: "Yeah, shit. I need you to drive to the hospital with Olivia and Debbie. Take the Jeep."

She nodded without hesitating and got out dressed in her pajamas. She found Olivia and Rachel already in the kitchen. They hugged one another and walked out hastily, leaving Mish, Ganja and Ghandia. Debbie and Chantel stayed behind while Ronza, Snakes and Bigz drove back to Mish's house.

Mish: "Come in, gents."

He hugged Snakes.

Mish: "She's going to be alright. She has to."

Snakes: "I don't know what the fuck I'm going to do with four kids should she die."

Ronza: "Don't think like that."

Ghandia: "We have to think of a plan."

Bigz: "I say we go there – to his house and eliminate him."

Ronza: "Viper isn't that stupid. He's anticipating that. He wants us to do that."

Mish: "I have an even better idea."

They all looked at him anxiously.

Mish: "I say we "invite" him to join us. We tell him our plan to do a heist."

Ganja: "You mean we give him a fake plan?"

Mish: "Not exactly. We pretend to go on the bank robbery with him and his guys. We have to pretend there are no hard feelings. They'll do the job for us, we take the money and act like we're escorting him and his gang, but we send him on a different route. I can even get one of my guys in the police force to be on standby and arrest them. That way he'll be out of our hands for good."

Snakes: (shaking head) "Arrest is not good enough for me. Ke batla go mo thuba hlogo (I want to blow his brains out)."

Mish: "Fine then. Before the cops come, you can shoot him."

Ronza: "I'm all good with that. He nearly killed my wife. He has to pay."

They all agreed to the plan and decided to test him out. He was a very impulsive thinker, so he wouldn't think that they were trapping him.

Snakes: "Make the call, Mish."

Mish nodded and dialled. Viper answered almost instantly.

Raymond: "Hello, dear brother. I see you got my message."

Mish: "Yes, and unfortunately you fucked up, Viper. What happendd to talking like a normal person?"

Raymond: (laughing) "As if you've been listening to me."

Mish: "Let's cut the bullshit, Viper. Here's a deal. I know you're angry for a lot of reasons. I killed your kid, of which you're not even sure is yours or not. And you're pretty pissed that I refused to let you join my gang, so here's a deal. You and your useless, cowardice boys prove you have what it takes on our next heist and you can join."

Raymond: “Now, that’s what I’m talking about. What took you so long to consider?”

Mish: “You put a few bullets into a friend of mine and Snakes’ pregnant wife. You’d better hope and pray they don’t die or else you’ll be to blame.”

Raymond: “If you can live with our father’s death on your hands, I can live with that too. See you soon.”

Mish: “Cia (Bye), Motherfucker.”

He hung up and Snakes was even angrier than before.

Snakes: “Let the games begin.”

Proverbs 26:27 says; “Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.” It was Mish’s turn to receive the stone that he once threw towards Raymond.

Romans 12:19 says; “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written; “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

“There’s a natural law of karma that vindictive people, who go out of their way to hurt others, will end up broke and alone.” – Sylvester Stallone

While the Fantastic 7 were baying for Raymond’s blood, Kumkani was finalizing his own plan against Mish. He knew that Mish and his gang were behind the recent heists, he just needed some sufficient evidence. He had his own doubts when they all suddenly moved to the estates, hence he asked for the books. He went through them and it took him all night. Debbie’s work was so good, that it was almost perfect. What they forgot was that Kumkani had connections pretty much everywhere – even at his tender age. He did his own little investigation while everyone else were reaping the benefits of being under Mish’s payroll. So, he found a few accounts; some were ghosts and some were offshore. It wouldn’t be surprising since most criminals act that way, but what startled him was what he discovered. So, he decided to call the bank to make sure.

Consultant: “Good morning, Claire speaking, how may I assist you?”

Kumkani: “Good afternoon, my name is Kumkani Mdhletse, I am Meshack Ndhlovu’s lawyer. I’d like to find out if all the accounts he has are still in place?”

Consultant: “Sir, it is policy to ask you a few questions for quality and security purposes.”

He agreed and answered all the questions properly before proceeding.

Consultant: “Thank you very much, Mr. Mdhletse. Please give me a moment to check through our system.”

Kumkani: “No problem.”

Consultant: “Yes, I see all of them are still in place, sir. There is an investment account which was opened 3 weeks ago and currently has R300 000. The offshore accounts are still in place, sir, there are two of them – each with R100 000 each.”

Kumkani was startled. Precious was the one who had signing authority on those accounts. It wasn't odd since they were married, but which meant only one thing – she knew about Mish's dealings and was in on it.

Kumkani: "Thank you so much for your time, Claire. Goodbye."

He hung up and checked the accounts of the other members and their wives. Surprisingly, all their wives also signed on the accounts. He knew that something shady was going on but never anticipated that. He had it all planned out; hand over his file to the prosecutor and hand Mish in. Now that the woman he loved was involved, it was darker than he thought. Perhaps it was time for him to tell Precious the truth, but before he did that he needed to pay someone a visit. Meanwhile in Zululand, Glenda, the ruthless and selfish mother had decided that whatever the boys had accumulated was not enough. It was now time for them to go for the entire throne, she didn't really care which one got it as long as it was out of Kumkani's hands. So, she decided to test the waters and call Kumkani.

Kumkani: "Ufunani (What do you want)?"

Gwen: “Hawu (Goodness), Kumkani, what’s with the hostility?”

Kumkani: “Gwen, I’m really busy right now, talk.”

Gwen: “Well, I thought perhaps we could meet up this weekend, you know. To discuss the future of Gatsha’s sons?”

Kumkani: (annoyed) “There’s no need to bother yourself with that. I’ve already found Princess Buhle – the real heir to the throne and everything owned by Gatsha and Lehumo. As for you, your daughter and your grand sons, you can kiss his riches goodbye.”

He hung up leaving Gwen dissatisfied. She got so mad she threw her phone against the wall.

Ntsika: (shocked) “Gogo, what’s happening?”

Gwen: (angry) “That lawyer, mfana wami (my boy)! He’s testing my patience! How dare he try and steal all of this from you!”

Ntsika: “Usho njani (what do you mean)?”

Gwen: “He has found Gatsha’s bastard daughter!”

Ntsika: (angry) “Kodwa (But) Gogo, she isn’t even royalty.”

Gwen: “My point exactly! So, what are you going to do about? Your mother didn’t raise no weaklings.”

Ntsika: “Njabulo and I are going to fight it. The way you told us to.”

Gwen: (smiling) “That’s my boy. Call him and tell him you two will be on the next flight to Pretoria. It is high time you two end that bitch – permanently.”

And just like that, her plan was set in motion while her daughter Georgina was drinking herself to death. Kumkani had

gone to visit Thoko, only to find the one person who could assist him. He knocked and she opened.

Bridget: (frowning) "Hi, may I help you?"

Kumkani: "Oh, hi. You must be Bridget, right?"

Bridget: (scared) "How did you get in? Who sent you? Is it him? They sent you, didn't they?!"

Kumkani: "No, no, no. Relax, please. The gate was left open. Who are you talking about?"

Bridget: (looking down) "No one."

Kumkani: "Look, I came here to seek answers, please help me out. I'm willing to pay you for your time."

Bridget: "How much?"

Kumkani: "How's R5000?"

A leopard never changes its spots.

Bridget: "Come in."

She looked so frail with bandages on her fingers, and a few missing teeth. Her face had healed, but he could tell that Mish had fucked her up real badly.

Kumkani: "Thank you for allowing me to come in."

Bridget: "If you're looking for Hercules, I can't help you with that."

Kumkani: "Bridget, please. I know you can help me. Do you want Precious to take your kids away from you?"

Bridget shook her head.

Kumkani: "I didn't think so. What happened to your teeth and your fingers?"

Bridget: (teary) "She ripped them out."

Kumkani: (frowning) "Who?"

Bridget: "Precious! Who else? Or should I say Buhle?"

Kumkani knew he had hit the nail on the head, but what confused him was her saying Precious did that to her. According to him, she could never hurt a fly.

Kumkani: "Wait a minute, Bridget. Slow down and tell me everything."

Bridget: "Precious took my teeth out and ripped off my fingers. She's not the angel you think she is. I know who you

are. You're the fool who's in love with her. You were talking about her on tv, weren't you?"

Kumkani took out an envelope stacked with cash and put it on the table.

Kumkani: "If you want this money, you're going to have to be a lot nicer and straight with me. Start from the beginning. Why did she do that to you and how do you know her real name?"

Bridget: "I met Hosea, I mean Hercules – whatever you want to call him years ago. We were both teenagers and he had come to live here with his sister. I could tell he was troubled, but man I fell for him the moment I saw him. He was a real mess, and told me everything. He told me how Lehumo had changed their identities once they came to live here and why they had to do it. I loved him, I still do. I know everything – I always have. Mish also knows; he has known ever since he met Hosea."

Kumkani was utterly shocked. He put two and two together.

Kumkani: “Why did he never tell Precious about her real identity?”

Bridget: “He claimed that her life was still in danger. I mean he is the most notorious gangster in the country and yet he felt he couldn’t save her. But I know he married her because he loved the fact that she was a virgin and everyone loved her. He couldn’t handle letting her go to be a Queen of some village.”

Kumkani: “So
why did she do what she did to you?”

Bridget: “I stole her money. R1 million to be exact. I was going to pay it back. I just did it to spite Hosea. I love that man so much and he just fails to see it. I ran away and before I knew it the money had run out. Mish found me and brought me back. He took me to his house and that’s when Precious found me tied to one of the chairs. Even when she saw that Mish beat me up so badly, she didn’t stop him. Instead, she took a few of my fingers – four to be exact and a few of my teeth. She said I needed a makeover. Who the fuck does that?”

Kumkani was in such disbelief. That couldn't be his Precious.

Bridget: "I know, it sounds ridiculous, right? But perhaps you should ask Mam'Thoko. She was there too. She has seen how Precious has changed into some kind of animal. She is not the woman you think she is. Mish has gotten to her and now, she is a real time gangster bitch."

Kumkani: "What do you mean by that?"

Bridget: "You don't know? She is the leader of their gang now. She plots the heists and bank robberies."

Kumkani couldn't believe his ears.

Kumkani: "Impossible."

Bridget: "Oh, it is so much possible."

Kumkani: "So? Where is Hercules?"

Bridget: “Oh, he is somewhere in Mexico. I told his bosses and everyone he worked for about his shady dealings. I know, I was bitter and angry that he wouldn’t marry me. Now, I fucking regret it. My kids ask me about their father every day and I don’t even know what to say to them.”

Kumkani: “If you give me all the information you have about his whereabouts, I can bring him back here. I can set you up with a good plastic surgeon to fix you up and make you brand new again – even better. Only if you agree on one condition.”

Bridget: “Anything.”

Kumkani: “You have to convince him to come back and tell Precious the truth. Her inheritance is at stake.”

Bridget: (sigh) “Okay. Just so you know, I’m not doing it for her.”

Kumkani: “Fine.”

He tossed her the money and walked right out. He thought of a brilliant plan, but would Precious believe him? He took out his phone and dialled her number.

Precious: (whispering) "Hello?"

Kumkani: "Hi, did I catch you at a bad time?"

Precious: "Not really, just that I don't want Mish to hear me. Wait, you're still alive?"

Kumkani: (frowning) "Am I supposed to be dead?"

Precious: "Never mind. What's up?"

Kumkani: "I need to see you – urgently."

Precious: (sigh) "Okay. When?"

Kumkani: "Today if possible."

Precious: "I'll be at the hospital all day. Can we make it tonight?"

Kumkani: "Fine. Seven o'clock?"

Precious: "Sure. I'll come to your place."

Kumkani: "Okay. See you then."

He hung up and thought of how he was going to construct his perfectly planned out speech. Precious had gone home to change and so did the rest of the ladies. Debbie decided to go over to Precious's house since she didn't want to be left alone at her house. Chantel did the same. All the men except for Pilot, who was still in hospital, were in the basement constructing their plan against Raymond. None of the women knew about it – not even Precious. She was about to leave but decided to go and tell them that they were on their way.

Precious: “Hey, guys. Let me quickly go tell Mish we’re leaving.”

Chantel: “Cool.”

She walked towards the basement and she could hear them speaking in low tones.

Mish: “This is it, gents. It’s now or never.”

Snakes: “I can’t wait to get my hands on that bastard.”

She knocked twice and opened the door, leaving them a bit startled.

Ronza: “I thought you locked the door, Mish.”

Mish: “I forgot.”

Precious: (smiling) “Hey, gentlemen. I was just letting you know that we’re on our way back to hospital.”

Mish: (smiling nervously) “Okay then. Be sure not to make any pit stops.”

She knew that was code for Kumkani.

Precious: (annoyed) “Am I missing anything?”

Ronza: “What do you mean?”

Precious: “I mean why are you all gathered in here? Is there something you’d like to confess?”

Snakes: (firmly) “No, we’re good.”

Precious: “Are you sure?”

Snakes: “Yes. Please do me a favour. My wife loves those blueberry muffins from Woolworths. Please, get her some of those – for me.”

Precious: “Okay then. Bye.”

Mish: “Sho.”

She walked out but still had that weird gut feeling that told her that they were up to no good. She approached Debbie and Chantel shaking her head.

Debbie: “What’s wrong?”

Precious: “Nothing, it’s just that, I can’t shake the feeling that those guys are planning something behind our backs.”

Chantel: “Something like what?”

Precious: "I don't know but whatever it is, it's big. Anyway, Snakes asked me to get Daphney some blueberry muffins from woollies. Apparently she loves them. We'll stop by The Grove Mall before heading to see her. Is there anything you'd like to get Pilot, Chantel?"

Chantel: (teary) "Not really. If he could have a beer, I'd most definitely give him one."

Precious and Debbie laughed.

Precious: "Tell you what, we'll sneak some in a squeeze bottle so that when he wakes up he can have a sip or two."

Chantel: (laughing) "Good idea. Thanks for being there for me, ladies. I honestly don't know what I would have done without you."

Debbie: (smiling) "We're family now."

They headed out as they picked up Rachel and Olivia. Lerato preferred driving alone as always, of which they didn't mind at all. They headed to the mall and got what they needed and some food for themselves. Once they got to the hospital they were rather surprised to find Lerato seated with an unlikely alliance, which got Rachel annoyed immediately.

Rachel: "What the fuck is this now?"

Lerato: (smiling) "Oh, Rachel, how many times should I tell you that a woman should never lack stature. I mean your mouth is pretty foul."

Rachel: (angered) "Bitch, don't you fucking tell me shit about stature. You grew up in the furthest place in Mamelodi, wearing cheap skinny jeans and Carvellas and now o batla go mpotsa masepa (you want to tell me shit) about stature?! I asked you a fucking question and don't make me repeat myself!"

Rachel was quite short, but if she blew a fuse nobody knew what to expect. Lerato was quite shocked and scared. Precious, Chantel and Olivia didn't bother to stop her.

Lerato: (shocked) "Calm down, okay. I didn't mean it like that."

Rachel: "You never mean anything. All you ever do is act like you're fucking better than us. Now who the fuck gave you the right to bring this one here?!"

Leah: "Rachel, come on now. I'm not "this one", I'm your twin sister."

Rachel: "Was anyone talking to you?"

Lerato: "Look, I found her outside my house and she needed someone to talk to. She was nearly raped out there and I offered her a place to stay."

Rachel: (shaking head) "I have no idea why you're even in this gang to begin with. You're too stupid to even think. How do

you even know that she's not even working for someone who's trying to bring us down? How did she even know where you live or where any of us live for that matter? Ever thought about that?"

Lerato: "I think you're being ridiculous. No matter what she did to you, she's family."

Rachel: "Oh, I see. That's probably the reason why you never got your father arrested for raping your own sister, right?"

Everyone was rather shocked at how Rachel was spewing daggers.

Precious: "Okay, Rachel. I think we need to calm down. We can do this another day."

Rachel: "Fuck that. This bitch was never there for me. I was always her shadow. And now, that I am happy and married she decided to come back and ruin it for me – for all of us. I don't

trust you one bit, Leah, and don't even think that I have room for forgiveness in my heart for you."

She walked away and headed to Daphney's room, while Chantel, Debbie and Olivia did the same.

Leah: "Oh, so now you're also against me too, Precious? What did I ever do to you?"

Precious: "Leah, you're not welcome here. Lerato, if you want to continue being family, I suggest you get your priorities straight."

Precious left them standing there as she walked on further to the ward. Lerato was spewing with internal rage, right where Leah wanted her. She was the easy target, the jealous and envious one. Leah would easily use her to get to the rest of them. Little did they know who Leah owed and why she was even there. Rachel was right; no one even bothered to question why Leah appeared out of the blue and soon after she appeared, the shootings started. No one questioned how she knew where they all lived; their exact locations. They always

say that the easiest way to kill someone is having someone close to you sell you out. We all sleep with serpents; some are our very own husbands and wives; even parents and some are our very own children. This world is not for the faint hearted. Once you lose your faith and trust in God, walk around without believing in anything or anyone, what is stopping the vultures from eating you alive?

Romans 12:9 says; "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good."

Proverbs 3:3-4 says; "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man."

“You cannot do harm to someone because someone has done harm to you. You will pay just like they will.” – Ericka Williams

After their rather eventful day at the hospital, Lerato still decided to go ahead with her own thinking and took Leah out for lunch. The rest of the ladies decided to go back home, while Precious decided to go see Kumkani. She came up with an excuse for the ladies to use just in case Mish asked about her, but he had his own plans. While Mish and his crew were working tirelessly on getting the system right for the following morning’s job, Precious had gone to see Kumkani. She arrived at his place after punching the code, which he gave her few weeks earlier. She knocked and he opened hastily. He was topless that evening, wearing only his jeans and his smell was recognizable from a mile away.

Precious: “Hi.”

Kumkani: “Hi. Please, come in.”

She walked in and as usual, she was hypnotized by the beautiful aroma of food which filled the room. Kumkani always went all out, with candles on the table, the wine was already chilled and the table was already set.

Kumkani: "I was just taking out the dessert from the oven. Please, take a seat. I'll be right back."

Precious: "Where are you going?"

Kumkani: "I'm going to put on my shirt. You surely didn't think I'd have dinner with a Pretty lady like yourself not dressed accordingly, did you?"

She blushed as he chuckled and ran upstairs. She decided to switch her phone to silent mode as she didn't want any disturbance. She was about to get herself comfortable, when she was approached by an unfamiliar woman.

Zandi: (smiling) "I finally get to meet the woman who has stolen my son's heart."

She nearly jumped off her chair when she saw her. She looked so beautiful, even though much older than Kumkani. Did she say son? She thought to herself.

Precious: (nervously) “Uhm, Sawubona (Hello), Ma.”

Zandi smiled to her as she opened her arms for a hug.

Zandi: “Hello, Precious. Unjani (How are you)?”

They hugged and Precious felt like it was as if she was hugging Mam’Thoko.

Precious: “I’m well thanks and how are you, Ma?”

Zandi: “I’m alright. At my age, you don’t have any problems, that’s if you age gracefully and without regrets.”

She chuckled while Precious smiled nervously.

Zandi: “Oh, don’t mind me. I just came to get myself a bottle of wine.”

Kumkani found them talking as he smiled to himself.

Kumkani: “Haibo (Goodness), Ma. I thought you were in your room.”

Zandi: “Hayi wena (Come on), I can’t be cooped up in there while you’re dining this gorgeous woman. I just came to say hello and fetch myself some alcohol.”

Kumkani: “Well, you might as well join us. That’s if you don’t mind, Precious?”

How could she mind when it was not even her house to begin with? She thought that it would be a romantic dinner between them, but she thought why not? It would be a nice opportunity to get to know him from his mother’s perspective.

Precious: "Oh, sure. I don't mind at all. You needn't ask."

Zandi: (laughing) "Nonsense. A sensible man always asks his woman."

She looked down in shame as she stared at her wedding ring. Did that mean that she was officially cheating on Mish with Kumkani? That was just a complicated bit. They all sat down while Kumkani brought the food. They prayed and started eating.

Precious: "Oh, this is lovely, Kumkani."

Kumkani: (smiling) "Thank you."

Zandi: "So, Precious, where are you from?"

Precious: "Oh, I'm from Mamelodi."

Zandi: "I mean where are you really from?"

Precious: (puzzled) "I don't understand."

Zandi: "I don't want you to take this the wrong way or think that I'm crazy, but I'm not your ordinary person."

Precious still stared at her in wonder.

Zandi: "I'm a medium."

Precious: "Oh, it's alright. My grandmother is something like that. She can see things. Supernatural things."

Zandi: "Yes, but for some reason her gift was taken away from her. She sees vivid dreams now, isn't it?"

Precious: "The last time I checked, yes. I don't know much about her gift."

Zandi: "I see. Well, I'm about to tell you something weird, but please. I don't want you to be afraid and believe me, I don't want to force you to believe me or anything. It's your choice at the end of the day."

Precious was a bit nervous, but then she went with it.

Precious: "Okay."

Kumkani was praying silently for his mother not to ruin things for him.

Zandi: (grunting) "Your mother is here. She is stepping forward. She has been troubling me ever since she passed on. From the moment you walked into this house, she has been here – begging me to come see you."

Precious: (frowning) "Okay. What is she saying?"

Zandi: "She is saying she has a lot to tell you, so you need to get ready for what I'm about to say."

Precious swallowed hard thinking of all possible things her mom would tell her, mostly she was thinking that her mom was probably disappointed in the person she has become and for marrying a man like Mish, but she was in for a big surprise. Meanwhile at Mish's house, they were startled by Raymond who had walked in with his crew. It was rather odd on how they got in without Mish's approval, but he had other plans in mind.

Raymond: "Gentlemen."

Mish: (shocked) "Viper, what the fuck are you doing here?"

Raymond: "You need tighter security, man. Anyway, I came here with my boys as you can see."

Ronza: "We get that. What do you want?"

Raymond: “We’ve decided to go rob the bank tonight instead of tomorrow morning.”

Mish’s crew was startled. That is what someone does to you when they try to fuck you over.

Mish: (shaking head) “This is not your plan, Raymond, it’s ours.”

Raymond: “Yes, but I figured since we all don’t trust one another, what better way to prove ourselves – tonight? We can do the bank robbery together and if all goes well, we’ll be partners, just as you agreed.”

Mish had a bad feeling about that, but Snakes being filled with uncontrollable rage, he wanted to take Raymond down.

Snakes: “Okay.”

Ronza: “Snakes, what the fuck?”

Snakes: "We can do it."

Raymond: "Let me leave you guys to discuss it. We'll be in the living room."

He walked out with his guys, leaving Mish startled beyond.

Ghandia: "I have a bad feeling about this, Mish. Let's not do this."

Ronza: "I second Ghandia. We're not ready."

Ganja: "Besides, he wants to fuck us in the ass. Can't you see, Snakes?"

Bigz: "I agree with Snakes. We can fucking do this, man. It's not rocket science."

Mish was confused. Being the leader was never an easy task.

Mish: "Okay, we can do this, gents. I just say we stick to our plan and by the end of the night, we'll be celebrating someone's death."

Ronza: (shaking head) "I don't like this. Not one bit."

Ghandia: "Maybe we should involve Rachel, you know, last minute kind of things."

Snakes: "You want her to rat us all out to our crazy wives? You can handle this. You know computers."

Ghandia: "Ai."

Mish: "Okay. Are we all good to go?"

They all decided to go ahead with the plan even though they weren't all agreeing with it.

Ghandia: "Sure."

Mish: "Good. Ganja, you'll be the driver, Snakes, you stay in the car until they come out with the money bags. Bigz, Ronza and I will head out with them."

Snakes: (angered) "Why do I get to stay in the car? I want to pop that guy."

Mish: "We need to be strategic about this."

Ronza: "Especially since we don't know what they're planning."

Snakes: "Fine. Let's get this over and done with already."

They got their guns and gadgets on, and met Raymond in the living room with his guys, drinking Mish's expensive whiskey. He himself didn't have a good feeling about that night, but then, trouble always followed him.

Mish: "Fine, we're ready."

Raymond: (smiling) "Good. It's about damn time."

They walked out and Raymond had another surprise for them. Two of his guys walked towards Mish's van.

Mish: "Ke masepa a eng a nou (What bullshit is this now)?"

Raymond: "I take two of your guys and you take two of mine. It's insurance."

Mish: "You don't get to call the shots, Viper. You see why I'm in charge of a crew like mine and you're not?"

Raymond: "You want me to trust you or not?"

Ronza: "It's okay, Bozza, I'll go with Bigz."

Raymond was changing the whole game for them – complicating everything. It was going to be hard for them to communicate along the way on what they planned on doing to Raymond, but they went with it. They got into the cars and drove off. Ronza was there to keep Bigz calm

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while Mish was on edge the whole time Ganja was driving. His phone rang and it was Thoko, he ignored it and she called again until he switched his phone off. Raymond's guys didn't take their eyes off Mish and his members.

Ghandia: (on the line) "Okay, Bozza. Are you ready?"

Mish: "Yeah, are the cameras shut down?"

Ghandia: "I redirected them to old footage. We're good to go."

Mish: "Sure. The alarm system?"

Ghandia: "I'll disable it once you reach the door. I can only do that for fifteen minutes. You need to act fast."

Mish: "Got it."

They arrived at the mall and Ghandia had hacked every system there was from the entrance of the gate to the entrance of the mall. They managed to go in and walk alongside one another. Raymond wanted himself alongside Mish, which made Mish really uncomfortable.

Mish: "Ghandia, we're at the door."

Ghandia: "Okay. Alarm system deactivated. Your fifteen minutes starts now."

They rushed in while Raymond's men came with the bags. They headed to the safe, Ghandia gave them the pass code.

Ghandia: "2569978456. Then turn the wheel clockwise and you're in."

They did as instructed and managed to open the safe.

Raymond: (excited) “Yeah, baby! I always knew you were a bad ass mother fucker, little bro.”

Ronza: “Enough with the bullshit. Let’s get to it.”

They started packing the money in the bags.

Ghandia: “Come on, gents, 8 minutes left.”

Raymond’s men left first, and then Bigz and Ronza left second, leaving Snakes, Raymond and Mish. Snakes took it as an opportunity to kill Raymond, ruining the whole plan. He drew his gun and aimed at Raymond, who did the same.

Raymond: (laughing) “I knew you were a sellout, Meshack. Sending one of your lab rats to do the job?”

Ghandia: “What’s happening?”

Mish didn't respond to him.

Mish: "Snakes, man, come on. What are you doing?"

Snakes: "I'm doing this for my wife and child. You killed my child, Viper. It's high time you pay."

Raymond: "If you pull the trigger, I'll blow your head off and believe me my guys are out there waiting to kill your men if they even hear one gunshot."

Mish's men had the advantage, they were able to hear Ghandia on their headsets. While Raymond and Snakes were debating on who got to shoot first, Raymond's four men were outside. Two were in Mish's van, while the other two outside of their own van.

Viper's guy1: "What the fuck is taking them so long?"

Ronza: "I don't know. Let me go and find out."

Viper's guy2: "I don't think that's a good idea."

The second guy drew his gun and pointed it at Ronza and Ronza pointed his at him. Before they all knew it, they all had guns pointed at one another – except for Ganja, who was in the driver's seat.

Ganja: "Come on, guys. We can talk about this."

Viper's guy3: (chuckling) "You honestly thought that all of you would walk out of here alive?"

Viper's guy4: "Guess they're dumber than we thought."

Ronza: "Look, if you shoot, we all shoot. It's either some of us die or we all die. Do you want that? You want the money or you want to die?"

Viper's guy 1: "Man, we don't give a fuck about you. Viper is the man and he'll get us all out of here."

Bigz: "I guess we'll have to see about that."

Ghandia was so scared on the other side, sweating to death. He wasn't sure if he was supposed to call any of the women, or the cops or what, so – he waited.

Ghandia: "Guys, 5 minutes left before the alarm goes off."

Back in the vault, Mish and Snakes were still debating.

Mish: "Snakes, come on, man. Not now – not here."

Raymond: (chuckling) "Shoot me already. What the fuck are you waiting for?! I did you a favour, I mean you already have four bastards you're looking after."

Snakes' rage took over as he shot Raymond five times. Bullets were flying in the vault, while the others were outside.

Viper's guy 1: (scared) "What the fuck is going on in there, man?"

Viper's guy 2: "I say we shoot them all."

Ronza didn't have time to think. He knew that it was impossible for all of them to walk out without gun wounds, so he pulled the trigger and before they knew it – gunshots were flying outside as well. Ganja had to take a gun out of his compartment and start shooting as well.

Ghandia: (worried) "What is going on?! Can somebody just tell me what the fuck is going on?!"

A whole three minutes of gunshots flying, men screaming and some dropping on the floor, left him still in his chair.

Bigz: (crying out) "Aaah, fuck!"

Ganja: "Shit, Bigz, you're hit."

Ronza was limping, Viper's four guys were down on the ground and he decided to go get the bags that were in Viper's car.

Ghandia: "Come on guys, 5 minutes left. Someone tell me what the fuck is going on?!"

Ronza: "Fuck, I'm hit but I'm okay. Bigz is bleeding from the pelvis. Ganja is okay."

Ghandia: "Any word on Snakes and Mish?"

Ronza: "Well, the gunshots stopped inside, so we'll see who comes out."

Greed is something else. Snakes walked out with a bag hung on his back, carrying Mish in his arms.

Ganja: "Oh, shit, Mish looks hit really badly."

Ghandia: "What do you mean?"

Ronza: "Snakes is carrying him."

Snakes got to the door of the van and dropped Mish on the seat. He was also limping.

Ronza: "What the fuck, Snakes? What happened in there?"

Snakes: "I'll tell you on the way. We need to get to hospital. Mish seems hit really badly."

Ghandia: "Guys, you need to get out of there. Two minutes left."

Ganja: "On it. Just make sure that the robots are cleared for us."

Ghandia: “Which route are you using?”

Ronza: “Highway. We don’t have a choice. Mish needs the hospital. He’s unconscious.”

Ghandia did his thing and thank goodness he managed as the alarm started ringing after they had left the mall. With one sloppy job all it takes is a small bit of evidence. Blood, beanies – or even a toe. They were rushing to hospital with the others bleeding inside of the van. It was a shitty mess, which they had to account for. Meanwhile at Kumkani’s house, Precious was getting her first dose of the after life.

Zandi: “Your mother is here, so please be patient as I’ll be quiet at times.”

Precious looked at Kumkani who held her hand in reassurance.

Zandi: “She is standing right next to you, crying.”

Precious: “You mean you can actually see her?”

Zandi: “Yes. See all those goosebumps on you? It’s a sign that she is here.”

Precious: (teary) “I haven’t dreamt of her in a long while.”

Zandi: “There’s reason for that. Firstly, she would like to say she is very sorry. She never meant any harm. She’d like me to tell you your story; of where you actually come from.”

Precious gulped anxiously while Zandi told her everything about Zululand; how Lehumo met Gatsha and what drove her way. It was a lengthy story and it took immense energy from Zandi, but she had to do it.

Zandi: “That’s who you are, child. Your real name is Buhlebendalo Bahumi Ncube, Princess of Zululand and the rightful heir to the throne.”

Precious was filled with so much anger, rage and confusion.

Zandi: “Your father is also with her. You need to claim your rightful place at the throne before it’s too late, my child. The Ncube ancestors can only accept your mother to join them fully once you go and find where your father was buried.”

Precious: “Where was he buried?”

Zandi: “Only they can show you. They refuse to show me.”

Precious: (crying) “So, my own mother lied to me and refused to give my father access to me? What kind of a mother is that?”

Kumkani: “Precious, please – “

Precious: (interrupting) “You surely can’t expect me to be happy while she stole my whole life from me! She only cared about herself. And now my uncle Hercules or Hosea whatever is missing because of her. Who gave her the right to dictate our lives? Why didn’t she just stay and face the music like a real woman?!”

Zandi: "Precious, that's not fair."

Precious: "Is what she did to me fair?! This is bullshit, I'm sorry."

Zandi: "I understand that you're angry, but danger is looming."

Precious: "Danger has always been looming."

She was about to continue when she felt as if her whole body had been hit by something sharp. She fell onto the floor and screamed out in pain. Kumkani also felt what she felt, since he was her soulmate. He felt pain too, but it was bearable for him.

Precious: (in agony) "Yoooh! What's happening to me?!"

Zandi: "Kumkani, please pick her up and place her on the couch. Precious, please breathe. That's Meshack. He is in so much pain right now. He was shot."

Precious wasn't hearing what Zandi was saying. She cried out in pain three more times and then collapsed.

Kumkani: (worried) "Ma! Ma!"

Zandi: (sigh) "Relax, she'll be okay."

Kumkani: "Why is she feeling whatever he's feeling right now?"

Zandi: "That's because she is carrying his child. His ancestors are now fighting for the child, and his father. It's Mish's time to go, but his spirit has unfinished business here on earth."

Most of us think that we go through hell here on earth, but no one really knows what happens in the after life. You reap what you sow hits a lot closer to home.

John 15:13 says; "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

The truth was that Mish sacrificed himself for Snakes. He knew his time was coming as the angel of death had visited him a few times before that botched robbery. It was about to go downhill from there as others stuck by family over everything while some said blood was indeed thicker than water.

1 John 4:20 says; “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.”

“Grace isn’t a little prayer you chant before receiving a meal. It’s a way to live. The law tells me how crooked I am. Grace comes along and straightens me out.” – Dwight Lyman Moody

While everything was hanging in the balance for Mish’s crew, it was about to get worse. They had to rush to hospital – with no choice. Mish, was unconscious and had to be attended to and headed immediately to surgery after sustaining multiple gunshot wounds. Bigz also had to get surgery as he was bleeding from the abdomen, while Snakes was shot by Raymond in the arm and leg. He had to get minor surgery. Ronza decided to stay at the hospital while Ganja had to disappear and make sure that the money was safe. Of course, all those gunshot wounds, and them all fully clothed in black with bullet proof vests gave the doctors a reason to inform the police. As if that was not enough problems, their wives were about to get hysterical. Ghandia and Ganja had to break the news to the wives, while Precious was M.I.A. according to them. They all arrived at the hospital, hysterical and beyond upset.

Ronza: (softly) “Debbie, I – “

Debbie didn't even give Ronza a chance to finish his sentence. She slapped him immediately and he had no choice but to look down. It seemed as if certain situations brought out the beast in Debbie and Rachel.

Debbie: (crying) “What the fuck were you thinking?!”

Rachel: “How could you guys even decide to do a job without informing us?!”

Lerato: “Le gona (Even so), where is your “Boss Lady” Precious?”

Ghandia: (annoyed) “Shouldn't you be worrying about your husband right now?”

Ganja: “And what is she doing here?”

By she he was referring to Leah, who was also part of the crew that evening.

Leah: "I'm family. Come on, guys. You surely didn't think I'd just sit by and watch you all cry yourselves to sleep."

Chantel: "This is a real fuck up. My husband is still in hospital, along with Daphney and now you guys went out again! Were you planning on getting killed?!"

Ronza: "No."

Olivia: "Where is Raymond anyway?"

Ronza: "We don't know. Mish and Snakes were left inside the vault with him. All we heard was gunshots and next thing Snakes walked out carrying Mish."

Rachel: "Ghandia, did you even manage to rig the cameras?"

Ghandia: (scratching head) "I think so."

Rachel: (frowning) "You think so?! Mara (But)! Who even taught you to hack anyway? You'd better not have learnt from another bitch."

Ghandia: "Relax, baby bathing (goodness). I learnt a thing or two from you while you were working."

Chantel: "If the cops find out, you're in deep kak (shit)."

It was as if she was speaking things into existence, because right there and then, the police walked in.

Policeman1: "Gentleman and ladies. Sorry to disturb you. We believe your friends were brought in with some gunshot wounds."

Some of the women became a bit nervous, but the guys were rather used to that.

Lerato: (worried) "Are you here to arrest us?"

Policeman2: "By us I assume you're referring to the whole crew? Husbands and wives? Why would we arrest you? We just came here for questioning."

Ronza: "Lerato, you need to keep quiet."

Policeman1: (chuckling) "That's if you have something to hide, girly."

Policeman2: "Anyway, where were you guys tonight?"

Ronza: "We took a drive."

Policeman1: "All six of you?"

Policeman2: "Dressed in black with bullet proof vests?"

Ronza: “Yes, one can never be too safe.”

Ghandia: “This is Msanzi after all.”

Policeman1: (chuckling) “You’re damn right about that. Are you sure that’s all you were doing? Taking a drive?”

Ronza: “Yes.”

Policeman1: “Sibiya, khipa i video (take out the video).”

Policeman2 took out his cellphone and started playing a video. It looked like the video of Snakes walking out with Mish on his back, carrying a bag of money, and Ronza, Ganja and Bigz shooting Raymond’s men.

Policeman1: “We found Raymond Ndhlovu in the bank’s safe. He was pretty butchered, but he is alive – for now. As for the rest of you, you’ll have to come with us for some questioning.”

Ronza: "Ghandia, call Kumkani."

Lerato: (worried) "Where's Precious?! She should be taking the rap for all this!"

Chantel: "Shut the fuck up! Jy maak naar, man, fok (you're annoying as fuck)."

Ghandia started dialing Kumkani in haste, as the two policemen took Ganja and Ronza away. The rest of the wives were pretty pissed, and now, more pissed at Lerato for failing to keep it together.

Rachel: (annoyed) "I sometimes ask myself why Bigz married a dumb bitch like you."

They left her standing there as they went to see Daphney and Pilot. Back at Kumkani's house, Precious had woken up.

Zandi: (smiling) "Good morning, my dear. Ulele njani (How did you sleep)?"

Precious: "I'm not so sure. I feel like I have been run by a truck. My whole body is sore. What happened to me?"

Zandi: "Do you remember what we spoke about when your mother came through?"

Precious: "Yes. I remember."

Zandi: "Well, do you remember getting stabbing pains all over your body?"

Precious: "Yes."

Zandi: "That was your husband, Meshack. He... he was shot last night."

Precious: (worried) "Oh, no! Is he going to be okay?"

Zandi: “Well, I can’t say. Do you want me to be honest?”

Precious: “Please.”

Zandi: “No. He’s alive – but not for long.”

Zandi was not done explaining everything when Precious got up hastily.

Precious: “I have to go see him.”

Zandi: “Wait. I’m not done yet.”

Precious: “Ma, for all I know he could be arrested right now.”

She took out her phone and realized it had since been on silent.

Precious: “Shit! Fifteen missed calls!”

She saw a message from Rachel. “Where are you? We’ve been calling. Mish, Snakes and Bigz got shot. They’re in hospital. Ronza and Ganja got taken in for questioning. Been calling Kumkani. Don’t know what to do.”

Precious: (panicking) “Ma, where is Kumkani?”

Zandi: “He went out to get you some breakfast.”

As she was done saying that, he walked in.

Precious: “Oh, thank goodness. We have to go.”

Kumkani: (frowning) “What’s wrong?”

Precious: “Mish and a few guys of his crew were shot last night. Ronza and Ganja were taken in for questioning.”

Kumkani: "Okay. Let's go."

He was dressed in a simple white Tshirt and jeans, and never bothered to change.

Zandi: "Okay, we'll talk some other time."

Precious rushed out like a maniac along with Kumkani. They got into Kumkani's car and they drove off. For the first time since she got married to Mish, she said a prayer, well, a mini – prayer at that. She didn't realize that she had stopped relying on God. God gave us all the freedom of choice when he created us. He holds no grudges towards us, as we are all His children. All of us are capable of changing in his eyes and we're all worthy of forgiveness. You have to put in the work, though, as nothing comes for free. Kumkani drove as fast as he could, but Precious felt like he was rather slow.

Precious: "Can't you drive a bit faster?"

Kumkani: “This is the fastest I can go, Pretty Lady. You don’t want me to get a ticket, do you?”

Precious was silently annoyed, as she failed to realize that Kumkani needn’t do what he did, but he did it because he loved her.

Kumkani: “We’ll go past the police station first and then we’ll go to the hospital.”

Precious had a weird feeling deep in her gut. Something just told her she had to go see Mish right away.

Precious: “Can we please stop by the hospital first? I just feel like I have to go there first.”

Kumkani: “Okay.”

Kumkani was a bit hurt, but he understood that she was still married to Mish and with marriage comes attachment. He reminded himself that he needed to be patient. His plans to

destroy Mish were put on hold, as it seemed like the Universe did all the work for him. He just didn't have the heart to tell Precious about her carrying Mish's baby – again. They arrived at the hospital and Kumkani was courteous enough to go with her. As soon as they arrived at the ward, they found Ghandia, Rachel, Deborah, Lerato, Chantel, Olivia along with Leah sitting there. Deborah and Olivia were crying, while the others remained silent. Of course Lerato and Leah just looked mischievous.

Precious: "Hey

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guys."

Deborah got up and hugged her immediately. After that, she hugged Rachel, Chantel and Olivia. Lerato didn't seem bothered by affection and neither did Leah.

Ghandia: "We've been trying to call you. Where have you been?"

Precious: "It's a long story. I'll explain later."

Kumkani greeted them and they all pretty much figured out that they were together, judging by how Kumkani was dressed. He was a man of suits.

Lerato: (angered) "Waitse keng (You know what)?! My husband got shot because of you but seems like you were too busy to even give a fuck!"

Chantel: "Lerato, shut the fuck up. You're really starting to annoy me."

Precious: "Excuse me? How is this my fault when I don't even know what happened?"

Lerato: "I'll tell you what happened. My husband and his friends went on a heist along with Viper, and they got injured. Had it not been for your stupid plan, we'd all be safe!"

Precious: (fuming) “Did I force your husband to join the crew?! Don’t act like he’s a child and besides, you enjoy this lifestyle even more than the rest of us. If I were you I wouldn’t be talking. You’re really pissing me off. I just found out now that my husband is in a critical condition and here you are spewing shit on me. You’d better stay the fuck out of my way.”

Lerato: (standing up) “Or what?! You think your tall boyfriend will shut me up? If the police question us I’m throwing you under the bus!”

Precious got so angry that she punched Lerato twice, so quickly, that none of them expected it. Lerato fell onto the floor, and none of the other ladies bothered to help her up – except Leah.

Lerato: (bleeding) “You think you’re all that, don’t you?!”

Precious: “I dare you to keep going because I can punch you until you die right here!”

Kumkani: “Calm down, Precious. The staff is watching.”

Precious: "I'll be right back. I have to find Mish."

Kumkani sat there with them while watching his love go see her husband. What a fucked up situation that was. Lerato was clearly up to something, but everyone was in too much pain to even think of every possible situation. For Luke 21:34-36 tells us; "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." Precious found Meshack's ward and walked in. He was hooked onto machines and seemed badly hurt. He even had a bandage around his head as well. She had never seen him that frail and helpless. There's something about a woman; no matter how much a man hurts you, there'll always be that tiny room left for you to love him. She really did love Mish, even though she was no longer in love with him. She sat next to him and held his hand.

Precious: (teary) “Oh, Meshack. What have you done, my husband? How did we even get here?”

Mish opened his eyes almost immediately. He looked at Precious and took off his breathing mask.

Precious: (shocked) “Meshack, are you even supposed to be doing that?”

Mish: “Precious, Sthandwa sami (My love). I have been waiting for you to come see me.”

Precious: (frowning) “What are you talking about?”

Mish: “I don’t have much time. I have to go. It is time for me to leave this earth.”

Precious: “No, Mish. Your mother has to come say goodbye first.”

Mish: "She'll be fine. I have to say this to you or I'll never get the chance."

Precious: "Okay."

Mish: "I'm so sorry. I'm sorry I got you to marry me. All I ever wanted was to love you and prove to you that I could be the man you needed me to be. I failed you in more ways than one and now, you're about to be widowed before our first year anniversary. Precious, I have wronged you so many times, but I never stopped loving you."

Precious: (crying) "Mish, it's okay."

Mish: "No, it's not. I knew all along."

Precious: "Knew what?"

Mish: (sigh) "I knew that you were royalty. Hosea told me everything. I decided to keep it a secret from you because I didn't want to lose you. I knew all along that our ancestors

didn't want us to connect and that they had said we're not meant to be. Please, forgive me, Precious. You have your whole life ahead of you. You're so beautiful and strong and even if you decide to move on tomorrow, I won't hold it against you."

That was a lot to take in for her. She was consumed with so much hurt and rage, that she didn't even know how to respond.

Mish: "Presh, please, try to move on with your life and be the woman I fell in love with – the God fearing woman. You're no longer the same and I am to blame. You're about to go on a dark road, especially now that you're about to lose my – "

He didn't finish his sentence as he started getting fits, his machines started beeping, while his body was shaking uncontrollably.

Precious: (scared)

"Meshack! Meshack! Nurse! Doctor! Somebody! Help!"

The nurses rushed in and asked her to leave the room. She was so traumatized, she was beside herself. Everything felt like it was heading downhill. Kumkani went rushing towards her.

Kumkani: "What's happening?"

Precious: "He started telling me everything and then he was shaking. Oh, my God. My husband is dying, Kumkani."

She started crying and he held her in her arms. Everybody was a mess. The nurses came out after a few minutes.

Precious: (worried) "Is he okay?"

Nurse: "I'm so sorry, Mrs. Ndhlovu, but your husband didn't make it. He's gone."

Precious felt numb, she didn't know whether she was supposed to cry out hysterically, or be relieved. Ghandia was shocked – too shocked to respond. He sunk in his seat once he heard the news and let the tears flow. Rachel was there crying in his

arms. Debbie was crying along with Olivia and Chantel. Lerato and Leah were sitting there staring at Precious. As if that was not enough, the doctor came by with some more disturbing news.

Kumkani: "Doctor, is everything okay?"

Doctor: "Are you family of Mr. Sizwe Ngwenya?"

Lerato stood up in shock even before she heard the news.

Lerato: "Yes, that's my husband."

Doctor: "I'm afraid I have some bad news. The bullet punctured his right kidney and he had some internal bleeding even before the surgery. We tried to resuscitate, but unfortunately we were too late. I'm very sorry, Mrs. Ngwenya."

Lerato threw herself on the chair and wailed out in pain. Leah rushed by her side as she consoled her. Their whole world

turned upside down in a heartbeat. They made a bad choice and as a result, two women became widows that day.

Life is full of choices; love is a feeling, but can also be a choice. You find out that you're loving the wrong person, and you continue to love him; you find out you're involved with an abuser, and you continue to love him – that's a choice. Your toxic family keeps extorting money from you and you keep giving which results in you being sad half the time – that's a choice. You choose to focus on the positive and look at life as a glass half full – you chose happiness. At times we are baffled by people's deaths because some just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, but when your time is up – there's no negotiating with God. So, He spares our lives, gets us out of dangerous and horrible situations by His grace.

At times you go through so much in your life and you actually wonder if God is even there. Well, He is, perhaps you're not listening to Him. Signs are always present in our lives; our ancestors are always relaying messages to us and they tend to use Mediums, prophets, sangomas and the likes as vessels to relay their messages. When you don't listen to your parents as a child, you get punished for it, but that does not mean that

they love you any less. It works similarly with God; when you refuse to listen to Him, He punishes you.

You'll find yourself in awkward situations, but the battle is won by the ultimate faith and prayer. There is no stumbling block that will keep being a hurdle to you if you keep believing and keep praying to your God. Precious had so many warnings, and like most of us we tend to see the good in people even when the good isn't there. God send Kumkani her way; the same way one can find their soulmate while married to the wrong man. Once you leave, you see life in a different way – the right way.

Ephesians 6:10 says; "Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known to what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he."

“Grace is free sovereign favour to the ill-deserving.” – Benjamin B. Warfield

Kumkani went to the police station with Precious to try and get bail posted for Ronza and Ganja, but they got some unexpected news. The rest of the gang had gone to Mish’s house to let the news sink in. Mam’Thoko didn’t take the news very well once she was told over the phone. Kumkani went back to the car where Precious had waited for him.

Precious: “So?”

Kumkani: (shaking head) “It’s bad. The Prosecuting Authority has taken over the case. All the guys left are being charged with Murder, Possession of dangerous and illegal firearms, grievous bodily harm, armed robbery and theft. It’s not what I expected, but they even refuse bail. They Ronza and Ganja will spend the weekend in jail.”

Precous: “This is bad. Even Ghandia?”

Kumkani: (shaking head) "There's no proof that he was there, so he's off the hook."

Precious: "That's a relief."

Kumkani: "There's more. All your accounts are frozen."

Precious: (shocked) "You mean all as in all of us?"

Kumkani: (nodding) "Yes."

It felt as if Precious was seeing total flames. That is not what she had in mind when she became a gangster. That was all the guys' fault. They went and did a job without the approval of their women. Now, two guys lost their lives and all their money was frozen. What most people in Precious' shoes don't realize is that God calls you to Him in the most unconventional ways. So many people have gone to prison by being at the wrong place at the wrong time and yet they came out as if they were the best Prophets that ever lived. God's mercy and grace

are full of favour – to those who stand a chance of redeeming themselves. For those like Mish, who died without repentance, that is up to God himself. 2 Corinthians 12:9; “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Precious: “Okay. We’ll have to wait for Monday then.”

Kumkani: “Are you sure you’re okay? I mean, will you be able to be alone at your house tonight?”

Precious: “I’m sure I’ll be fine. I mean, I doubt I’ll have peace of mind and much sleep since I have to plan my husband’s funeral.”

Little did Precious know what awaited her. Kumkani was chivalrous enough to drop her off at her house. He promised to have her car delivered there. It was a rather hectic day, but they had two funerals to prepare for, as well as prepare for

Ronza and Ganja's bail. She decided to call Ghandia before she went to bed and luckily he answered.

Ghandia: "Sho sho (Sure sure), Boss lady. Is everything okay?"

Precious: "Yes, everything is fine. Listen, do you still have that money from the heist?"

Ghandia: "Yes, I left it in your house. In the basement."

Precious: "Can you come fetch it? And use some for the funerals as well as the upcoming bail hearing?"

Ghandia: "Okay, but why don't we just leave the money at your house?"

Precious: "I don't know, I just have a very bad feeling. I can't seem to shake it off."

Ghandia: "Okay, on my way."

Ghandia came and fetched all the bags of money.

Ghandia: “Are you sure you’ll be okay alone? I can get Rachel and Debs to come keep you company.”

Precious: “I appreciate that, really, but I’d rather be alone.”

Ghandia: “I’m just one phone call away if you change your mind.”

Precious: “Thank you.”

Ghandia left and proceeded to his house which was not so far away, while Precious went into hers. She locked the doors, and set the alarms. She found herself going through the study, trying to remember Mish in every possible way. His smell was still in his study chair and on some of his clothes. She could hardly believe that he was gone – forever. Even though she was no longer in love with Mish, she didn’t want him to die. Little did she even know she was pregnant to begin

with. What a year it truly had been for her. she took a few sips of Mish's favourite cognac in his study and managed to pass out in his chair.

Meanwhile, Ntsika and Njabulo were doing what they're evil Gogo had asked them to – to get rid of Precious; permanently. They had the whole plan orchestrated very well. They had spent a few days surveying her every move and where she stayed. The fact that Mish had died, was the perfect move for them. Money talks – in every situation. It is sad that some people are always willing to sell their souls for a few thousands. They were about to drive into the complex, when Ntsika told Njabulo he had a very bad feeling.

Ntsika: (worried) "Njabs, ima kancane, mfo (wait a minute, bro)."

Njabulo: "Yini (What is it)?"

Ntsika: "I have a very bad feeling about what we're doing. Maybe we should go back home."

Njabulo: “Are you kidding me? Gogo will skin us alive if we come back with no news. Besides, don’t you want to be the future king of Zululand? Don’t you want to claim your birth right?”

Ntsika: “I do

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but – “

Njabulo: “Then no buts. That’s all the motivation you need.”

There’s something about a gut feeling; it is hardly ever wrong. Ntsika was right to feel what he felt, because Glenda had gone so overboard for fortune, that she had turned brothers against one another. They drove in and the security guard let them in as discussed.

Njabulo: “Sho sho (sure sure), don’t forget to get the alarm disabled and the cameras as well.”

Security Guard: “Sure thing, but that will cost you an extra 5k.”

Njabulo: “Whatever. Just get it done.”

Security Guard: “On it, boss.”

They drove in and managed to get into the house. The lights were still on, so they had to be a bit careful. It was as if Njabulo knew where to look around, because he went straight to the kitchen, behind the microwave and managed to find Mish’s gun.

Ntsika: (worried) “How did you know where to find that gun?”

Njabulo: “I’m a lot smarter than you think.”

Ntsika was about to take a step further when he received the shock of his life. He turned around as soon as he heard a clicking sound of the gun.

Ntsika: (shocked) “Wenzani, mfo (What are you doing, brother)?”

Njabulo: (pointing the gun at him) “I’m sorry, Bafo (Brother). I am doing what I have to do. There cannot be two kings ruling Zululand, only one must rule. And one must fall.”

Ntsika: (panicking) “Njabulo, don’t do this, brother. We can talk about it.”

Njabulo: “I’m sorry.”

With that said, he pulled the trigger, shooting Ntsika twice – once in the head and once in the chest. He stood there and looked at him as he watched him take his last breath. He walked around the house, but Precious was so startled by the gunshots, she got up and walked around with the other gun she had in her hand. She found Njabulo standing in the passage with a gun in his hand. She immediately shot him in the arm. Njabulo fell and screamed out in agony.

Njabulo: (screaming) “Aaah!”

Precious: (scared) “Who the fuck are you and why are you in the house?!”

She saw Ntsika’s body bleeding out on the floor, and immediately became even more worried. She couldn’t understand how he even got there. Within minutes, the Security walked in almost immediately.

Security: “Nkosazana (Lady), what’s going on here?”

He took one look at the body, then another at Njabulo and then stared at Precious who had a gun in her hand. The very same Security guard who was paid off to let them in fraudulently.

Security: “I’m afraid I have to call the police.”

Precious: “You do that, Jimmy, please. I don’t know this intruder.”

She was about to step closer to him, but he stepped back.

Security: “Step back, ma’am, I can’t let you get any closer to me.”

Ghandia stormed in with a gun in his hand and was beyond startled to see the ugly scene before him. Njabulo was still screaming in pain on the floor, while Precious was in disbelief.

Ghandia: (shocked) “Precious, dintshang (what’s happening)?”

Precious: “I don’t know. I don’t even know these guys. I heard gun shots and the next thing this guy was in my house with a gun in his hand.”

Security: “Stay back, sir. This is a crime scene.”

Everything was a shitty mess and no one had any idea what was going on – except for the security guard and Njabulo. Within an

instant; three people died in one day and it was about to get rough.

Philippians 2:3 says; “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

Proverbs 27:4 says; “Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?”

Njabulo and Ntsika were well raised – despite not being Gatsha’s biological children, but Glenda got into their heads and made them turn against one another. Well, she managed to get Njabulo to turn against his own brother. What a time to be alive.

Proverbs 18:10 says; “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe.” It was finally time for Precious to start seeking guidance from the Lord, but until she had fully accepted her flaws and turned to him – things were not going to get any easier.

“Fake friends are like shadows: always near you at your brightest moments, but nowhere to be seen at your darkest hour. True friends are like stars, you don’t always see them but they are always there.” – Habeeb Akande

It was about to become an interesting Sunday. Ghandia had to make sure that Precious was okay – she was a complete wreck and very confused. Jimmy, the two faced security guard and Njabulo who was on the floor, bleeding and screaming like a maniac didn’t make it any more bearable. She decided to grab a bottle of whiskey and start drinking while waiting for the police. She felt so alone and helpless; she couldn’t call Mish since he was dead, she couldn’t call Hosea, since was still M.I.A according to her knowledge at the time and she couldn’t exactly call Mam’ Thoko nor any of her friends. She gave Ghandia a glass to sip on.

Ghandia: “Thanks. Who’s that guy?”

Precious: “I have no idea who he is. I was in the study and next thing I heard gunshots and he was in my passage holding a gun. I had to shoot. Either that or he was going to shoot me.”

Precious was soon to learn that bad news does indeed travel fast. While trying to think of who to call, Kumkani completely slipped her mind. She saw herself trending on Twitter with the most ridiculous hasthag #GangsterWifeKills. People were saying that she had killed her own brother and wounded the other. She couldn't understand how they even got hold of such ridiculous news, but then it made sense since Jimmy had been on his phone constantly ever since the whole situation erupted.

Precious: "What the fuck?"

Ghandia: "Keng (What is it)?"

Precious: "Did you see this? Did you fucking see this?"

She handed Ghandia her phone and he was so irritated, he looked at Jimmy and became even more worried.

Precious: "It was you, wasn't it?"

Jimmy: (shocked) “Aowa, suster (No, sister). Akitsi o bua kang (I don’t know what you’re talking about).”

Precious got so angry and wanted to charge at him, but Ghandia stopped her.

Precious: (furious) “You’ve been on your fucking phone this whole time! You’re supposed to be guarding my life! Instead you’re busy le this shit bag I don’t even know in my own house! Now I’m accused of murdering my brother. I don’t even have a brother!”

Ghandia: “Presh, leave him. Before he starts spreading other lies. Ke tla mo sorter (I’ll sort him out).”

Within a minute, the police arrived – the same two cops who interrogated them and arrested Ganja and Ronza. Detective Sibiya and Sargent Sithole.

Det. Sibiya: Koko (Knock-knock).”

While the door was slightly open, there was a bit of a crowd outside, with cameras flashing and a few microphones.

Journalist: “Detective, can we have a sneak peak of the body at least?”

Det. Sibiya: “La tena lena man (You guys are annoying).”

He shut the door and looked at Precious and Ghandia with a smirk on his face. They both knew something wasn't right. They honestly took their time to get there even though the police station was not that far.

Det. Sibiya: “Well, well, well. Mrs. Ndhlovu, you sure have trouble following you everywhere, hey. Sithole, checka daai man (check that guy).”

Sithole put his gloved fingers on his neck to check for a pulse.

Sithole: “Ah, o ile (he's gone).”

Det. Sibiya: “Ja, ne. Can someone explain to me what happened here?”

Jimmy: “Well, I heard gunshots. Then when I walked in here, I found Ntsi – I mean that guy dead on the floor and this one bleeding on the floor.”

Det. Sibiya: “Sithole, get the medics to come in and check that guy. He looks like he’s about to bleed out.”

Sithole: “Sure.”

He walked out.

Det. Sibiya: “Hmm, I never thought I’d ever walk into a gangster’s house. Fancy stuff you got in here. It’s a pity you acquired everything ka madi a batho (with people’s blood).”

Precious: (annoyed) “Are you going to take my statement or not? This is my house after all.”

Det. Sibiyi: “That won’t be necessary. You have to come to the station with me.”

Ghandia: “On what grounds?”

Det. Sibiyi: “Lena magenza la phapha waitse (you gangsters are so forward, you know). To make your statement there.”

Ghandia: (whispering) “P, something isn’t right about this whole scene. I’ll call Kumkani. You need a lawyer.”

Det. Sibiyi: “Yes, you might need one. Gape (Because) a murder charge in South Africa carries a life sentence. That’s a minimum of 25 years if you didn’t know.”

Precious: (frowning) “Why are you acting like I’m guilty?”

Det. Sibiya: “In my line of work, everyone I meet is guilty until proven innocent. Now, let’s move.”

Ghandia: “I’ll come see you in a bit.”

Det. Sibiya: “Good luck with that.”

Sibiya held Precious by the arm firmly as they walked out. The press was there, taking pictures of her, asking questions, while some neighbours were already looking at her like she was guilty. Debbie, Rachel, Olivia and Chantel were looking at her with so much fear in their eyes and so much pity. She refused to cry especially when she didn’t do anything wrong. She couldn’t understand what was happening. At last, she saw the light at the end of the tunnel when she saw Kumkani appearing amongst the crowd.

Kumkani: (shouting) “Precious! Precious!”

She stopped even though Sibiya’s grip was a lot tighter than what it was supposed to be.

Precious: “Kumkani.”

Kumkani: “It’s going to be okay. I’ll meet you at the station. Don’t say anything until I get there.”

She nodded with relief and smiled at him. Sibiya yanked her arm.

Det. Sibiya: “A re ye, sboshwa (let’s go, criminal). I don’t have all day.”

It was probably about 4:30 am and Sibiya pushed her into the van – next to him instead of the back, while Sargent Sithole went with the paramedics and Njabulo.

Det. Sibiya: (chuckling) “Ne o nagana gore o tlo fella kae (Where did you think you’d end up)?”

Precious: (frowning) “Askies (Excuse me)?”

Det. Sibiya: “You and your little gang thought you could rule the world, huh? I got you now. Your precious criminal husband is dead along with one of his friends. Your gangster friends who were in hospital are headed to jail as we speak. I’m going to nail you all and it will be the biggest thing for my career. I can’t wait.”

He was boasting and was so proud, but Precious decided to rather keep quiet as she recalled Kumkani’s words.

Det. Sibiya: “Just imagine, the so called Princess of Zululand sentenced for murder. What a time to be alive.”

She had forgotten that she was a princess, but she let him be. Once they got to the parking lot of the police station, he did something that was against protocol.

Det. Sibiya: “You know, I can make all this go away if you just do one small thing for me. Kgale ke duma go nyoba mosadi wa legenza

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waitse (I've always wanted to fuck a gangster's wife, you know). Mfe one nyana (Give me one round only)."

He touched her thigh, but little did he know Precious. She didn't even think twice, as she punched him in the face and his nose started bleeding.

Det. Sibiya: (screaming) "Ah, fuck! Sfebe ke wena (you bitch)!"

Precious got out of the car, beyond furious. Det. Sibiya was about to slap her, but Kumkani walked out of his car just as furious.

Kumkani: "I dare you to do that, Sibiya. Remember what happened the last time you assaulted someone in custody?"

Det. Sibiya: (furious) "Your little lawyer won't be around you 24/7."

Kumkani: "Are you okay?"

Precious: "That fuck touched me inappropriately. I punched him."

Kumkani: "He does that. He's a pig."

Precious: "That's an understatement. What's this of me being accused of murdering my own brother?"

Kumkani: "I'll tell you about it later. Let's go into the interrogation room before he sparks another story about you. Don't worry, I got your back."

She felt a huge sense of relief knowing that Kumkani was there. He made everything seem like it was going to be alright. The minute they walked into the station, everyone was giving her nasty looks, while Sibiya was heard ranting and raving at how Precious assaulted an officer on duty.

Kumkani: "Keep staring like that and you'll lose your job."

They all carried on with what they were doing before they walked in. Kumkani walked alongside Precious, with his hand on her back. They entered the room and waited for Sibiya. Precious recalls the smell of those cells faintly. She was drunk and not in the right state of mind that day when she got arrested. Not only that, she was pregnant. Little did she know that she was pregnant yet again. Kumkani had hid the information away from her as he felt it was just not the right time to tell her. Not with everything that was underway. Sibiya finally walked in with a cloth on his nose and a very pissed off look on his face.

Sibiya: "Right. Let's get right to it."

Kumkani: "Please do. Don't keep my client waiting."

Sibiya: (annoyed) "Mrs. Ndhlovu, tell me what happened."

Precious: "Only now you feel the need to ask me?"

Sibiya: “Are you going to speak or not?”

Kumkani: “It’s okay, answer the question.”

Sibiya: “You’d better listen to your boyfriend, Pretty Lady.”

Precious got annoyed, but she managed to calm herself back down.

Precious: (sigh) “I came home right after the news of my husband’s death last night. I locked the doors, set the alarm and went to his study. I ended up having a few sips of cognac and passed out on the chair. I heard gunshots – I didn’t check the time. Two gunshots to be exact. Right in my house. I have no idea how that fucker came in, but I reached for my husband’s gun and walked out to see what was happening. The moment I saw him walking towards me in the passage with the gun in his hand, I did what anybody would have done. I shot him.”

Sibiya: (chuckling) “Really? What anybody would have done?”

Precious: “Obviously.”

Sibiya: “Oh, alright. How do you explain your dead brother on the floor?”

Precious: “Like I said, his brother must have shot him. How else do you explain the two gunshots? Also, he’s not my brother.”

Sibiya: “Hmm. Bad blood between you guys, huh? Okay then.”

Kumkani: “My client gave you her statement, Sibiya. Now that that’s out of the way, when are you planning on arresting the culprit who broke into her home and murdered someone in her house?”

Sibiya: “Well, I’m afraid you’re wrong, Mr. Mdhletse. You see, your “client” here is the one who shot and killed her own brother, and wounded the other.”

Kumkani: “Don’t be assuming bullshit here, Sibiya. I’ll have you sued.”

Sibiya: “Oh, well, go ahead. Because you, my dear, Mrs. Ndhlovu are being charged with the murder of Ntsika Ncube, amongst other things.”

Precious couldn’t believe her ears. It was as if it was a very horrid dream.

Kumkani: “Based on what grounds? Stop fucking around and do your fucking job! Two men broke into her home!”

Sibiya: “Well, according to the report I have here, there was absolutely no evidence of foul play or forced entry.”

Kumkani: “They must have hacked the system.”

Sibiya: “You should have been a detective, because wow. Your theories are straight out of a movie.”

Kumkani: “If there’s nothing else, I’d like to take my client home.”

Sibiya: “Maybe you misunderstood me, Mr. Mdhletse.”

He stood up, took out his pair of cuffs and started reading Precious her rights.

Sibiya: “Mrs. Precious Ndhlovu, you are under arrest for the murder of Ntsika Ncube. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say or do can be held against you in the court of law. You have the right to an attorney, if you cannot afford one, one can be offered to you.”

Kumkani: “You’re making a big mistake, Sibiya. I’m going to sue you!”

Sibiya: “I’ll be waiting. Say goodbye to your boyfriend, Princess.”

He tightened the cuffs around her arms and she screamed slightly.

Precious: (screaming) “Aah!”

Kumkani: “You’d better treat her right or else I swear, you won’t hear the end of this.”

Sibiya: “Welcome to your new home, Princess.”

Sibiya took her away, while Kumkani was shaking in frustration.

“Someone who smiles too much with you can sometimes frown too much with you at your back.” – Michael Bassey Johnson

Precious was going through a whole surge of emotions. Her whole life changed in the blink of an eye. Just the day before, she was a widowed wife, then she became a murderer in a few hours. She was locked in the very same cell she was in the day she got arrested for shooting Cassandra. She sat on that rusty bench, forcing her mind to think, but she was just blank. She had lost hope even before her own trial had started. There were women of all kinds in there; prostitutes, crazy women even women who looked just like her – innocent. One of them looked really interested in her, as she kept on looking at her from the moment she walked into the cell.

Precious: (annoyed) “Can I help you?”

Woman: “Oh, hayi. I didn’t mean to stare.”

Precious: “Well, you did stare so out with it.”

Woman: "Aren't you that gangster wife? Meshack Mavuso's wife?"

Precious: "That's me."

Woman: (excited) "I knew it was you! I mean you look so sad and a lot more beautiful in person. Believe me, I don't believe that you did it for a second. No ways. O pila thata man (You're way too pretty)."

Precious: "Tell that to that annoying cop."

Woman: "Oh, o ra (you mean) Sibiya? He's got beef with everyone. He forces his way into all women's pants and if you refuse, he makes sure you go behind bars. Someone needs to stop him, but then, ke Mzansi (This is Mzansi after all)."

Precious just kept quiet while this woman was talking non stop.

Woman: “Ke nna (I’m) Linda. Now that we’ve been formally introduced. Tell me, what was it like being married to the most notorious gangster in the country? I mean wow, everyone wanted to be you. So many girls and guys have gone to prison because of him; some for him. If I were you; I’d make sure you make it out of here. If you go to prison, they’ll skin you alive.”

Precious became even more frustrated as she heard that woman talk about Meshack like that. A part she never even knew about. While she was listening to her new cell mate, Kumkani appeared.

Precious: “Oh, thank goodness, Kumkani. Please, tell me you’re getting me out of here.”

Kumkani: (looking down) “I’m afraid not.”

Precious: (frowning) “O ra bjang (What do you mean)?”

Kumkani: “Look, I don’t know what is happening here, but I’ll get to the bottom of this. Apparently their evidence shows that

you are the one who killed Ntsika and wounded Njabulo. I don't know, but obviously someone has been bribed. I just can't pin point it, but I know Sibiya has a hand in this."

Precious: "So, I'm stuck in here."

Kumkani: "Not for long. Only tonight. You have a bail hearing tomorrow, along with the gang. I'll get to the bottom of this. Believe me, I promise."

Precious felt so emotionless.

Kumkani: "I brought you some food."

Precious: "Thanks, but I'm not hungry."

Kumkani: "Take it. In case you feel hungry. I'll come see you soon. I promise."

Precious took the food and nodded. She just couldn't believe that she was actually charged with murder. It felt so surreal. She sat down and Linda came rushing by her side.

Linda: "Are you going to eat that?"

Precious: (shaking head) "Help yourself."

Linda: "Dankie. Tjo wena o nale botho waitse (you are so kind)."

She took her time to take a closer look at Linda. She was a beautiful girl, pretty young as well. She didn't look like criminal at all.

Precious: "If you don't mind me asking, why are you here?"

Linda: "Oh, ah, di fraud wa itse mos (fraud, you know hey)."

Precious: "Oh."

Linda: “Ja, ah ne ke jola le motho nyana o mongwe so, wa bona (I was dating some other guy, you see). A ntshepisa soft life (He promised me a soft life), ka dumela (I agreed). Kgante motho o ntsentsha jaiveng (Turns out he was getting me into trouble). Re forga di cheque (We were forging cheques); I had to dress up and seduce guys for him. Re ropile batho stekend (We robbed quite a lot of people). It was all fun and games until we got caught, wa bona (you see).”

Their story was not that different.

Precious: “I see. So, what’s the most you have conned out of a person?”

Linda: “Ah, we robbed this Russian guy R5 million. We were halfway spending it til ke bona magata ko gating ya ko gae (til I saw the cops at my gate). That’s when I knew ke masepeng (I was in shit).”

Precious: “Sorry to hear that.”

Linda: “Ah, a se flopo (It’s okay). Ke mmoditse nna (I told him). I said to him, if he doesn’t get me out here, I’m dragging him down with me.”

Precious: “You’re serious?”

Linda: “Bona girl (Look), I have nothing to lose. No child, and now the man I turned my back on my family for dumped me as soon as I got arrested for him. So, I sang like a canary. Now, ke no emetse bail hearing (I’m just waiting for my bail hearing). I know, I won’t get bail and I’ll most likely get a few years, but then, I’ll live.”

Linda was so positive and Precious failed to understand why.

Precious: “Why are you so positive, though?”

Linda: “Because I know that in life if you do shit, you’ll get caught. You have to own up to your mistakes – no matter how painful the punishment is. I lived my best life, girl, and that time

I'm only 24. Ke nale (I have a) degree, I had a nice job but I left everything for that stupid fuck. My family raised me well; ke itse Modimo in and out (I know God in and out). Bible yona ke dese o kare e ngwetse ke nna (I'm so good with the Bible as if I wrote it myself). My parents forgave me. So ke shap (I'm good)."

Precious: "You're not afraid or worried? I mean I heard prison is not very nice."

Linda: "I have a few friends in there, wena o no kgopela ba go ise ko bo Mma moruti (Just ask to be taken to the church cells), and you'll be good. I'm a nice girl, talkative too, but o nseleke ka hlaba (But annoy me and I'll stab you)."

Precious could feel the light at the end of the tunnel getting dimmer and dimmer. She tried to sleep, but sleep felt like it was a mile away. She eventually fell asleep and had a dream of her parents. Gatsha was standing next to Lehumo as always, with tears streaming down his face.

Lehumo: "Precious

ngwanaka (my child). Kopa o ntshwarele (Please forgive me).”

Precious: “Mama? Papa? Is that you?”

Gatsha didn’t say a word, instead he was just crying.

Lehumo: “I don’t hate you for what happened and I know you didn’t do it.”

Precious: “Then help me out of this situation, Mama. I beg you.”

Lehumo: “I wish it were that easy, my child. But you have to face the consequences after you were warned. You were warned to stay away from that boy, but you didn’t listen.”

Precious: “So, you’re punishing me, Mama?! Isn’t it bad enough you punished me by keeping my father away from me?!”

Lehumo: (shaking head) “I’m not, ngwanaka (my child), but the ancestors are. As you can see I am not even surrounded by your other ancestors. They have blocked me from being with them as punishment for keeping you away from them for so long. You can fix that, by following what I taught you. Get closer to God, appease your ancestors, my child and all shall be well. Your destiny is far greater than being locked behind bars. The only way you can get out of this mess is if you do what I have always taught you. Remember Proverbs 29:25; “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.”

She struggled as she tossed and turned and that metal bed didn’t make things any easier. Before she knew it, she heard a guard banging on the cell.

Guard: “Vukani (Wake up), criminals. Food will be served in five minutes.”

They brought them food and tossed it to them.

Precious: “Is this what they serve in here?”

Linda: “Ja, ga se mo geno mo phela (this is not your home). Ba re botsa bjao always (they always say that to us). Bjanong re no ja re tla etsang (so we eat, what else can we do)?”

Kumkani arrived and she felt relieved immediately.

Precious: “Oh, Kumkani, thank God.”

Kumkani: “Hey. How did you sleep?”

Precious: “It’s not the most comfortable bed, but what can I say? I’m alive, aren’t I?”

Kumkani: “I brought you some change of clothes. For your hearing.”

Precious: “Thank you.”

She was allowed to go to the toilets and freshen up. It was a whole new set of clothes. Kumkani was just a very nice guy. She

took a good look at herself in the mirror, and she almost didn't recognize herself. She just didn't know who she was anymore and how she actually allowed herself to get to the point she was at. She walked out and found Kumkani waiting for her.

Kumkani: "I'll see you in court. Don't panic. Everything will be fine."

She nodded and thanked him, while she was cuffed again, alongside Linda. They got into the van and the whole time she was thinking about the dream she had. They were placed in their holding cells, until they were called out. Once seated in the dock, she saw Ronza, Ganja, Pilot and Snakes alongside her. She didn't understand what was going on. It was her first time in court, so she felt the nerves. The cameras flashing, the stares and then she spotted Mam'Thoko, who was crying silently. She felt so much pain within herself. She knew she had failed her in so many ways, but she had no idea that Thoko felt the same about herself. She saw Mam'Zandile there and she waved silently at her. Kumkani was right before her. The judge walked in and they were ordered to rise.

Policeman: "All rise in court."

They all stood up and were told to be seated after the magistrate sat down.

Judge: “Well, present the case, please.”

One woman, opposite Kumkani, was wearing a lawyer’s robe just like him. She looked rather young, but something told Precious that it was not someone on her side.

Prosecutor: “My Lord, in front of you is the five accused for robbing the bank a few days ago. They were all present, my lord. There is camera evidence and we have two witnesses.”

Precious was puzzled to think who were the two witnesses.

Judge: “Mr. Mdhletse?”

Kumkani stood up in his robe. His cologne hit Precious' nostrils and he looked so sexy. Yep, she still managed to think of that while under such stress.

Kumkani: "My Lord, there is no apparent evidence that my clients did indeed rob that bank. As far as I am concerned, the footage looks dim and you will see for yourself that it is all just heresay."

Judge: (sigh) "Fine. I'll look into it. In the mean time, do you oppose bail, Ms. Jele?"

That was the Prosecutor.

Ms. Jele: "My Lord, we cannot possibly let these people walk out of here on bail. We need to set a firm example of them so that the people of South Africa know that this is a serious case. Life is not a movie, my Lord."

Kumkani: "My Lord, I refuse to allow this court to taint the good reputation these men and this woman have built for themselves. They cannot possibly be blamed for their past."

Judge: "I have a long day ahead, so bail is set to R1 million each."

Everyone gasped in the court while Kumkani smiled, but his smile was soon to be diminished.

Ms. Jele: "My Lord, propose to the court that Mrs. Ndhlovu remain behind bars as she is facing a some serious charges. She killed a man, my Lord."

Kumkani: (annoyed) "That is based on hearsay, my Lord. She is being framed."

Judge: "You can argue that in court, Mr. Mdhletse. Mrs. Ndhlovu shall remain behind bars. She will await her trial at Kgosi Mampuru Prison, while you figure out how she was framed, Mr. Mdhletse. If that is all, good day to all."

Ms. Jele bowed in satisfaction, while Kumkani stared at her in annoyance. Something was really fishy – Precious could feel it, but nothing prepared her for the pain she was feeling deep in her gut.

Kumkani: “I’ll fix this, Precious. I promise.”

Precious refused to cry even though the tears were threatening to fall. She looked in the crowd and saw Lerato right next to Leah. They were smiling in deep satisfaction. She was hurt, but she didn’t want to give them that. She walked out and Ronza shouted to her.

Ronza: “Hang in there, Queen! We’ll get you out of there.”

Psalm 57:6 says; “They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down. They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves. Selah.”

“The only thing more frustrating than slanderers is those foolish enough to listen to them. – “Chris Jammi

Everything felt like a movie – literally. It felt as if everyone was working against Precious and there was nothing she could do about it. Straight from court she got transferred immediately, along with Linda and a few other women. She was cuffed like a criminal, right at the back of a police van. Linda was as positive as ever.

Linda: (excited) “Tjo, le wena ba go timile bail (you were also denied bail)?”

Precious was in such disbelief and confused, so she kept quiet. It didn't bother Linda much.

Linda: “Ska wara (Don't worry). Go tla loka, ngwaneso (It will all be well, sis).”

While Linda was trying to brief her about what to expect in prison, she couldn't help but feel overwhelmed. She felt the tears threatening her eyes, but after watching a few prison series and movies such as Orange is the New Black, she learnt that crying was deemed as a sign of weakness in prison. Jail and prison are two different things. The further they drove, the closer they got to the prison. She saw the oversized walls and the high gates and knew that it was not in her mind. The police parked the car and opened the door.

Policewoman: "Phumani ziboshwa (Out, criminals)! Sheshani (Hurry up)!"

They all had to walk swiftly behind one another. They were processed in and she felt so violated.

Guard: "Okay ladies. For most of you who have been here before, you know the drill. For you newbies, welcome to your new home. You have to walk through that door and strip – take it all off. Further instructions will be given to you."

She honestly thought it was just one of those things that tv lied about.

Linda: (whispering) “It’s not so bad. O tlo bona le wena (you’ll see).”

Linda sounded way too experienced for someone who was never in prison before. They walked into the next room one by one and were met by a rather unfriendly and unbothered female guard.

Guard: “Right. Take your clothes off and put them over there.”

Precious felt like she was really being dehumanized. She was slowly taking off her blouse, but the woman was at work and didn’t need to nurse anyone’s feelings.

Guard: “Faster, sisi (sis). I don’t have all day, celebrity.”

She figured everyone knew who she was. She was rather famous for a newbie. She took off her clothes and the guard gave her further instructions.

Guard: "Turn around and bend over."

She did as instructed.

Guard: "Cough three times."

She coughed.

Guard: "Harder."

She coughed again, but that time she heard the sound of a camera. She quickly turned around and caught the guard taking a photo of her asshole.

Precious: (frowning) "You can't do that."

Guard: "I just did. You're not a celebrity in here, princess. I'm going to make a quick buck with you."

She was smiling while Precious was perplexed by how inmates were being treated. There was nothing she could do, but she never went down without a fight. She looked at her name tag and saw "Mazibuko". She decided to memorize it and move on. She was given her new set of clothes – the famous prison uniform. While they were being led to their new cells after being processed onto the system, inmates were whistling at them and making remarks.

Linda: "Ba nna ba etsa so (they always do this). Gwa bora ka mo (it's rather boring in here)."

She felt like she was on display for all those inmates. They reached a cell that had about 28 other women in it.

Guard: "This is your cell. Bed 8 up is Seloane, down it's you, Mazibuko."

She was at least paired with Linda, which made things a little easier. She expected a cell that would require only two inmates, but she was rather disappointed. She was literally shoved in there while the other inmates looked like they were expecting new, fresh meat. Some of them looked big, others scary, and others looked both big and scary. One who looked like the “boss” of the cell walked up towards them.

King: “Ekse (Hi). I’m King. I’m the boss of this cell.”

Linda: (smiling) “Sho (Sure).”

Precious remained quiet.

King: “And then, Linda? Doesn’t your friend know how to greet people in their home?”

Precious: “I’m sorry, the 1st thing I need is being told whom this cell belongs to. As you can see I’ve had a very long day and all I need is some sleep.”

One of them whispered in King's ear as she was about to lash out at Precious.

Cellmate: "Hayi (No), King. That's Precious Ndhlovu. Meshack Ndhlovu's wife."

King: (shocked) "Heh (Huh)? Hawu nani ni dom (you guys are dumb), man. Aningitsheli ukuthi si ne celebrity lana (you didn't even inform me that we have a celebrity here)."

Precious kept quiet and made her bed.

King: "Ah, no flop. You're one of us. If you need anything, let me know. I got your back."

Linda: (smiling) "You've already made new friends, Precious."

Precious: "Why does it seem like they all know you?"

Linda: “Oh, ah, my uncle is a druglord. You know, those big drug lords ko kasi (in the township).”

It actually made sense as to why she wasn't worried at all. While they were busy setting up the bed, Mazibuko, the rude guard walked up to the cell and banged it.

Guard: “Ndhlovu, masihambe (let's go). You have a visitor.”

Cellmate: “See? I told you she's rich. It's not even visiting day but already she has a visitor.”

Precious walked out.

King: “See you later, Mfazi ka Mish (Mish's wife).”

Precious walked out and Mazibuko felt the need to be funny. She shoved Precious forward with her batton.

Precious: (annoyed) “You’re not allowed to treat people like shit, you know.”

Mazibuko: (chuckling) “Oh, honey. In here, I call the shots. You’re just a prisoner. Who’ll they believe? Me or you?”

Precious walked forward and was taken to the visitation area. She saw Kumkani there and felt a bit of relief. She rushed towards him and hugged him.

Mazibuko: “No touching!”

Kumkani: “Relax, Mazibuko. You never do your job with any sense of integrity anyway. What’s your problem?”

Mazibuko: (clicking tongue) “Mxm. Make it snappy.”

Precious: (frowning) “That guard. How well do you know her?”

Kumkani: “Well enough to know she can be a bit of a bitch. How’s it going? Has anyone hurt you?”

Precious: (chuckling) “No, I doubt they even will. I can take care of myself, you know.”

Kumkani: “Just be careful. Prison is not like the streets.”

Precious: “I hear you.”

Kumkani: “Why do you ask about Mazibuko? Did she do something to you?”

Precious: “She took a picture of my backside when they were strip searching us. She said she’d make a killing with it.”

Kumkani: (angered) “She did what?! Hey

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wena (you), Mazibuko! You'd better delete that picture or else you'd be out of a job first thing tomorrow morning! Are we clear?!"

Mazibuko: (annoyed) "Crystal."

Precious: "You don't have to do that, Kumkani. Now she'll make my life even more hell."

Kumkani: "She's small fry. She's the least I'm worried about."

Precious: (frowning) "What do you mean?"

Kumkani: "Well, besides Meshack having put away a few people in here, you saw what Jele did today in court."

Precious: "Yes, I saw that. I mean what's her deal anyway?"

Kumkani: “Well, this is her biggest case yet and she wants to win it and prove to everyone that she does deserve to be state prosecutor. It’s just business with her – nothing else.”

Precious: “This case feels personal, Kumkani. I didn’t do it. I mean how come no one is listening to my side of the story? And also, what is this I hear of two witnesses who will testify against us?”

Kumkani: (sigh) “Raymond and Lerato.”

Precious felt like she had just had a huge bomb dropped on top of her chest.

Precious: “I don’t understand. I thought Raymond was dead and what does Lerato have to do with all this?”

Kumkani: “Well, she claims that she was there with you and the rest of the gang on that night.”

Precious: (shocked) “That’s fucking insane! I mean surely there’s evidence to prove that, isn’t there?”

Kumkani: “Well, there’s camera evidence yes. I don’t get it. Something just isn’t right. It feels as if someone is tampering with state evidence here.”

Precious: “Please, look into Sibiya. I don’t trust him. And surely Jimmy can testify for me, right?”

Kumkani: “At this point the ladies and your co-accused are the only ones who can testify for you. It’s looking pretty dim.”

She couldn’t stomach facing an entire lifetime in prison.

Precious: “I see.”

Kumkani: “I swear. I will get you out of here – even if it is the last thing I do.”

Precious nodded with glistening tears.

Precious: "Can you at least do me one favour?"

Kumkani: "Anything."

Precious: "Please, tell Ganja to give Mam'Thoko whatever amount she needs for the funeral. I won't be there, but every bit counts. Mish was not such a bad person. He doesn't deserve to be buried like a pauper."

Kumkani: (nodding) "I'll do that. Here, you'll need this."

He handed her a cellphone and some money.

Precious: "Is this even legal?"

Kumkani: "It's Mzansi, Pretty Lady. You'll need that. I see you made a new friend. She's more powerful than you think. Keep her close to you."

Mazibuko: "Alright love birds, time's up."

Kumkani: "I'll call you."

Precious nodded as she watched Kumkani walked out. The only remembrance she'd have of him for the next few weeks, maybe months even is his distinct smell. As soon as Kumkani walked out, Mazibuko roughly pulled Precious out of her chair.

Mazibuko: "Don't you know that snitches get stitches in here?"

Precious: "Excuse me?"

Mazibuko: "You told your little boyfriend about my million dollar pic. You just made a big mistake. You'll soon learn that things won't always go your way in here. I'm watching you, celebrity."

Precious was just too annoyed to even say anything. She was roughly thrown out into her cell by the bitter Mazibuko. She didn't even worry about that, but instead started thinking about her case.

Linda: "So? Who was it?"

Precious: "My lawyer."

Linda: (excitedly) "Oh, that hot lawyer. I thought ke juba yao mos (he's your boyfriend, isn't he)?"

Precious: "Not really. We're just friends."

Linda: "Ah, o ja baeza wena (you're slow). I'd have given him this coochie of mine ages ago."

Precious chuckled a little bit. Linda never knew when to keep quiet, but she was most definitely a breeze.

Precious: "Yeah, well. He came to tell me about my case and to give me a few things."

Linda: "So? Ba reng ka case ya gao (what's happening with your case)?"

Precious: "It's not looking so good."

Linda: "Don't worry. Ge go pala reka docket sa mma (If all else fails, buy your docket, babe)."

Precious: "Linda mara (though)."

Linda: "Kao botsa (I'm telling you). This is Mzansi."

Precious: "Whatever happened to facing your charges and taking them like a God-fearing girl?"

Linda: (laughing) “Do you honestly see me wasting ten years of my life in here? Girl, by the time I get out of here, popelo ya ka tlabe e swahlile (my womb will be dried out).”

They both laughed.

Linda: “Look, what I am saying is that if go nale (there’s a) chance, take it. None of these bitches enjoy it in here – no matter how many benefits you may have. At the end of the day, tanyane ke tanyane (prison is prison).”

What Precious had no idea of was that Linda was going to be much bigger help than she ever realized.

Precious: “Speaking of benefits; he gave me this. Where do you even hide this stuff in here?”

Linda: (chuckling) “That’s easy. I’ll show you. Don’t worry. I got your back.”

She felt a bit relieved to have someone who knew the ropes by her side. The last thing on her mind was joining a gang to survive. They had to remain in their cells for the rest of the day until supper time. Mazibuko banged the gates once again. That was her thing.

Mazibuko: (shouting) “Masiyeni (Let’s go), bitches. Dinner time.”

She opened the gate and gave Precious a spine-chilling look as she walked past her. She then stopped King as he was about to leave.

Mazibuko: “I need you to do a job for me.”

King: “You know I don’t come cheap.”

Mazibuko: “I need you to slip this into her food or drink or something. Better yet, I need you to organize a few of your people to rough her up.”

King: (frowning) "Who?"

Mazibuko: "Celebrity."

King: "You mean Precious?"

Mazibuko nodded.

King: "Hayi hayi (no no), Mazibuko, man. I like her and besides, she has money and connections. I don't want any beef with her."

Mazibuko: "I'll double your normal asking price."

King didn't even need to think twice about it.

King: "Okay sharp. When do you need me to do it?"

Mazibuko: “Tonight. After dinner, when everyone’s asleep. Make sure you rough her up real nicely. Aim for the stomach.”

King: (frowning) “Why?”

Mazibuko: “She’s pregnant. We test all of you when you walk in, remember?”

King didn’t like the sound of it all. Killing innocent and unborn children was not her style. She was more into punishing and torturing rapists, but money talks.

King: “Okay, sharp.”

Mazibuko: “You’ll get your cut once I know she is in hospital and has miscarried.”

King: “Sharp.”

Precious arrived at the kitchen where they were queueing up for food. The food wasn't much and nor did it look appetizing, but as Linda told her; "it's not home, it's prison." It is rather amazing how life can change in the spur of a moment. Precious's life was about to change and she had no idea. Sadly, it wasn't about to get any easier any time soon. Tough times are always there – yet people need to remind themselves that they never last. God has continuously reminded us of that.

Proverbs 16:7 says; "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

“A problem is a chance for you to do your best.” – Duke Ellington

While queuing for the food, King cut in front of Precious, annoying her to the point where she almost confronted her, but Linda stopped her just by shaking her head.

King: “Sorry, I’m in a hurry. You don’t mind, do you?”

Precious: (annoyed) “Of course not.”

Linda watched carefully as King signalled to one of her peers who were dishing up for the prisoners. She was very observant for someone so talkative. Precious was staring at King all along. Indeed Linda saw what they did; they put something in her soup. Precious took her tray and then Linda did the same.

King: (shouting) “Eh, Celebrity. Come sit with us!”

Linda: (whispering) "Let's go sit over there. Whatever you do, do not eat the soup."

Precious felt a cold shiver down her spine as she heard Linda say that. Was she being poisoned? She didn't understand. Linda took her to one of the benches where the oldest prisoners were seated.

Linda: "May we sit here?"

Old Woman: (chuckling) "Linda, you're back."

It seemed as if Linda was not 100% honest with Precious about not being a regular in prison.

Linda: (chuckling) "It's hard staying away with a dysfunctional family like mine."

Old Woman: "You'd better change your ways before you end up here like us. Old and alone."

Linda: "I promise."

She looked at Precious and whispered once again.

Linda: (whispering) "Remember what I said. Don't eat the gravy. Anyway, I'd like to introduce you to my new friend."

Old Woman: "I know who she is. When will you listen to your mother, child?"

Precious was stunned to hear the woman ask her about her mother.

Precious: (frowning) "I'm sorry?"

Old Woman: "You heard me. She keep speaking to you, but you just don't listen."

Precious: “I don’t think you have the right person. My mother is deceased.”

Old Woman: “I know. Time is not on your side. Go and claim what’s yours before it’s too late. No kingdom can survive without the right heir reigning.”

Precious felt as if the woman was seriously beside herself. How on earth did she know about Zululand? Or perhaps she was trying to make a quick buck as it was all over the news? She felt like she didn’t have much of an appetite. She didn’t even notice the way King had kept an eye on her ever since she sat down. King approached her, much to Linda’s dismay.

King: “Ekse (hey), Celebrity. You don’t fancy prison food? Don’t worry, you’ll get the hang of it.”

Linda: “Mara (but) King, ga o lape (don’t you get tired)?”

King: (clicking tongue) “mxm, wena wa khenya waitse (you’re annoying).”

Linda: “Ke tshwana le wena (I’m just like you). I wonder what my uncle would say if he heard you’re into poisoning newbies around here instead of pushing his stash.”

King immediately became dismayed by Linda’s comment. She froze for a second as she was caught off guard.

King: (clicking tongue) “mxm o itse thata (you know too much). See you around celebrity.”

Old Woman: “No matter what happens, Precious, remember not to ever let your guard down. God is waiting for you to accept him again with open arms. Once you do, everything regarding your trial will be as clear as daylight to you.”

Supper was over, and it was time for them to retreat back to their cells. While walking back, Linda took it upon herself to orientate Precious about Prison life.

Linda: "You need to be more observant, babe. Gwa nyewa ka mo (it's rough in here)."

Precious: "Why would anyone want to poison me?"

Linda: "Have you looked around? Pretty much everyone in here is mad at you. You're paying for your husband's sins."

Precious didn't feel very good about what Linda said. Mazibuko pushed Precious in as always and locked the gates.

Mazibuko: "See you later, celebrity."

Linda: "I don't like that woman one bit. I don't trust her."

Precious: "Me neither. Perhaps I should sleep with one eye open."

She lay in her bed, trying to think about everything that happened that day. She didn't even get that old prisoner's

name, but somehow deep down, she knew that she was making sense – a lot of it. She turned to her side and checked her phone. She noticed a message. “I’m doing my best to get you out of there. Trial starts in a week. Stay strong and don’t forget to pray. I’m praying for you

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Pretty Lady.” Things weren’t looking too good. Her trial was about to start in a week, which meant that Prosecution had all the “evidence” that they claimed they had. She tried to stay awake as an effort to sleep with one eye open, but her body betrayed her and she dozed off to sleep. While asleep, her mother appeared in her dream once again with her father alongside her. This time, Gatsha found the courage to speak out.

Gatsha: “My baby, you need to pull yourself together and stay strong. I need you to pray, Precious. Get up right now and pray! Get up!”

Her father’s warning had fallen on deaf ears. It had barely been an hour when the lights were shut off by the guards, when all of a sudden Precious felt someone pin her against the bed; another one covered her mouth so that she couldn’t scream

while someone else was beating her to a pulp; kicking and punching her so badly – aiming for her stomach just as instructed. Linda couldn't do anything as it was dark and someone pinned her against the bed as well and covered her mouth. Precious had never felt so much pain before in her life. She felt her pants become wet; the fluid felt a lot thicker than urine and the pain in her abdomen felt so unbearable. As the punches and kicks kept coming, she felt herself slip away and she became unconscious.

King: "Ekse (Hey), that's enough now."

All of those involved moved away and towards their beds immediately. Linda got off hers and checked on Precious.

Linda: (worried) "Precious! Precious! Tsoga (Wake up)!"

Precious wasn't responding, so Linda took her phone and switched on her flashlight and was overcome with shock as she saw the horror before her.

Linda: (screaming) “Help! Help! Somebody help!”

Inmate: “Wa rasa jo (You’re making noise)!”

She got up and banged on the gates until one of the guards heard her.

Guard: (annoyed) “Yesses (Goodness)! Keng na (What is it)?! O ntsositse (You woke me up)!”

Linda: “Help her! She’s unconscious and bleeding!”

Linda didn’t even have time to explain anything to the guard, she moved her flashlight to Precious, and the guard became immediately worried.

Guard: “Shit! Zanele! Tlao thuse mo (come help here)! And then wena (you)? O kereile kae phone (where did you get a phone)?”

Linda: "That's the least of your problems right now. An inmate got injured and beaten unconscious while you're on duty. Imagine how that would look."

Guard: (clicking tongue) "Mxm. O itse thata (you know too much)."

The guards walked in and helped Precious get onto a stretcher. She was rushed to the prison hospital with so much blood gushing out of her. As she was being wheeled into the hospital, the doctor himself got the shock of his life.

Doctor: (shocked) "What happened to her?"

Guard: "I don't know, just get her awake again."

The doctor frantically checked her.

Doctor: "She still has a pulse, but it's weak. She's still bleeding out. She might need a blood transfusion."

Guard: "So? What are you waiting for?"

The doctor quickly undressed her and tested her blood. He managed to stop the bleeding temporarily, but there was only one problem.

Doctor: "We have a problem. I don't have her kind of blood here. Only one bag of blood. You will have to get her transferred to another hospital as soon as possible."

Guard: "Shit. I'm going to get a lot of heat for this."

Doctor: "Do what you have to do or else she will die."

The guard got on the phone and managed to get everything in order for Precious' transfer to a private hospital. She got set up there and got assistance immediately. Of course, nothing ever stays hidden with someone who wants to make an extra buck. Before dawn, the news of Precious being hospitalized at a private hospital had made headlines. Kumkani was so furious,

that he went there immediately. The poor girl couldn't catch a break. As soon as he walked in, he saw her bruised face and became instantly bewildered. A guard was right outside of her room and her right arm was chained to the hospital bed.

Kumkani: (angered) "Precious. Precious wake up."

Precious was still unconscious. She could hear him from a distance, of what felt like a dream she was enduring.

Kumkani: (teary) "I'll get you out of here. I promise. I just need you to hang on just for a little while longer."

At times there are people who endure one heartache after the other, while others simply feel like they come upon endless stumbling blocks. Very few of them hardly ever stop and ask themselves why that happens. Often enough, we forget about God and forget to have faith and pray; have a simple conversation. At times, you get into trouble because God tries to steer you into the right direction. Most of the times, our plans are not His plans. He knows what He would like us to do and at times we just don't lend him an ear.

Ephesians 1:4 says; “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”

God tells us no one is here on earth without a reason or purpose. You have been chosen before God formed the galaxies, the word or Adam! God knew you then and He knows you now.

“Prosperity is a great teacher; adversity is a greater. Possession pampers the mind; privation trains and strengthens it.”

One week later...

Precious had been in a private hospital for a whole week, much to the dismay of many. Kumkani had to pull off a few strings and try to get Precious on track with her upcoming trial. At least she managed to get a few nights' good sleep, even though her parents were visiting her continuously in dreams. It had become a routine that they'd visit her every night. She hadn't really been doing much and failed to adhere to their warnings and messages. When one fails to listen to ancestors, you get punished. It was her trial day, and of course she had no idea what to expect. She was in a very bad space after finding out she had lost Mish's second child. On top of that, she hadn't seen Mam'Thoko in ages ever since Mish passed on. She saw the funeral on tv, a few days later. Although, she did hear that Thoko had come to visit her while she was unconscious and she left a bunch of roses for her. Kumkani had brought her a brand new set of clothes. It had become routine everytime she

attended court. He pulled off some strings as well and got Linda to come see her just before her first day of trial.

Kumkani: (knocking) “Knock-knock. May we come in?”

Precious: (frowning) “We?”

Kumkani didn't say anything further and opened the door. Linda stormed in dressed in casual clothes and she went straight in for a hug.

Linda: (teary) “Yoh, mogkotsi (oh, my friend)! I'm so glad you're okay! Believe me, I was worried sick about you all week. I couldn't even eat or sleep.”

Precious: (chuckling) “Linda, you are so dramatic, my friend.”

Linda: “Aowa wena (No man). Taba e e serious (this issue is very serious). Ke ba kereile di mpya tsela (I found the dogs) who attacked you. And believe me, each one of them got their fair share of punishment.”

Precious: "It doesn't matter really right now. I lost my second child and I'm facing serious charges."

Linda: "Well, I'll tell you anyway. Mazibuko hired King and his little measly crew to attack you. Something is not right with your case, which is why I am willing to help wherever I can. I'll be sure to attend every day."

Precious: (frowning) "What do you mean?"

Linda: "Well, my boyfriend was arrested for everything and all the charges against me have been dropped. So, I'm officially a free woman."

Precious was elated for Linda, but she felt a huge hole creeping its way into her abdomen. She was officially without a friend and she'd have to go back to prison without Linda. How on earth was she going to cope?

Precious: "I'm so happy for you."

Linda: “Don’t worry. I managed to get you sorted. You won’t ever be in trouble again when you go back. Go tlo loka (All will be well), my friend. Before we leave, can we please pray?”

Linda was full of surprises. She actually left Precious rather speechless.

Precious: (frowning) “Wa kgona kgante (Can you pray)?”

Linda: (laughing) “Only one way to find out.”

Kumkani, Linda and Precious held hands, while Linda led their prayer.

Linda: (praying) “Dear Lord, Our father, we humble ourselves before you, Oh, God. Father God, we thank you for this is the day the Lord has made. We ask that you protect my dear friend over here, oh Lord. If you managed to get me out of prison, surely you can do her that favour. She has her whole life ahead of her and she regrets every single choice she has made. Please

forgive her, my Lord. Help her through this trial and may she be found not guilty. Protect her and guide her throughout each and every day of her life. Help her find her way back to you, oh, Lord. We all make mistakes, hence we are human. I know and you know that she is of a pure heart. Let all those against her perish and confess their sins. For she is one of your children. I ask this in Jesus' mighty name. Amen."

Precious literally felt some shivers down her spine as soon as Linda finished praying. She couldn't believe that her talkative, crazy fraudster friend could utter such beautiful words.

Precious: (teary) "Thank you, friend. I really appreciate that."

Lionda: "You'll be okay."

Kumkani: "Okay. Precious, I'll meet you in court, okay?"

Precious: (nodding) "Thank you."

They walked out as Precious was once again cuffed and had to walk out of the hospital in chains. The media was waiting outside as usual, ready to take snaps. As soon as she walked out, the nightmare began.

Reporter: “Mrs. Ndhlovu! How do you feel being chained on your first day to court? What are your feelings regarding not being able to bury your husband? Do you think you will walk away free? Is it true that favours were made for you to be in a private hospital instead of the prison hospital? Did you really have a miscarriage?”

Precious walked right along and finally entered the back of the police van. The cameras flashing and those coarse questions from the reporter rubbed into her soul like sea salt. She felt herself shedding a tear for the first time since she was arrested. The world is a cruel place and even more cruel when they all forget the good you have done and focus only on the bad. They finally made it to the court room. She pulled herself together and wiped away her tears and prepared herself to face the flashing lights of the cameras, fight her way through the crowds the journalists fighting to ask her questions. They walked in and she was uncuffed. Kumkani was once again in front of her and Ronza, Ganja, Pilot and Snakes were right next to her. She gave

them all a brief wave and smile, while Kumkani winked at her. Ms. Jele, the new prosecutor gave her a confident smile. She really thought she was going to nail her. The judge arrived and it was time.

Officer: "All rise."

They all stood up and waited for the judge to walk in and he ordered them to be seated.

Judge: "We're back again. I presume we are ready to start the trial, Mr. Mdhletse? Ms. Jele?"

Kumkani: "Yes, your honour."

Ms. Jele: "Yes, your honour."

Judge: "I believe the two cases will run concurrently, seeing as Mrs. Ndhlovu is the defendant charged for both cases?"

Kumkani: "Yes, your honour."

Judge: "The prosecution may proceed."

Ms. Jele: "Thank you, your honour. Since we have all the defendants right here in court today, we may start with the bank robbery case. It is believed that the five alleged people behind us were involved in the bank robbery that occurred a few weeks ago, your honour. There is apparent evidence as well, that shows they were all involved in a shooting right outside and inside the bank, your honour. Tragically, the king pin Mr. Meshack Ndhlovu died after sustaining Multiple bulled wounds along with Mr. Bongani Zungu, also known as Bigz. However, we have one key witness who was with them during the course of the robbery, your honour and he has valid information. Hence he has decided to turn state witness."

That was not very good. Precious was sure that it was Raymond.

Ms. Jele: "May the prosecution present its first witness, Mrs. Raymond Ndhlovu."

The crowd was in shock, cameras started flashing and a few displeased sounds were made as Raymond appeared in the dock, with bandages wrapped around his head, an arm sling and a crutch.

Judge: "The prosecution may proceed with questioning the witness."

Ms. Jele: "Thank you, your honour. Mr. Ndhlovu, thank you for taking the time to come and give your testimony. I know

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you're fearing for your life and you must be in real pain."

Kumkani: (standing) "Objection, your honour! Irrelevance."

Judge: "Get to it, Ms. Jele."

Ms. Jele: "As you wish, my Lord. Mr. Ndhlovu. Do you know the people who are accused for these heinous crimes?"

Raymond: "Yes, I do."

Ms. Jele: "May you tell the court how you know them exactly?"

Raymond: "I know them because Mrs. Ndhlovu was married to my late brother, and the men were a part of my brother's crew."

Ms. Jele: "By crew you mean what exactly?"

Raymond: "My brother was a gangster, so they would do crime together."

Kumkani: "Objection, my lord! Speculation!"

Judge: "Sustained."

Ms. Jele: "Mr. Ndhlovu, may you explain to the court where you were on the night of the bank robbery?"

Raymond: “Well, I was with them. By them I mean my brother and his crew.”

Ms. Jele: “Please explain what happened exactly.”

Raymond: “Well, most people knew that my brother and I never got along, so he threatened me. He convinced me to do the job with him or else, he would kill my family.”

Ronza found himself chuckling silently and murmuring, while the rest of the crew were shaking their heads.

Ronza: (chuckling) “Bitch.”

Judge: “Mr. Mdhletse, control your clients, please. I will not have such behaviour in my court.”

It honestly felt like the judge was already on Ms. Jele’s side.

Kumkani: "Apologies, my Lord. It won't happen again."

Judge: "It had better not. Continue, Ms. Jele."

Ms. Jele: "And then what happened?"

Raymond: "Well, being the civilian that I am, I knew that I wouldn't be able to kill him, so I went ahead with his plan. I figured perhaps it wouldn't end well and that he'd get arrested some how."

Ms. Jele: "Why didn't you call the police?"

Raymond: "Everyone knows that my brother had so many policemen on his payroll."

Kumkani: "Objection, my Lord! Speculation once again."

Judge: "Sustained."

Ms. Jele: “And then you went on the ride to the bank, along with his crew. You got into the bank and then what happened?”

Raymond: “Well, we got out and headed right to the bank. We managed to get in. We meaning Bigz and my brother, while the rest of them waited outside. As soon as we got into the vault, we put the money in the cash bags and right before they walked out, they turned their guns against me and started shooting.”

Ronza and his crew were all trying really hard not to laugh at how Ray was changing the whole story. Basically, he did that because Bigz and Mish were dead and they weren't able to testify. It was his word against the rest of them.

Ms. Jele: “And can you confirm whether Mrs. Ndhlovu was with you on the night in question?”

Raymond: “Absolutely, she was our driver.”

Kumkani was shaking his head, while Precious felt defeated already.

Ms. Jele: "No further questions, my Lord."

Judge: "The defense may approach to question the witness."

Kumkani: "Thank you, my Lord. Mr. Ndhlovu, you say that you and your brother never got along. So, how is it that your brother got hold of you if you never got along in the first place?"

Raymond: "Well, I don't know. I'm a very successful businessman and so, he must have gotten my number online."

Kumkani: "I see. Mr. Ndhlovu, can you confirm that you had sent a few of your hitmen to try and kill Mr. Ndhlovu's crewmen?"

Ms. Jele: "Objection, my lord! This has nothing to do with our case!"

Judge: "Sustained. Mr. Mdletse, what does this have to do with our case?"

Kumkani: "Bear with me, my Lord. I am getting there."

Judge: "Alright then."

Kumkani: "Mr. Ndhlovu, do you mind answering the question?"

Raymond: "Please repeat the question."

Kumkani: "Did you or did you not send your hitmen on a specific night to shoot at and kill Mr. Ndhlovu's crewmen?"

Raymond: "No, I don't know what you're talking about."

Kumkani: (chuckling) "My Lord, as you will see in that file, it is doctor's reports along with police evaluation of the alleged

night, a few nights before the bank robbery occurred. You will see that Snakes along with his wife Daphney were shot at. Daphney sustained two bullet wounds to her abdomen that led to the result of her losing her baby. Pilot was driving with his wife Chantel, and they were shot at. He also sustained multiple bullet wounds and he also was hospitalized. Ronza, along with his wife Deborah, were shot at too and they luckily got away. There is the proof in there, that there is no way that all of them were there on the alleged bank robbery, as Pilot was in a hospital bed.”

Ms. Jele: (panicking) “My Lord, I know nothing of this so called evidence.”

Kumkani: “It will also prove to you, my Lord, that one of the hitmen survived and got away and he is willing to testify on behalf of the defense.”

Judge: “I’ll look into the evidence later. You may proceed with questioning.”

Kumkani was smiling. He had some hope.

Kumkani: "Thank you. Mr. Ndhlovu, now, back to this particular night. Can you or can you not confirm that you and Mr. Ndhlovu had lengthy phone calls? You initiated the calls right before the shooting, am I correct?"

Raymond was starting to get tongue tied.

Raymond: (stuttering) "Uh.. I don't know what you're talking about."

Kumkani: "My Lord, here are all the phone records we have between Mr. Raymond Ndhlovu and Mr. Meshack Ndhlovu. There is also one recording that was taken a few nights before the alleged bank robbery. You will also note that it goes against everything Mr. Raymond has said to the court. Which means that he lied under oath and is at liberty to be charged with perjury."

Ms. Jele was starting to sweat, along with Raymond.

Kumkani: “Mr. Ndhlovu, you say that you were co-erced to play a part in the robbery, but you failed to mention to the court why you were with two other men, in your van. Can you explain that?”

Rayond: (sweaty) “I... uh... I don’t feel so well right now.”

Kumkani: “My lord, may the court please get some water for the witness before he falls over the chamber. We don’t want another Ndhlovu dead.”

Judge: “Ms. Jele, please, get your witness contained. Court is adjourned for recess. We shall resume in fifteen minutes.”

Kumkani looked at Precious and smiled at her. He had given her a ball of hope. Perhaps there was light at the end of the tunnel for her after all. Ms. Jele walked up to her and whispered.

Ms. Jele: (whispered) “This isn’t over yet, bitch. I’ll nail you.”

Precious looked at her in shock. That case was personal indeed.

Isaiah 26:3 – 4 says; “Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace – because they trust in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord God you have an everlasting rock.”

“Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today.”

During their fifteen minutes recess, Kumkani managed to get a chance to speak to Ronza, Snakes, Ganja, Pilot, Ghandia and Precious all in one room. They were all happy to see Precious and hugged her.

Ronza: “How are you holding up? We heard about what happened.”

Precious: “I’m trying to get by.”

Snakes: “We’re going to sort them out. Don’t you worry.”

Precious: “Thank you.”

Kumkani: “Well, while you’re all here. There’s an urgent matter I’d like to discuss with you.”

Pilot: “Don’t keep us waiting.”

Kumkani: “We have a bit of a problem. Jele can see that all her evidence is not applicable, so therefore, she wants to call Lerato next to the stand.”

Ghandia: “She has been a witness all along. That’s not surprising.”

Kumkani: “It’s not, but Leah has also opted to go onto the stand.”

Everyone was left speechless.

Precious: “The fuck?!”

Kumkani: "I know. Judging by the way Lerato hates you, Precious, she will do and say anything to bring you down. She will point everything in your direction."

Precious sat down and thought really hard.

Precious: "Okay, we'll see how it goes. What happens if they both testify against me and me alone?"

Kumkani: "Well, you could be charged with minor charges, and since I can prove that you weren't at the robbery as well as the rest of you. The camera quality is too low and no one can really determine whether or not you were there, you could be acquitted or get a few months – a year tops. Since you have no criminal record and you're still a student, we can argue that Mish was in charge of everything and you had no idea what he did on the side. The judge could have the case overturned. The one I'm concerned about is the murder case."

Ronza: "Can't you buy the case?"

Kumkani: “Not with Jele there. Something is just not right and I can’t shake the feeling. Which is why, I’ll have to go to Zululand as soon as possible. Also, Njabulo is going to testify as a witness.”

Things were starting to look up again yet it felt like nothing was going right. Before they knew it, recess was over and they had to go back in court again. Precious could feel the walls closing in on her, and she thought of a plan – a plan that could save everyone else – except her.

Officer: “All rise.”

They all stood up out of respect for the magistrate.

Judge: “You may be seated.”

They all sat down and as Precious was looking around, she saw Debbie, Rachel, Chantel and even Daphne seated. They didn’t look very well, it must have been due to all the crying and stress throughout the days. Debbie looked a bit bigger, much

fuller in her face. She waved at them briefly and looked in front of her.

Judge: "The Prosecution may proceed."

Ms. Jele: (nervously) "Well, your honour, my witness shall not be able to continue with further questioning today. He is not well, so perhaps we can get him in again tomorrow?"

Judge: (sigh) "I don't think that would be necessary, Ms. Jele. Besides, I was going through his testimony as well as his answers and all the transcripts of this morning. They do not correspond. I'm afraid he is not a reliable witness, so therefore, I'm excluding him for now."

Kumkani smiled as he looked at Precious, leaving Ms. Jele very displeased.

Ms. Jele: "Of course, my Lord. The Prosecution would like to call upon its next witness, Mrs. Lerato Zungu."

Precious immediately felt rage rising from within as Lerato made her way to the stand. She didn't even look like a widow, with a ridiculously oversized black hat, and a black Dolce and Gabana suit, with high black Jimmy Chu's. Of course, her nails were up to standard and she was wearing shades as well. Talk about ridiculous.

Judge: (sigh) "Mrs. Zungu, kindly remove your sunglasses as well as your hat, please. This is a court, not a fashion show."

People in the court chuckled and murmured a little.

Lerato: "My apologies, your honour."

Judge: "Proceed, Ms. Jele."

Ms. Jele: "Thank you, your honour. Ms. Jele, to the court's understanding you saw what happened that very crucial night, you were there just before you husband got killed. Am I correct?"

Lerato: “Yes, ma’am.”

Precious was raising her eyebrows and refraining from sighing and chuckling as she had never seen or heard Lerato be so polite before.

Ms. Jele: “Where were you that night?”

Lerato: “Well, we were all at Mish’s house, preparing for the upcoming heist.”

Ms. Jele: “By heist, you mean the bank robbery?”

Lerato: “Yes.”

Ms. Jele: “Go on.”

Lerato: “Well, Precious was the mastermind of everything. She had her little black book and her big map of the whole entire bank. She knew the entrances and exits of the bank and she

was calling the shots. She was telling every man there what to do at which specific time.”

Ms. Jele: “Interesting. And then what happened?”

Lerato: “Well, they all went out, while the rest of us ladies – except for Precious of course. We waited for them to come back. Sadly, my husband didn’t make it back. We received a call from Precious stating that Mish, my husband and Snakes were in hospital. The next thing I know they were arrested. My husband was a good man.”

She started crying.

Ms. Jele: “May someone please provide some water for my witness, please.”

Kumkani: “While you’re at it, may I proceed with questioning, my Lord?”

Judge: “Are you done, Ms. Jele?”

Ms. Jele: “Yes, my Lord, but I am afraid my client seems a little too drained to continue.”

Judge: (sigh) Ms. Jele, tears have never stopped anyone from telling the truth. I’d like to get this case out of my hair ASAP. Continue Mr. Mdhletse.”

Kumkani: (smiling) “Thank you, your honour. Ms. Zungu.”

Lerato: (interrupting) “Mrs.”

Kumkani: “My apologies, Ms. Zungu. I’ll explain to the court why I call you Ms. Zungu – even though it is completely irrelevant to the court. To my knowledge, you and Mr. Bongani Zungu also known as Bigz, were not legally married. He didn’t even take out any lobola for you, am I correct?”

Lerato: (nervously) “Well, he was planning to, but – “

Kumkani: "Please answer yes or no."

Lerato: "Yes."

Kumkani: "Thank you, now as I may proceed, Ms. Zungu."

Kumkani was playing dirty, putting emphasis on Ms. Zungu. Already Lerato's testimony was starting to be discredited by the judge as she had lied about being Bigz's wife. Everyone thought they were actually married. It turns out he just gave her a wedding and promised to pay lobola for her. He must have seen the real Lerato.

Kumkani: "Well, Ms. Zungu, you said you were at the house just before they went out to rob the bank. You also said that Mrs. Ndhlovu was with you, am I correct?"

Ms. Jele: "Ag, objection your honour! Will he get to the point?"

Judge: "No one interrupted you when you were questioning her

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Ms. Jele. I think it is only fair that we see where Mr. Mdhletse wants to go with this.”

Ms. Jele sat back down annoyed and kept tapping her foot in annoyance.

Kumkani: “Thank you, your honour. Ms. Zungu?”

Lerato: (nervously) “Yes, she was there. Leah can attest to that.”

Kumkani: “Oh, I am sure Leah can speak for herself. This is about you now. Remember, Ms. Zungu, you are under oath. I will ask you again. Was Mrs. Ndhlovu with you on the night in question?”

Lerato kept quiet for a while; her eyes were wandering around and then she stared at Precious. She could smell the hate from the stand.

Lerato: “Yes, she was there.”

Kumkani: (chuckling) “My Lord, I present to you camera footage of the day in question. Mrs. Ndhlovu went to the mall, as you can see on the screen. She was indeed with the women, but Lerato and this Leah woman she mentioned was not there. The time was 2:45. After that, she is seen driving out, and straight to Mooikloof residence; which is where I stay. She arrived at my house at 3pm, as you can see on the screen. The camera’s are showing that she didn’t leave the place until the following morning after she had heard that her husband was shot and in a critical condition. You will then see, your honour, that Ms. Zungu over here as she calls herself, is seen at the Hospital lobby, fighting with Mrs. Ndhlovu, minutes before she went to see her now deceased husband. In that file presented to you now, you will see all the call records from the day in question to the day after. You will even see the messages that were sent to Mrs. Ndhlovu, by Ronza stating that her husband had been shot and they were looking for her all night.”

Ms. Jele was trembling from underneath her desk, while the court was gasping in shock. Lerato was rather stressed and felt like peeing herself. She took another sip of water as her forehead had begun showing drips of sweat.

Kumkani: “I put it to you, Ms. Zungu that you are a liar!”

Ms. Zungu: “No, I’m not! It was all her idea! All her plans!”

Kumkani: “You decided on your own or you were coerced to play the victim role and try to frame my client. The evidence clearly states that what you are saying is extremely contradictory to what you said in your sworn statement. You have an agenda against my client and all your husband’s friends and I’ll tell you why. You were angry that Bigz didn’t marry you and all of them some even younger than you, were married to these men – legally married. You were angry because Bigz was still in love with the mother of his two children. You are bitter that you won’t get a single cent!”

Lerato: (crying) “That is not true!”

Kumkani: “Then how would you explain lying in front of this very same court, while under oath?! Why jeopardize these people’s future when you could have just told the truth! The

truth that you don't know anything about what happened that night!"

Ms. Jele: "Objection, your honour! He's badgering the witness!"

Judge: (sigh) "That's enough, Mr. Mdhletse."

Kumkani: "Apologies, my lord. I think we can gather here, my lord. That these people – my clients are being framed for a crime they didn't commit. The only person shown on those cameras is one of the witnesses, Mr. Raymond Ndhlovu. If he really was innocent, he wouldn't have taken a plea bargain. The only people we could very well identify are Mr. Ndhlovu and his brother. Snakes, happened to be at the wrong place and at the wrong time. It is clear to us that the camera footage were tampered with – therefore, we cannot say that the people mentioned were indeed the people robbing the bank that very same night. No further questions, my Lord."

Judge: "You may step down, Ms. Zungu. Any other witnesses, Ms. Jele?"

Ms. Jele: “Yes, your honour. I’d like to call upon Ms. Leah Letswalo.”

Judge: “But she is not on the list of witnesses, Ms. Jele.”

Ms. Jele: (nervous) “Yes, my Lord. It was a last minute thing.”

Judge: “Seems to me that everything about you is last minute. I won’t need to hear anything about this next witness. It seems to me that you didn’t do your research properly. The only people who could tell us what exactly happened are Mr. Ndhlovu, the deceased and the witness. Now that both your witnesses have lied under oath, I opt for them to do some time behind bars. Mr. Raymond Ndhlovu’s charges will stand and he will face trial like the rest of the criminals in this country. As for your witness, Ms. Jele, she will face 6 months in court for perjury and lying under oath. I will not have my court room be turned into a mockery like that. Unless you want the same fate to befall your next witness, feel free to bring her in.”

Ms. Jele was boiling, but she had to let it go.

Ms. Jele: "I retract, my Lord. No further witnesses."

Judge: "Thank you. Now that it has been clear that this trial was a waste of my time, I have decided not to waste further time. I have a holiday planned with my wife and children, so I shall be giving my verdict after recess. We shall return in an hour's time. Court adjourned."

Everyone was chanting in court, while Precious was sighing in relief. Things were looking really good for her on this one.

Officer: "All rise."

They all stood up as the judge walked out. Kumkani had organized a mean lunch for the crew while waiting for the judge to come back, along with the wives – except for Lerato and Leah. While they were eating, Debbie, Rachel, Daphne and Chantel walked in. They were so excited to finally hug their husbands and their dear friend.

Rachel: "Oh, friend. I'm so glad to finally see you."

Precious: "You guys look like complete shit. What do you do all day? Cry?"

Chantel: (laughing) "You know them too well."

Precious: "I'm really sorry I dragged you guys into this."

Debbie: "No need. We all made our own decisions. We all knew what we were getting ourselves into."

Ronza: "Well, now that we're all together, are you going to tell them the big news, baby?"

Debbie: (looking down) "I'm pregnant."

Everyone was elated, especially Precious. She didn't want to think about her recent tragedy, but she was genuinely happy for her.

Debbie: “Oh, hun. I hope you don’t mind me saying this after what happened to you. You know.”

Precious: “Just because I’m going through a lot does not mean we don’t have any reason to celebrate. I’m honestly happy for you. Which is why I have come to a decision. I’m glad you are all here.”

They all looked at her in suspense.

Precious: “Since you’re all going to get back the money from the heist that you put down for bail, should you get acquitted, I’d like you to do a few favours for me. Take it all and the rest of the money that will be released in our accounts and use it to your benefit. Start new businesses – legit ones. Sell my house and my car and give the money to Mam’Thoko. She needs it more than ever.”

Everyone was so shocked. They didn’t expect it.

Rachel: "What about Bigz's house?"

Precious: "Ronza will take care of that. He'll sell his house and give the money to the mother of his children."

Daphne: "And Lerato?"

Chantel: "What about her?"

Daphne: "I mean, she was really going through a lot with him. She really stuck by him."

Precious: "If you were in my position and she wanted to fuck you over like she did, would you give her everything and leave his kids with nothing?"

She kept quiet and tried to process it all.

Precious: "She deserves nothing."

Rachel: "What about you? Why do I get the feeling you're saying goodbye to us?"

Precious: "I'm being realistic. I'm tying up loose ends, because it seems as if the murder trial is going to keep me in prison for quite some time. Let's face it, someone is out for blood and I am the sacrificial lamb. I'm being framed and I don't even know by whom or why. You guys should go on with your lives and not worry about me too much. You have enough on your plates."

Ronza: "No, Mish was our brother. You are one of us and we're not going to let you go just like that, Boss Lady. You made us who we are and even though we couldn't rob the Reserve Bank, you really gave us a lot of insight."

Precious was really touched. They all refused to give up on her.

Precious: "Thank you, guys. You're my family. You're all I pretty much have."

They all smiled and hugged her before they went back for the Judge's verdict. They walked in anxiously in court and the judge walked in and sat down without hesitation.

Judge: "After numerous consideration, I have finally come to a verdict. It is really perilous to see how people do not take the law of this country seriously. As much as the accused may have done a few crimes in their past, it gives no one the right to pin a hideous crime on them without any relevant evidence."

He said that looking at Ms. Jele, one could tell that she was already not his favourite.

Judge: "Without further ado, all charges regarding the bank robbery against the accused have been dropped. You are free to go."

The court was happy. The men were happy; Precious was happy – for them and that at least for once something went her way. She had one more case to solve and it was not going to be easy. Ms. Jele was not even happy about the verdict, and

Lerato as well. She was being shipped all the way to Prison for her little white lies. It was not such a bad day after all.

Ronza: "I'll make sure you're set in there, okay?"

Precious: "Thank you."

At least that day was proof that her ancestors and God hadn't given up on her.

1 Peter 5:10 says; "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong and steadfast."

“The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.” – Chinese Proverb

Precious’s murder trial had been postponed for a further two weeks. It was bad enough that she was going back to prison for the next two weeks, but she couldn’t continue with her studies from within prison, but knowing people in high places really helps. The following day after the robbery trial was concluded, she saw Lerato with her own eyes. Yes, the very Lerato who hated her so much that she committed perjury on her own accord. It was a lonely time for her without Linda, but she had officially been moved to another cell, along with the elder inmates and the old woman who told her about her parents the other day. She had formed a rather minimal friendship with them, but they really took her like family from the first day she arrived. They had queued for food and she went to sit alongside the old woman, Martha.

Martha: (smiling) “It’s so nice to see you settling in. Just don’t get too comfortable.”

Precious: (smiling) “I’ll try.”

She looked around and saw King looking rather less cleaner than usual. She didn't have her usual crew with her anymore and she had a bust lip and a swollen face.

Precious: (frowning) "What happened to her?"

Martha: "Let's just say you have made some really good friends with Linda. She told her uncle about what they did to you and punished them – big time. King is no longer part of their operation and Mazibuko no longer has the powers she had. I must say, you really know how to piss people off."

Precious: (frowning) "I didn't do anything."

Martha: (chuckling) "You misunderstood. You didn't have to. Your presence alone pisses people off, my love. You are beautiful, intelligent, strong willed and a born queen. That is more than enough to make people envious."

She smiled to herself as she heard Martha's sweet words. Along came Lerato and she stood right in front of Precious.

Lerato: "Hi, Precious."

Precious: "Oh, hi."

Lerato: "Can I sit here?"

Precious: "No."

Lerato: "Look, I'm really sorry about what happened. But honestly, I think that the sentence I got was a bit harsh. People lie in court all the time. I mean, can't you talk to your lawyer boyfriend for me? It's the least you could do since you didn't give me a cent from my husband's money."

Wow, the nerve of that girl.

Precious: (annoyed) “Fuck off, before I make you!”

Lerato walked away hastily, leaving a sour taste in Precious’s mouth.

Martha: “Is she the one who tried to get you life in prison?”

Precious nodded.

Martha: “Ja, neh. Let her be. This place will eat her up before she even realizes it.”

Precious continued eating her food while trying to get Lerato out of her mind. She was not even apologetic about her behaviour. I guess you cannot make someone be sorry. They themselves have to realize they messed up. Meanwhile, Kumkani was tying up some loose ends, while trying to gather as much evidence as possible to get Precious to win the case against her. Nothing made sense, and he knew there was obviously some foul play. Firstly, he had to start in Zululand – the main source of the problem. He arrived at the Ncube

mansion, where he found Glenda making herself feel at home. It was time to end that shit once and for all. He knocked a few times.

Glenda: "Come in!"

Kumkani walked in and was not amused at all.

Glenda: (smiling) "Oh, Mr. Mdletshe. How lovely to see you. Have you come with good news?"

Kumkani: "Such as?"

Glenda: "Oh, I don't know. Maybe something to do with giving my grandson the reign he deserves."

Kumkani: (chuckling) "Glenda, you know, my mother warned me about women like you. She said that there is always one unstable woman whom God saw fit to be a mother. She said that God does that not to make a mockery out of those who deserve children, but He does that so that the unstable ones

may find a reason to live; a reason to repent and find God within again. But in your case, I doubt that was the case.”

Glenda: (frowning) “What can I do for you? You are clearly wasting my time. I’m cooking a feast.”

Kumkani: “Hmm, cooking a feast in the King’s house? The king you murdered.”

She clammed up immediately.

Glenda: (panicky) “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

Kumkani: “Tell me something, Glenda, how did Njabulo and Ntsika know where Precious lived? And why did Njabulo kill his own brother?”

Glenda: “I really don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Kumkani: "Okay, then. Perhaps you'll be willing to speak the truth in court."

Glenda: (worried) "I don't have anything to say."

Kumkani: "Oh, but surely you are willing to support your own grandson. I mean, since he isn't a Ncube after all. He is a state witness, but I'll get to the bottom of everything. Well, let me not waste any more of your time and get straight to the point."

Glenda: "Which is?"

Kumkani: "Now that I have found the legal and sole heiress of the kingdom, your time here is done. By you I mean all of you. Of course, Kumkani wanted Georgina to be well taken care of. She was only good to him, it's only fair, but you on the other hand. Your time is coming."

Glenda: (worried) "You can't do that. She's in prison and will be there for a very long time."

Kumkani: “Even so, she is still the heiress of this kingdom. There is nothing you can do about it. You have 2 hours to fuck out of here.”

He walked out and closed the door behind him, leaving Glenda worried sick to her stomach. Her plan had failed – dismally. What she wasn’t aware of was that God was watching. The Ncube ancestors were watching her the same way they were watching Abigail and Queen Kuli years ago. Their wrath was upon her; they were just waiting for the right time to strike.

Two weeks later...

Precious had been learning a lot from Martha; she had been trying to pray again and was reading the Bible again. She was trying her best to heed to her parents’ warnings and messages in her dreams. It was slowly working, but things were still looking bleak for her case. Day one of the murder trial had officially arrived like a thief in the night. Kumkani had brought her a new outfit to wear once again, and she hadn’t seen Mam’Thoko ever since Mish died. It was a sad thing for her,

but she had to focus on her own life at that moment. Before she walked out of the prison, Kumkani arrived swiftly.

Kumkani: "Hi."

Precious: "Hey. Aren't we supposed to leave for court?"

Kumkani: (worried) "Well, there's been a slight change of plans. Apparently you have a new judge. The one we had, is suddenly sick and not well. He is in hospital as we speak. Food poisoning."

Already Precious had a bad feeling and she looked down in worry.

Kumkani: "Hey, everything is going to be okay. You just wait and see."

She nodded and tried to remain hopeful. She got into the van and of course, the paparazzi were outside waiting to take the perfect shot of the Gangster wife. As soon as she walked in,

she looked behind her and saw her Gangster family – the guys and all their wives. She felt a little better knowing they had taken their precious time to come and support her. She then saw three people she never thought she would ever see; Mam'Bongi sitting next to Mam'Thoko and Hosea. She felt her warm tears flowing down her cheeks as she smiled in absolute relief. Hosea looked so good, a whole lot better than he did almost two years ago. The new judge walked in and this time it was a woman. She felt perhaps she would be able to sympathize with Precious, but she was hardcore and unpredictable.

Officer: "All rise."

They stood up as usual procedure. The judge sat down.

Officer: "You may be seated."

Ms. Jele was prepared as always in her short stature; beautiful hour glass figure and high heels. She was ready to pounce, but so was Kumkani.

Judge: "May the prosecution relay the case."

Ms. Jele: "Of course, your honour. Today, we are officially starting with the trial of the state vs. Mrs. Precious Ndhlovu on the charge of the Murder of her brother, Ntsika Ncube and attempted murder and grievous bodily harm against her other brother, Njabulo Ncube."

Judge: "How does the defendant plead?"

It was Precious's chance to speak up the way Kumkani coached her to.

Precious: (nervously) "Not guilty, your honour."

Judge: "Alright then. You may start."

Ms. Jele: "Thank you, your honour. As we all know, Mrs. Ndhlovu over here is the widow of gangster kingpin Meshack Ndhlovu. We all know how they flash money when it comes to everything and how they avoid following the law."

Kumkani: "Objection, your honour. Speculation."

Judge: "Sustained, Mr. Mdhletse. Move on, Ms. Jele."

Ms. Jele: "Of course, your honour. Well, Ms. Ndhlovu here was charged with robbery of one of South Africa's best banks just a few weeks ago, but we all know that she dodged that bullet."

Kumkani: "Objection, your honour! Relevance?"

Judge: (sigh) "Ms. Jele. Please, get your point across. I think we have passed the point where we want to paint the defendant as a bad person. She was married to a murderer, that's reason enough. Move on."

Precious didn't appreciate the tone of that judge and judging by Kumkani's tightened jaw, he was displeased as well.

Ms. Jele: "Very well

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your honour. On the night in question, it has been said that Mrs. Ndhlovu shot Ntsika Ncube and injured Njabulo Ncube with a bullet in his shoulder, which resulted in a dislocated shoulder, and of course surgery. I am telling the court today, that I will prove that this woman is a monster. She deserves nothing less than life sentence, which is 25 years in prison. This country should not be lenient to people like her. They do not deserve any mercy nor a place in our society.”

Ms. Jele looked at her as she sat back down. Precious felt that it was very personal.

Judge: “The defence may present its opening statement.”

Kumkani stood up and his magnificent scent hit Precious’ nostrils. He was so confident and his charm had probably won over the court.

Kumkani: “Thank you, your honour. Well, I am here to tell the court and the people of South Africa, that this young woman is just a victim of circumstances. How many of you have loved

the “wrong” man or woman, and yet people blamed you for it? How many of you had to pay for your lover’s sins? I put it to you, that Precious Ndhlovu is a victim. And I will tell you why; on the night in question, she was in her house; in a safe and secure neighbourhood in Silverlakes. She came in and set the alarm as usual and went to enjoy a drink in the study of the man she once loved. She was devastated to hear of the death of her husband and she did whatever she felt like doing – In the comfort of her own home. Her own home, my people! Let that sink in. I say to you that someone tampered with camera footage of that place and tampered with her alarm system. She had no knowledge of Mr. Njabulo Ncube and the deceased up until that night. So, how do two people who claim to be related to you by blood, get into your house, in a safe and secure complex, without being noticed as they claim and without tripping the alarm system? If you were in that house, wouldn’t you be scared for your life finding an unidentified man you had never seen before in your house at odd hours of the night, carrying a gun and one of them dead on the floor in a pool of blood? What would you do? I’ll tell you what. You’d defend yourself. You’ll shoot the person if you have to. Intruders have no right to enter our homes. No one has the right to take a life – especially invade the privacy of your own home. I put it to you, once again that Precious Ndhlovu is indeed a victim and I’ll prove it.”

He went to sit back down. Wow, that was a moving speech, Precious thought to herself. Judging by the murmurs of people in the court, he had really got people thinking and actually got them to see the other side of the story – Precious' side.

Judge: "Very well, then. The defence may continue."

Ms. Jele: "The defence calls upon its first witness, detective Jackson Sibiya."

Precious became instantly annoyed as she saw him. Something about him was just not right. He walked up on that chamber and sat down confidently.

Ms. Jele: "Detective, you are the one who responded to the call, along with your partner on the night in question, isn't it?"

Sibiya: "That's correct."

Ms. Jele: “Please tell the court what you saw when you walked into the defendant’s house that night.”

Sibiya: “Well, we got a call from the security guard in charge that evening, Jimmy Chauke, and once my partner and I walked in, we saw the deceased on the floor. He had a bullet on the head and a bullet in the chest, and was lying in a pool of blood. Then we saw the other witness, Njabulo Ncube, lying on the floor, wounded on the shoulder and bleeding.”

Ms. Jele: “Please tell the court what Mrs. Ndhlovu was doing?”

Sibiya: “Well, she was very arrogant and aggressive, hence we had to take her to the station. I mean, I have sustained a broken nose from her on the very same day as a result.”

Precious was appalled that a man who claimed to be serving the people was lying through his teeth so much on the stand. She was boiling, but there was not much she could do about it.

Ms. Jele: "In your own analysis of Mrs. Ndhlovu, do you think she did it?"

Sibiya: "Without a doubt, ma'am. I believe the defendant has a very violent streak. To my understanding her brothers had come to talk to her about her stance regarding the kingdom left by her father, but she just turned on them and shot them."

Ms. Jele: "Thank you."

Kumkani got ready and started bashing him with questions immediately.

Kumkani: "Detective Sibiya, you are an honest man, wouldn't you say?"

Sibiya: "Yes, I am a man of honour."

Kumkani: "So honourable that you force females arrested by you to sleep with you?"

Sibiya: (worried) "Excuse me?"

Ms. Jele: "Objection, your honour! Irrelevance!"

Judge: "What are you getting at, Mr. Mdletshe?"

Kumkani: "Bear with me, please, your honour. I'm nearly there."

Judge: "Alright then."

Kumkani: "Detective, you said that you got a broken nose from Mrs. Ndhlovu on the morning you took her to the station. Isn't it because you made sexual advances towards her and she retaliated?"

Sibiya: (angered) "That's ridiculous!"

Kumkani: “Your honour, in the file I’m handing over to you now, is a list of all the women who are willing to testify against detective Sibiya for raping them, sexually assaulting them and extorting sex from them in exchange for lenient sentences. Now, that is your thing, isn’t it, detective?”

Sibiya: (panicking) “I... I don’t know what you mean. It’s all lies!”

Ms. Jele: “Your honour, I don’t see the relevance!”

Kumkani: “I’ll explain the relevance, your honour. I put it to you, detective Sibiya, that you love to lie. Lying comes naturally to you. It is a habit. You walked in and saw the whole scene, but immediately judged my client and you didn’t even ask her what happened, but you chose to ask the security guard instead. You failed to act as an officer of the law, by asking for her statement at her house and insisted that she walk with you to the station – under false pretences! You asked her for sex, by touching her thigh and when she punched you, you decided to pin murder on her! Not once did you bother to check the camera footage or get a doctor to examine her before you made the arrest! You concluded on your own before making a

clear analysis that she was guilty! All because she was the wife of a gangster! I put it to you, Detective, that you yourself are abusive. You decided to pin murder on her because her late husband refused to put you on his team years ago – when he shot your brother during a heated argument which your very own brother started! Am I not correct, Detective?!”

Ms. Jele: (panicking) “Objection! Objection, your honour! He’s badgering the witness!”

Detective: (shouting) “My brother didn’t deserve that! Mish was a horrible man and if I had the chance to kill him myself I’d do it! His wife is just like him! They are all animals!”

Judge: “Ms. Jele, contain your witness!”

Detective: “I swear, you’ll rot in prison, Precious! Even if it is the last thing I do!”

Ms. Jele: “Alright! Get that man out of here! Ms. Jele, it seems to me that your witness is really unreliable, unstable and very

contradictory. I'll take my time and review his initial statement. Until then, court adjourned."

Precious was relieved that at least Detective Sibiya panicked and lost his cool. Kumkani really dug his claws into him. Ms. Jele was not very impressed.

Officer: "All rise."

The judge left and they walked out. Precious made her way to the van, and headed straight to prison. Things were indeed looking up for the Princess of Zululand.

Psalm 16:8 says; "I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."

“He knows not his own strength who hath not met adversity.” –
William Samuel Johnson

As soon as she got to prison and changed back into her prison clothes, she was told to go to the visitation room. She thought nothing much of it as Kumkani was usually the one to visit her after court. She was amazed to see Thoko, Bongi and Hosea. She rushed towards Hosea and he hugged her for quite a while. Then Bongi hugged her and she was a bit hesitant to hug Thoko, but she threw herself to Precious.

Thoko: “Oh, my baby. I’m so sorry.”

Precious: “What for, Ma? You didn’t do anything wrong.”

Thoko: “I am so sorry I got you into this mess. I should have refused to let you marry Mish. I should have tried harder. My son was not the best man there was on earth, you know.”

Precious: “Ma, he had his own demons, but he was a good man. You did nothing wrong.”

Bongi: “How are you doing, really?”

Precious: “Honestly, I miss doing whatever it is I want to at my own time. I miss freedom.”

Bongi: “All shall be well. You just pray.”

Precious: “I’m trying my best. I’m more interested in you, Hosea. What on earth, Malume (Uncle)!”

Hosea: (chuckling) “I am a changed man, what can I say?”

Precious: “What happened?”

Hosea: “Ag, it’s a long story, but your boyfriend saved me.”

Precious: "He's not my boyfriend."

Hosea: (chuckling) "If you say so."

Precious: "I'm so glad you're okay."

Hosea: "I'm sorry I wasn't there for you. I'm so sorry I left you in this mess to deal with by yourself."

Precious: "It's really okay, really. We all have our own struggles."

Bongi: "We only came to say hi very quickly. Kumkani asked us not to take up too much of your time. We promise to come see you again tomorrow after court. I'm praying for you, my baby."

Precious: "Thank you, Gogo (granny)."

Hosea: "Hang in there, kid."

She smiled as she hugged them goodbye. Kumkani walked in looking handsome as ever.

Kumkani: “Hey. How are you coping today?”

Precious: “Well, after seeing you on fire like that, I think I am feeling very positive.”

Kumkani: (chuckling) “Sibiya is nothing. He is just small fry. I’m more worried about tomorrow.”

Precious: (frowning) “What do you mean?”

Kumkani: “Well, I mean I’m very anxious to hear what Njabulo will say. He will incriminate you in every way possible.”

Precious: “I think I can take it. You told me to be hopeful and keep faith. I’m praying again, Kumkani. I am so sorry for not

allowing myself to lean on you like you have been waiting. I promise, I'm trying my best."

Kumkani: (smiling) "That's all I needed to hear."

Precious: "Stop buying me new clothes for every trial date."

Kumkani: (chuckling) "It's my duty as your boyfriend."

Precious: (blushing) "You're my boyfriend now?"

Kumkani: "Everyone says so, so why not?"

Precious: "Is that your way of asking? Not very romantic, hey."

Kumkani: "Wait and see. You just wait and see. I'll see you tomorrow, okay?"

Precious: (smiling) "Okay."

He kissed her hand and send amazing signals straight to her heart this time. Kumkani was slowly healing her and she was making an effort to communicate with her ancestors. While walking back, she bumped into Mazibuko, who looked even more annoyed to see her again.

Mazibuko: “Well, well, well, look who it is. Princess of Zululand. Is there even such a thing?”

Precious ignored her and walked on.

Mazibuko: “You really think you’re better than all of us in here, don’t you, wena sfebe (you bitch)?”

Precious: (annoyed) “Mazibuko, I don’t know you and I don’t care to know you. You must be one bitter bitch since you act like you’re an inmate instead of a guard. I don’t know what your problem is with me, but I’m sorry if your mommy never gave you love when you were little. Now, leave me in peace.”

She walked on, leaving Mazibuko stunned. She couldn't even do anything because one small bruise on her and she would be tickets. She ignored the stares and the whispers as she walked back to her cell. It was open cell time, so the cells were left open instead of locked up.

Martha: (smiling) "The prodigal daughter returns. How was it? I mean, I saw it on tv. We all did."

Precious: (frowning) "Really?"

Martha: "Yes, that lawyer of yours is on fire. How I wish my stupid lawyer was like that. Perhaps I wouldn't have been in here for this long."

Precious: "Speaking of which, why are you even here?"

Martha: (Sigh) "Most of us are in here because of men. You see Beatrice over there? She killed a woman for her man. Dumb bitch. He handed her over to the police, and raised her daughter with another one of his side bitches. I on the other

hand, I loved my husband. I adored him. He was my world and he found me with my daughter, and raised her like she was his own. One night, I found him on top of her. Imagine that. My own husband raping my ten year old daughter. I didn't hesitate. I went to the store room, grabbed one of my special knives and I slit his throat right there and then. Of course, I'm the guilty one. But at least I saved my daughter from the evil man he was."

Precious: "I'm so sorry about that. Your daughter must be really relieved that you did that for her."

Martha: (chuckling) "That one? Oh, no. She hates me. Still does. I'm a murderer in her eyes. 20 years later, I'm still a killer in her eyes."

That was rather painful. Killing for your child and having her hate you like you were the monster.

Beatrice: "She's ungrateful. She'll be back very soon. You just watch and see."

Martha: “Yep, such is life.”

While Precious was about to carry on with her own business, she saw one of the young inmates walk in to see her.

Inmate: “Hi, I don’t mean to bother you, but can I get your autograph?”

Precious: “Uhm, sure.”

Inmate: “Please, write a nice message for me. Your story gives me so much hope. Honestly, I never thought you were bad like the other girls. All of them just judged you because you were living the life.”

Of course, she’d say that. Everyone would say nice things to you just to get into your good books, right? She signed it and the girl thanked her and left.

Martha: (shaking head) “You’d better make sure you get out of here before you end up like them. Sucking guards’ dicks for a mere R20.”

Beatrice: “In my days, you’d do that for R150. Talk about cheap labour.”

She ignored them and read her Bible. The faith was slowly creeping in on her. The hours went by and it was finally night time, so she decided to take out her cellphone and watch day one of her trial on Youtube. She was so chuffed to see Kumkani so confident. He was on fire. She could see how Ms. Jele was very unimpressed on her first day of trial. The comments on the video were rather mixed. From “She’ll probably get bail, I mean she is rich and beautiful. Bitches like that never go to prison”, to “Team #GangsterWife.” There was one particular comment that caught her attention. “She didn’t do it. Everyone can see it, but too many people are involved in this case. Too much corruption.” She checked the person’s profile, but it was spanking new – not even two days old. No profile picture and the name was odd “Flaky007”. She took a screenshot and sent it to Kumkani via WhatsApp with the caption “Check into this person. It might be our big breakthrough.” She prayed and dozed off. Her parents visited

her as usual and the more they did, the less angry and less saddened they looked.

It was finally day two of the trial and she did her same old routine. Martha and her cellmates prayed for her before she left. Kumkani sent her a new outfit and off she was to court. Her usual support group was there, and the judge was still as sour as always. Ms. Jele was personal as always – nothing new.

Judge: “The defence may continue.”

Ms. Jele: “The defence calls upon their second witness, Njabulo Ncube.”

Njabulo walked up the stand looking healthier than most, with an armsling around his right arm.

Ms. Jele: “Mr. Ncube, you are related to Mrs. Ndhlovu, right?”

Njabulo: “Yes.”

Ms. Jele: “Please explain how.”

Njabulo: “She and I share the same father.”

That alone made Precious cringe. How was it possible that she shared the same father with such an animal? It just didn’t even make sense. From what he looked like in her dreams, they surely didn’t even look alike – not one bit.

Ms. Jele: “And you had met before the night in question?”

Njabulo: “Yes – I mean no. We spoke on the phone once or twice.”

Precious was shaking her head in disbelief. She didn’t know this guy. Not one bit.

Ms. Jele: “And how did you gain access to her house that night?”

Njabulo: "She gave me the access code to her house and the pin code for her alarm system."

Wow, just wow.

Ms. Jele: "Please explain what happened that night."

Njabulo: "Well, my sister knew we were on our way. So, we punched in the security code as instructed and we drove in. But, the moment we walked in and punched in the code. She turned against us. She shot my poor brother twice, and shot me in the arm. I'm lucky to even be alive. She's unstable."

Precious found herself so aggrevated, that she had to scream.

Precious: (angered) "Liar!"

Judge: "Mr. Mdhletse, contain your client."

Kumkani: "My apologies, your honour. Calm down please, Precious."

He whispered to her and she sat back down.

Ms. Jele: "Did you ask her why she did what she did?"

Njabulo: "I tried to, but she then said she'd shoot me. I mean, that's when I was thankfully saved by Jimmy, the security guard. If it wasn't for him, I'd probably be six feet under like my brother."

Ms. Jele: "Thank you. No further questions, your honour."

Precious was breathing heavily, hoping and praying that Kumkani would bring some peace to her on that day.

Kumkani: "Mr. Ncube, you said you and Precious spoke on a few occasions. Am I correct?"

Njabulo: "Yes."

Kumkani: "How come? I mean I have your cellphone records as well as hers from the past three months, and not once did you speak to her. Not once did she call you and she never met you before the night in question."

Njabulo: (panicky) "That's a lie. It's all fake. uSisi uyangazi (my sister knows me). uGogo can confirm that."

Kumkani: "By uGogo you mean your grandmother, Glenda?"

Njabulo: "Yes."

Kumkani: "Okay. Mr. Ncube, I do not need to remind you that you're under oath here. You said you were given the code to punch in, right?"

Njabulo: "Yes."

Kumkani: "As you can see on the camera footage, we see you and your brother, in the car and you were punching in the code. Mrs. Ndhlovu swears she never met you in her life before until that night. So, is it possible that you may perhaps have been given the code by someone else? A worker in the complex, perhaps?"

Njabulo was beginning to sweat, and Ms. Jele saw it.

Ms. Jele: "Objection, your honour! Speculation!"

Judge: "Overruled. Answer the question, please, Mr. Ncube."

Njabulo: "Pl.. Please repeat your question, sir."

Kumkani: "I asked you; is it possible that you got her code from someone who works in the complex? A security guard perhaps?"

Njabulo: (shaking head) “Hayi hayi (no no).”

Kumkani: “Mr. Ncube, you said you drove in and you punched the code, but you told the Police on the night in question that Mrs. Ndhlovu opened up for you once you knocked. So which one is it? Did she open the door for you? Or did you punch in the code?!”

Njabulo started panicking and acted like he was not okay. He then started vomiting, leaving the court astonished.

Judge: “Ag, someone please get him out of here. And please, get the stand cleaned up. We don’t want to pick up a virus.”

They removed Njabulo from the stand, and things were looking slightly good for Precious even though, Njabulo didn’t say anything to discredit his testimony.

Judge: “Now that your witness fell ill suddenly, Ms. Jele. Do you have another one?”

Ms. Jele: (confidently) “Yes, your honour. The prosecution would like to call upon Dr. Steward, the doctor who performed a post mortem on Ntsika Ncube’s body.”

She smiled at Kumkani who was frowning. Something told Precious that he was caught completely off guard, but he wasn’t worried.

Dr. Steward made his way to the stand, she was a white doctor and very tiny in stature.

Ms. Jele: “Doctor, you are the one who conducted a post mortem on the deceased’s body, correct?”

Dr. Steward: “Correct.”

Dr. Jele: “And please fill in the court on your findings.”

Dr. Steward: “Well, he did suffer a gunshot wound on the head and one in the chest.”

Ms. Jele: “Judging by your years’ experience, you can confirm that he died instantly?”

Dr. Steward: “Actually, the second bullet killed him. The post mortem shows clearly that he was probably gasping for air for a good ten seconds, before being shot in the chest. The amount of blood found in his airway, shows how he was still breathing before suffering from the second gunshot wound.”

Ms. Jele: “That should prove to the court that Mrs. Ndhlovu wanted him dead, she didn’t shoot him by mistake – she wanted him dead. No further questions, your honour.”

For someone gunning for permanent state prosecutor position, she was rather over confident.

Kumkani: “Dr. Steward, how long have you been working as a doctor in the post mortem department?”

Dr. Steward: “Sjoe (wow), uh, for about 32 years.”

Kumkani: “And you have come across men as large as Ntsika Ncube being killed by petite women like the accused?”

Dr. Steward: “Yes, but in this case, I differ.”

Kumkani: “Please explain.”

Dr. Steward: “Well, the deceased was shot at close-range, so it is impossible for someone as short and petite as Mrs. Ndhlovu to shoot him in the head that accurately. If she did indeed do it, then she would have had to be standing on top of a pedestal high enough to face the gun straight to his forehead.”

That was some good news. She confirmed that Precious couldn't have killed him.

Kumkani: “So you agree that there is absolutely no way that Mrs. Ndhlovu could have shot that man?”

Dr. Steward: “Absolutely. The person who did it must have been at least, 6m tall.”

Kumkani: “Doctor, judging by the brief re-enactment of the scene by Mr. Njabulo Ncube, do you think that he was shot right after opening the door?”

Dr. Steward: (shaking head) “Impossible. He must have opened the door, walked in and stood for a good few minutes. Approximately 5 minutes or so before being shot. The first shot was not fatal, however, the position of the second bullet shows that the person who did it, was standing over him.”

Kumkani: “So, if Mrs. Ndhlovu is the alleged killer, then she would have had to shoot him first on the head, which you just said is impossible, and then stand over him for a good 10 seconds and shoot him in the chest. Then she would have had to shoot Mr. Njabulo Ncube on the shoulder, of which seems doubtful because no one can ever stand and watch a small, petite woman as Mrs. Ndhlovu shoot their brother and wait for their turn. Am I correct?”

Dr. Steward: “Absolutely, sir. The position of Mr. Njabulo Ncube’s bullet, shows on the pictures on the screen that he was standing. The bullet nearly exited his back, therefore Mrs. Ndhlovu would have been standing and aiming up as he is taller than her. The blood spats we found in the corridors, show that he was shot while standing, and walked for a few seconds, before crashing down on the carpet in the lounge.”

Kumkani: “If Mr. Njabulo Ncube was indeed talking to his sister, then he would have not walked straight to the corridor, in complete darkness to speak to her, right after Ntsika was shot dead. I conclude to you, that Mrs. Ndhlovu is a victim of circumstances; these two broke into her house with the aim to kill her and then, Mr. Njabulo Ncube framed my client after he shot his own brother, with the aim to claim the throne all by himself. No further questions, your honour.”

The judge was impressed, while Ms. Jele had nothing to say for once. She was left dumbstruck. How odd.

Judge: “That’s enough for the day. Court shall resume tomorrow morning at 8. Ms. Jele, I do hope that your witness will be here to finish up his statements. Court adjourned.”

Precious was seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. It is amazing how a few days of prayer could change a person's life. Her life was hanging in the balance, but she was pulling through.

Psalm 145: 18 – 19; “The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfils the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.”

“I will love the light for it shows me the way, yet I will endure the darkness for it shows me the stars.” – Og Mandino

The following day, Precious had been receiving a lot of support. Court was postponed because Njabulo was sick all of a sudden. She and Kumkani felt as if he was faking it, of course, but as the court always says – proof is what counts. So, until he felt a lot better, which they had no idea when it would be – she was stuck in prison. She was praying and meditating, and of course listening to Martha’s stories about life and all that. It had been a rather normal day and Kumkani was busy trying to find any loopholes in her case, and then suddenly she got an unexpected visitor.

Mazibuko: “S’boshwa (criminal), you have a visitor.”

Precious: “Hmm, from celebrity to sboshwa. What an upgrade, Mazibuko.”

Mazibuko: (clicking tongue) “Mxm, don’t get cocky with me wena (you), criminal. Woza (come)!”

Precious walked on and she was astonished to find someone she never expected to see before her.

Leah: "Hi."

Leah looked so uncared for, so frail and just untidy. What's worse was that she was pregnant.

Precious: "Leah. What can I do for you?"

Leah: "I know I'm the last person you expect to see here."

Precious: "You're the last person I expect to see at all. What do you want?"

Leah: "Look, I know that I have fucked you over in more ways than one, but please – hear me out. I beg you."

Precious sat back and folded her arms.

Leah: “As you can see, I’m pregnant.”

Precious: “Well, I’m not the father.”

Leah: “Please, don’t mock me.”

Precious: (frowning) “Mock you? Sesi (Girl), the last time I checked you hated me – you hated us all including your own twin sister. You came back trying to make my life specifically a living hell and now you rock up while I’m in prison for a crime I didn’t commit and you tell me you’re pregnant?! What are we? Friends? Confidantes? Please, don’t fucking waste my time, Leah. Not today.”

Leah: “It’s Mish’s baby.”

What a bomb. Precious looked at her for a long while and did the unexpected. She laughed at her.

Precious: (laughing) “I’m so sorry, but you expect me to believe that you’re carrying Mish’s baby? Leah, ga o tswafe go zola, waitse (you never get tired of hustling, hey).”

Leah: “I know you don’t believe me, but as a woman I expected you to understand. But, what did I expect from a barren bitch like you?”

Precious’ smirk faded rather quickly from her face. She went from surprised to seriously pissed.

Precious: (firmly) “Leah, bjanong o tla ka masepa, sesi (you’re starting a lot of shit, sis). You of all people came to visit me in prison. You most probably came here to gloat, I don’t know and quite frankly I don’t give a fuck. You come here looking like shit, smelling like even more shit and you’re telling me I’m barren? I’d rather be barren and stuck in here than have a heart like yours. Look at you, you’re so broken and broke on top of it all. You thought that I would give you money and take care of your little bastard just because it was Mish’s baby? Shame. Didn’t Lerato tell you I gave all of Mish’s money away? Oh, wait, you honestly thought that I’d have sympathy for you just because

you're pregnant and I'm not? God actually did me a favour by refusing to let me carrying Meshack's children. I'd hate to see that kid take your disgusting genes. Now, if you'll excuse me, you're interrupting my yard time."

Leah saw that she had nothing else she could say to Precious to let her help her, and burst into tears.

Leah: (begging) "Please, Precious! I'm desperate!"

Precious: "So was I when you were willing to lie on the stand for Lerato. Have a nice life, Leah. I'm done doing charity work."

She left her sitting here, crying in her chair. She felt a lot of pain, but mostly because of Leah's words about her being barren. No one likes being told of their inability to carry children – no matter what kind of people they are. It is just mean and straight up uncalled for. She moved right along and tried to enjoy her day, even though Leah had ruined most of it. A week had passed and Precious was slowly losing faith. She was praying, but the spirit of procrastination had slowly taken over her soul. She hadn't been in court in a week, all because

Ms. Jele had been stalling because Njabulo was “Not up for court” as they put it. The judge had asked Ms. Jele to let him come to court to finish up or his testimony wouldn’t be considered, so she had no choice but to let him go to court. Once again, Kumkani had brought her a new outfit for the day. She was not up for anything and just had an uneasy feeling. She was not very optimistic as always. She got into the van and said a little prayer before walking out. She was stunned to see a lot of women protesting outside with placards and posters written #HandsOffPrecious. As soon as she made her way out, they were chanting and cheering for her. She felt a little caught off guard, but happy to see strangers in support of her. She walked in feeling a little more hopeful than she was a few seconds before. Ms. Jele looked a lot more confident – too confident, rather. That just didn’t look right. The judge walked in and the whole procedure started again.

Judge: “I hope the prosecution’s witness is up for court today and that there won’t be any illnesses, Ms. Jele. We can’t afford to stall any longer.”

Ms. Jele: “Yes, he is here, your honour.”

Judge: "The defense may proceed."

Kumkani: "Thank you, your honour. Mr. Ncube, as we were busy with our questioning a week ago, I asked you a question. You said in your initial statement that Mrs. Ndhlovu opened up for you and your brother, but in court you said that you punched in the alarm. So, which one is it?"

Njabulo: (fidgety) "I wasn't well that day. She... she opened the door for me. For us, I mean."

Kumkani: "Hmm, fair enough. So you walked in along with your brother, and then, what happened? Where was she?"

Njabulo: "She was in the lounge, awaiting us."

Kumkani: "I see. Well, there are a few witnesses who are willing to testify, saying that your car was seen driving into Mrs. Ndhlovu's driveway with the lights off. Why would you drive in with the lights off if you were going to see someone you claim knew you were coming?"

Njabulo: (nervous) “Well, I, uh, I didn’t want to frighten her.”

Kumkani: “But you then said that she knew you were coming. You said she knew about you and your deceased brother. So, how would you frighten her? Surely she was expecting you, so there would be no need for you to drive in like a thief in the night.”

Ms. Jele: “Objection, your honour! Irrelevance.”

Judge: “Overruled. Answer the question, Mr. Ncube.”

Njabulo: “I... like I said, I didn’t want to frighten her. I wasn’t trying to scare her.”

Kumkani: “Okay then. And then, you saw her in the lounge, seated, expecting you and then what happened?”

Njabulo: “Uh... then we spoke about stuff and then next thing she took out her gun and shot my brother, and then shot me.”

Kumkani: “Hmm, Mr. Ncube, a suphoena for your call records was issued the very same day you were found bleeding out on Mrs. Ndhlovu’s floor, but for some odd reason, you were contacting an unknown number registered to Jimmy Chauke; the very same security guard on duty that night. You had deleted your WhatsApp messages, but luckily for technology, I do have a copy of all your metadata.”

Njabulo was starting to sweat.

Kumkani: “My Lord, on the screen is a copy of the WhatsApp conversation between Jimmy Chauke and Mr. Ndhlovu.”

Ms. Jele: “Objection, my lord! The prosecution has no knowledge of this evidence.”

Judge: “Oh, hush, Ms. Jele. You have brought forward many surprises and heaps of so called evidence and not once did Mr. Mdhletse complain. Overruled. Sit down.”

She sat down in annoyance and gave Precious her evil stare once again.

Kumkani: (smiling) “My Lord, as you can see, Jimmy’s messages with the witness were concurrent. The first message reads “Let me know when you get here. I want 5k upfront.” The second message reads “Done.” That was from Mr. Ncube, the very same Mr. Ncube who is a witness in this case. The very same Mr. Ncube who claims that he had nothing to do with the shooting of his brother. I put it to you, my Lord, that Mrs. Ndhlovu had no knowledge of any brother. In fact, Mrs. Ndhlovu found out not so long ago that she was actually the heiress – the sole heiress to her father’s kingdom. Mr. Ncube and the deceased Mr. Ncube were not biological children of Mr. Gatsha Ncube. As you can see in Addendum 24.B, you will see the last will and testament of Mr. Gatsha Ncube, King of Zululand. You will also see in Addendum 25.B that I, as the lawyer of Mr. Gatsha Ncube, instructed his mother along with his grandmother on the specified date what was to be done in order for them to get the throne. You will see that Mr. Ncube,

the King clearly stated that should his wife and daughter not be found by a specific date, that the throne shall be handed over to the eldest son, which was Ntsika. It is also stated in the letter provided written by Gatsha Ncube, that he knew all along that the two brothers were not his – biologically, but he was willing to do so out of oath and thanks to their mother. My Lord, the two brothers must have heard from their mother that I had found the heiress, Princess Buhlebendalo Bahumi Ncube which is Precious Ndhlovu's birth name. Of course, being jealous and greedy, they went on a quest to find her and try to eliminate her before all else failed. I have a copy of my call recordings with their grandmother, Glenda, since their mother is an alcoholic and is permanently drunk. I shall play the latest one, just before the murder happened.”

Ms. Jele was about to piss herself, while Njabulo's sweat was dripping like a misbehaved shower head. Kumkani played the recording.

Kumkani: “Hello?”

Glenda: “Kumkani, what is happening, kanti (though)? I thought you’d be here to discuss the boys’ future. Ntsika needs to be king and you know it.”

Kumkani: (sigh) “Glenda, I am under so much pressure right now and I’m busy. There won’t be any need for that. I have found Princess Buhle. Your grandsons do not have the right to the throne.”

Glenda: “Heh (huh)?! You can’t be serious! You owe me and you know it! Those boys were with Gatsha ever since that barren bitch left him! How sure are you that it’s even his?!”

Kumkani: “Like I said, prepare for the boys’ departure. The Princess has been found. Goodbye.”

Ms. Jele: “Objection, my lord! Irrelevance.”

Judge: “Overruled, Ms. Jele. It seems to me that you haven’t done your research very carefully. This new evidence sheds a lot of light on this matter. I must say, this is a rather

complicated situation. I am going to need to hear this Jimmy Chauke's side of the story as well as this Glenda woman. If there are no more witnesses, Ms. Jele?"

Ms. Jele looked defeated for a minute, but she had a new trick up her sleeve.

Ms. Jele: "Actually, there is, my Lord. The Prosecution would like to call upon Mr. Anton Baton, head of Ballistics."

Once again, Kumkani was blindsighted.

Kumkani: "My Lord, Ms. Jele is really testing me. I have no knowledge of this person on the witness list."

Judge: "You two approach the bench."

Precious had seen that in a few movies. It didn't seem like a good thing.

Judge: "Ms. Jele, I get the feeling this case seems a lot more than just a case to you. It's personal or something. Why else would you ask for me to be the residing judge and call me right from my holiday with my husband in Spain?"

Another shot Kumkani had no knowledge of. It seemed as if he underestimated this Ms. Jele.

Ms. Jele: "My Lord, I do not know the defendant. I am sorry for the surprise, and I promise. No more surprises from now on."

Judge: "You had better be honest otherwise, I will recuse you."

Ms. Jele: "Noted."

Judge: "Continue."

Njabulo stepped down while Mr. Baton appeared on the stand.

Ms. Jele: (smiling) "Mr. Baton, you have been head of Ballistics for more than 20 years, am I correct?"

Mr. Baton: "That is correct."

Ms. Jele: "Please explain to the court what that is in the picture on the screen."

That gun looked very familiar to Precious.

Mr. Baton: "That is a picture of the gun we found on the scene. The gun that shot both the deceased and the witness."

Ms. Jele: (smiling) "And whose fingerprints were on the gun?"

Mr. Baton: "Well, Mrs. Ndhlovu's and the witness's."

Ms. Jele: (smiling) "No further questions, my Lord."

Precious was really angered by this Ms. Jele character. She had nothing to prove and went out of her way to prove that she was indeed the killer.

Kumkani: "Mr. Baton, you said that both Mrs. Ndhlovu's and the witness's fingerprints were on the gun. Did you test anyone for gunpowder residue?"

Mr. Baton: "No, sir. When I was asked to get on the case, the evidence was already removed from the house."

Kumkani: "And to whom does the gun belong to?"

Mr. Baton: "It belonged to the late Mr. Ndhlovu."

Kumkani: "Hmm, so being the gun that belonged to her husband, it means that she might have occasionally touched it, correct?"

Mr. Baton: "That is correct."

Kumkani: “Well, Mr. Baton, it is either you’re a liar, or someone fed you wrong information. My lord, in the file given to you, please check under Addendum 26.B. I will also put a copy on the screen for everyone to see. This is the initial report given to me by Mr. Sibiya and his partner. This copy does not resemble the one you gave, sir. This one is dated on the exact day after the night in question. This states that there was one gun found on the scene, but here is the catch; the gun that shot Mr. Ntsika Ncube is not the same gun that shot Mr. Njabulo Ncube.”

Njabulo was seen freezing in his chair, and Ms. Jele clamming up. Mr. Baton was confused.

Mr. Baton: (frowning) “I don’t understand. I only got to examine Mr. Ntsika Ncube, the deceased.”

Kumkani: “Yes, because someone intentionally made you do it. You see, your honour, there has been obvious foul play here. Two guns, but only one was added in the evidence. So, my question is; what happened to the other gun and who pulled the trigger? No further questions, my Lord.”

Kumkani was a bit stressed, but he put a lot of doubt in the Jude's mind and in the minds of the people who were in court. He was hopeful, and seeing Ms. Jele squirm, meant that he did something right. He only needed Jimmy's testimony and then it will be a win for him. If only he could find the other gun or evidence thereof.

Judge: "I have heard both of your arguments today. I shall await Glenda and Jimmy's appearance in the witness stand. In the mean time, court adjourned."

Officer: "All rise."

The same procedure was followed and they walked out. Precious headed back to prison, and she was a little hopeful. All they needed to do was find Glenda and Jimmy. Two weeks had passed, and there was no sign of Glenda nor Jimmy. Something didn't make any sense. It was clear that they were hiding and running away from something. What was also odd is that the person who was commenting on the Youtube videos was saying the same thing; "Precious Ndhlovu is innocent." She tried messaging the person, but they never responded. She was

feeling weak and drained and most of all – hopeless. She was actually starting to picture her life as a criminal behind bars forever, singing the same song everyone in there sings; “I didn’t do it.” Kumkani decided to visit her, since it was also Christmas. Imagine that. She had spent months in prison and despite Kumkani’s attempts to get her to finish the rest of her Second Semester in prison, she didn’t submit any of her assignments.

Kumkani: (smiling) “Hawu (Goodness), Pretty Lady. Why do you look so dull today?”

Precious: “Save it, Kumkani. You don’t have to be so nice to me all the time. I get it, you pity me. Perhaps you should spend your time trying to woo someone who is actually out there and you have access to.”

Kumkani: “Precious, come on.”

Precious: “I’m serious. I don’t mean to be rude or anything, but you have helped me a lot. A great deal in fact, but let’s face it. We can never be together. I’ll probably be stuck in here forever and that’s that. I have to go. Merry Christmas.”

She walked back to her cell without even giving Kumkani a chance to speak. Luckily for her, he didn't give up so easily, so he came up with a master plan. Of course he had to pay off a lot of people to do the one illegal thing he had done in his entire life. Later that night, Precious was trying to dose off, when one of the guards called for her.

Guard: "Ndhlovu, let's go."

Precious: (frowning) "It's night time. Where am I going?"

Guard: "You can ask questions later. Let's go."

She felt a bit worried as the guards never called someone at night unless the person was going to get taught a lesson. She was taken to the guard's office. The guard closed the door and she was scared.

Precious: "Please, don't kill me. I didn't do anything wrong."

Guard: (laughing) “Ai, relax man. Here, get dressed. Five minutes.”

She gave her a dress cover and walked out. She unzipped it and was shocked. There was a long, peach evening gown with beautiful matching stiletto’s and a small note attached. “Wear me.” She did as instructed. She stared in the mirror and cried a little bit. She couldn’t even remember the last time she had worn a beautiful dress. She imagined what the rest of the women like Martha must have been feeling all those years. The guard walked back in.

Guard: “Tjo (wow), he wasn’t kidding when he said you have a killer body.”

Precious: (frowning) “He? He ke mang (who is he)?”

Guard: “Only one way to find out.”

The guard put Precious in one of the private cars and they drove out.

Precious: (anxious) "Guard, where are you taking me?"

Guard: "Relax, you're not going to die. I'd kill for a boyfriend half as romantic as yours. You're lucky."

Precious was frowning to herself. Boyfriend? She must have had the wrong girl. Minutes later, they arrived right outside Kumkani's house. There he was, dressed in a gorgeous tuxedo walking out of a limousine. She smiled to herself as she thought of the amazing gesture.

Kumkani: (smiling) "Thanks so much, Rosina."

Guard: "I'm only doing it because I get to spend a night at your fancy place. Bring her back at 4am sharp."

Kumkani: "Got it."

He opened the door for her as always, took her hand and they walked into the limo. The limo drove off and she looked down in embarrassment. She couldn't remember the last time she even tweased her eyebrows and she didn't even have any lipstick on.

Precious: "Kumkani... what a surprise. I'm sorry I couldn't doll myself up for you."

Kumkani: (smiling) "Nonsense, Pretty Lady. You are so beautiful, make up has nothing on you."

Precious: "How did you pull this off and where are you taking me?"

Kumkani: "I'm taking you to a place that will fill your heart with hope again. I want you to see that I love you so much, that I am willing to wait for you. I am going to show you that you won't rot in jail – not when I'm alive. I've been waiting my whole life for you and I'm not willing to let you go."

She smiled and looked down. She was always such a hardcore and straight forward person. It took a lot to make her blush. They got to an open plot where they got into a helicopter.

Precious: "Can you even fly?"

Kumkani: (laughing) "Of course. Hop in."

Precious got in and put on her gear as instructed. Kumkani drove the helicopter and she was in absolute awe. He was a man of many hidden talents indeed. They reached a beautiful, big place she had never seen before.

Kumkani: "Welcome to Zululand, your birthright and the place you will rule one day."

Precious was so stunned. It is one thing seeing such a beautiful place on the ground, but it is something magnificent seeing it from the sky. He landed the jet and walked out with her. They walked into the Ncube mansion, and she was floored.

Kumkani: "This, is your house. The house that your parents wanted you to have."

Precious: "Wow. This is such a beaut."

Kumkani: (smiling) "Yes, Gatsha and your mother wanted you to have only the best, Precious. You see, I know that you feel like you just don't have anything to live for right now, but take a look. This – all this is for you. This is what you were created for. Are you going to leave all these people to fend for themselves and this kingdom to die because you are afraid to lose?"

She looked down and smiled.

Precious: (laughing) "So, you let me get all dressed up, broke me out of prison for the night just to tell me that?"

Kumkani: (laughing) "How well do you know me?"

He went to the music player and played the song – Versace on the floor by Bruno Mars.

Kumkani: (smiling) “May I have this dance?”

Precious smiled as she put her hands in his and they slow danced together. Not once did they stop looking into each other’s eyes. He placed his forehead on hers, and kept staring into her eyes. It was as if he was looking straight into her soul. What a splendid feeling. She had never experienced that with Mish. For once, she saw the Kumkani she had dreamt of – the real Kumkani, not the one she was dying to taste. They slowly kissed, passionately. It felt as if a million fireworks were exploding in their mouths. Their tongues were massaging one another, in the most sensual and romantic passo doble ever. They were intertwined with one another, and their souls were speaking to each other. Kumkani broke the kiss, leaving Precious flustered.

Precious: “Why did you stop?”

Kumkani: “Because I want to have you when the time is right. You’re still a Ndhlovu and I need to have you when you are a Mdhletse.”

Precious: “But what if you have to wait longer than expected?”

Kumkani: “Then I’d rather wait until the sun shines with you lying next to me as my wife.”

That was the most beautiful confirmation she had ever received from any man. The confirmation of love, pure love. Not attached to any physical feeling. She knew then that she had made the right choice to trust him and that was all she needed to restore her faith again. Little did she know that just by stepping right into the house her father left for her, was enough for Kumkani to think clearer. All that was enough for her doors to freedom to open up and everything to fall into place.

Romans 8:28 says; “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

“Never let your head hang down. Never give up and sit down and grieve. Find another way. And don’t pray when it rains. If you don’t pray when the sun shines.” – Leroy Satchel Paige

Precious had a wonderful and succulent dinner made by the chef himself, Kumkani Mdhletse. Afterwards, they were discussing plans for the future. It was the most intensely intimate conversation she had ever had with someone of the opposite sex. Not once did she have any doubt in her mind that Kumkani was going to win the case. It had been a further two months since she had been in court. Christmas and New Years passed, and her birthday was approaching. She was frustrated on some days, but her faith kept her going. She had been praying and meditating on the word of God. Her parents were rather pleased on the other side, and she was shocked to have an extra-ordinary dream on the eve of her birthday. A man she had recognized from pictures shown to her by Kumkani, as the late King Sfiso, also her grandfather, appeared in her dreams. He was surrounded by lots of people she didn’t know nor recognize, but what was astonishing was that her parents were together – with all these people.

King Sfiso: “My child, umzukulu wami okucala (my very first grandchild). You have no idea how much I have been longing to give you my blessing. You have turned into a wonderful woman and believe me – neither of us; the Ncube’s and the Mkhabela’s, hold anything against you. You’re still young and you have your whole life ahead of you. Trust in the Lord, and He will give you all the desires of your heart, Buhle. We all love you so much, and we have seen how you have been fighting the past few months. You’re turning 21 tomorrow, consider what’s coming your birthday gift. It’s our time to fight for you now. Be prepared to witness what happens to people who mess with one of our own. Your mother is safe with us now, all thanks to you. She has finally joined our family. Be prepared to witness many more blessings to come. Don’t be afraid when you see us wherever you go at times. You are one of us; our future Queen who will bear the next King in line to the throne. Happy Birthday in advance, baby. We all love you.”

Immediately after she woke up, it was exactly midnight; her 21st birthday had struck. She was in prison nonetheless, but she had just had the most beautiful visitation and dream from her ancestors. It started pouring immediately outside. Funny enough, it always rained on her birthday. Her mother told her how it rained immediately after she was born and so, rain had

always been part of her day of birth ever since she existed. She felt so much internal peace and smiled to herself. She struggled to sleep from there onwards and tried to read the Bible. She got surprised when she received a WhatsApp message from Kumkani. “Happy Birthday, my soon to be wife, MaMdhletse-to-be; my Pretty Lady, uMama we ngane zami (the mother of my kids), a woman of stature and elegance. Words can’t explain how you make me feel. You have had a tough year or two, and now, I’m about to make your 21st Birthday a memorable one. I love you, Kumkani.” She smiled to herself as she thought perhaps he would break her out of prison again and give her a memorable night, but little did she know. She managed to sleep right after her 3am prayer. She was woken up right before breakfast by the uncanny Mazibuko.

Mazibuko: (shouting) “Vukani nina (wake up)! Wena (you), Celebrity, you’d better get ready. Your lawyer boyfriend is here. Looks like we’re headed to court.”

She was shocked as Kumkani didn’t tell her anything. The case had been postponed as far as she knew. She started having mixed feelings and thoughts. “What if it’s D-day?” she thought to herself. Martha looked at her and smiled.

Martha: (smiling) “It’s your lucky day, sisi (sis). Happy Birthday. We won’t be seeing you after today, so what better way than to send you off properly?”

Precious was confused. Was she being transferred to another prison? What was it that she didn’t know? Martha gathered all the ladies in the cell and started praying for her. She felt instantly relieved and alive. Martha had her way with Jesus and she could revive just about any soul. She had no idea that Martha and her crew planned a special surprise for Precious in the dining area. As soon as she walked in to queue for food, she found a humble surprise awaiting her. The inmates all shouted “Surprise” and sang happy birthday to her. The whole dining area was decorated with lovely gold themed decorations, what was also surprising was that they weren’t having the usual boring meal for breakfast. There was a huge cake; pizza; cold drink; juice; burgers and more junkfood and snacks. They also had some champagne and punch in their prison bowls to avoid fights and people stealing bottles for their own amusement. She knew Kumkani had something to do with it.

Precious: (teary) “Thank you so much, guys. I really appreciate it.”

Inmate: “Yoh (goodness), le nna ke batla boyfriend la lawyara bathing (I also want a lawyer for a boyfriend, hey).”

They all laughed and had their breakfast. Of course, Lerato was still angry as hell, but Precious was not about that life. Each to their own. Thanks to Kumkani, breakfast was extra long and it was a lovely celebration. Once she was done eating, she headed back to her cell with Martha.

Martha: (smiling) “I really enjoyed seeing you, Buhle.”

That was the very first time she had called her Buhle, ever since she walked into that prison.

Precious: (smiling) “You called me Buhle.”

Martha: (chuckling) “I knew that was your name all along. You have big plans, don’t forget where you come from but most

importantly, remember where you're going. I hope to see you soon."

They hugged and Precious took her things as instructed by the guard. She left a few things behind as memorial for Martha and the girls and of course, left them with some money. She got dressed in a brand new Black Dolce and Gabana dress that Kumkani bought for her. This time, he even organised someone to do her make up and hair. Once she was set, she walked out and headed to the van. Paparazzi was outside as usual, and the protesters were more than usual; her case had attracted a lot of attention in the past few months. She walked in and the court room was also filled more than usual. Ms. Jele looked overly confident as usual, but Kumkani looked different – he looked so much happier and a lot more confident than always. She just couldn't pin point it. As soon as he saw her he reached for the bench and whispered to her.

Kumkani: (smiling) "Happy Birthday, my love."

He winked at her. She remembered that she hadn't prayed before leaving the prison, so she quickly closed her eyes and said her prayer. As soon as she opened her eyes, she was

elated to have experienced what was before her. All her ancestors were right in the room; dressed in their own cultural attire, smiling at her.

King Sfiso: (smiling) "We're with you, my baby. Don't fear anything or anyone."

She smiled and nodded.

Officer: "All rise."

The judge walked in and everyone was seated once again.

Judge: "I believe that we finally have all the evidence we need today and that this case is going to be concluded today, Mr. Mdhletse?"

Kumkani: "Yes, your honour."

Ms. Jele: (panicking) “My Lord, I was under the impression that we were going to have our closing arguments only.”

Judge: (sigh) “Well, you thought wrong, Ms. Jele. It’s one thing to act like you know it all, but it’s another when a member of this court who took an oath to abide by the law lies in my face. Sit down and watch the show. You may proceed, Mr. Mdhletse.”

Ms. Jele was surprised and rather shocked. She was seen fiddling with her hands and tapping her foot. Something that told Precious that Ms. Jele knew she was in deep shit.

Kumkani: “The defence would like to call upon Mrs. Glenda Dambuza; the grandmother of Njabulo Ncube and the deceased Ntsika Ncube.”

Everyone started murmuring, while Ms. Jele stared at the smiling Kumkani. She stared at the judge who gave her an unamused face, while she looked back to Precious with her usual hate. One thing she didn’t know was that Precious had her whole team with her on that particular day. She had God

and his whole entourage to support her on the biggest day of her life, a day that would make history. Glenda walked in looking really scared.

Kumkani: (smiling) "Hello, Glenda. We meet again. Please tell the court who you are."

Glenda: (shaky) "I'm Glenda Dambuza, the wife of the King Dambuza's brother, and also the mother of the late Gatsha Ncube's wife, Georgina Ncube. I am also the grandmother of the late Ntsika Ncube and Njabulo Ncube."

Everyone was shocked.

Kumkani: "Please explain why you say Mr. Gatsha Ncube is late."

Glenda: (shaky) "Two years ago, my daughter and I got people to help us bury his body after she found him dead at his desk. He had shot himself in the head after reading a letter from his missing wife, Lehumo."

Kumkani: "Lehumo, being Precious' mother, correct?"

Glenda: "Yes."

Kumkani: "Please tell the court how it came about that Njabulo and Ntsika made their way to Precious' estate?"

Glenda: "Well, the will stated that should Lehumo and or their daughter Buhle, which is Precious not be found within a certain period, then my eldest grandson would be the heir of the kingdom."

Kumkani: "Please explain to the court the exact paternity of the two grandsons."

Glenda: "They are not Gatsha's sons. He knew it all along. They were just a mere gardener's sons."

Everyone was shocked, while Precious started at Glenda in utter disbelief. What no one realized was that Glenda could also see Precious' ancestors, staring at her in total hate. She was freaking out because she could see them.

Kumkani: "So, you told them to go to Pretoria, to find Precious and then what?"

Glenda started crying.

Glenda: (crying) "I told them to find her and get rid of her, permanently."

Kumkani: "By permanently, you meant what?"

Glenda: "To kill her."

Kumkani: "No further questions, your honour."

Ms. Jele was feeling the heat already.

Ms. Jele: “Objection, your honour! This is totally irrelevant.”

Judge: “Sit your ass down, Ms. Jele. You wasted half a year of my time in this court room. Had you done your research properly we wouldn’t even be here. Be glad if Mrs. Ndhlovu doesn’t sue you after this.”

Ms. Jele could see that she was already defeated. Kumkani took out another one of his cards for the show.

Kumkani: “The defence would like to call upon its next witness, Jimmy Chauke.”

Precious was beside herself in shock. She couldn’t believe that Kumkani had managed to pull it off. He finally found Jimmy. Jimmy got on the stand, without any fear and looked like he was willing to tell the truth.

Kumkani: "Before I begin, my Lord, Mr. Chauke has agreed to turn state witness and therefore, he signed a plea deal and no charges will be filed against him."

Judge: (nodding) "You may proceed."

Kumkani: "Mr. Chauke, please tell the court what your relationship is with the accused."

Jimmy: "She is one of the people who live in the complex I used to work at."

Kumkani: "And you were on duty that night, correct?"

Jimmy: "Yes."

Kumkani: "Please enlighten the court how it came about for the Ncube brothers to contact you."

Jimmy: “They found me walking towards the robots that day. I was on my way to catch a taxi home. They told me that they had all the information they needed on Mrs. Ndhlovu, and said that they were her brothers. They asked me to help them get in or else, they would ensure that my mother died. My mother has cancer and I could barely afford any chemo treatment for her. Public hospitals are a nightmare, so they offered me R5000 to get them into the estate. They also said they’d give me another R5000 to tamper with the footage and eliminate all evidence that they managed to even get into the compound in the first place. I didn’t want to do it

Advertisement

I mean God knows I didn’t. I wasn’t raised like that. I just couldn’t let an innocent woman who had been so good to me go down for something she didn’t do.”

Kumkani: “It is understood that you were manipulated into the situation, Mr. Chauke. No one judges you right now. My Lord, in the file I just handed to you before this briefing, you will find concrete evidence of the EFT transfer that Njabulo Ncube made on that day. He made two transfers of R5000 each to Mr. Chauke. Please know that Mr. Chauke had no idea that the Ncube brothers were going to kill or plan to kill anyone in the house. You may step down, Mr. Chauke. Thank you.”

He got down the stand and Precious looked at him with tears in her eyes. She could see the remorse in his eyes.

Kumkani: "The defence would like to call upon Detective Sibiya."

Ms. Jele: "Objection, my lord! Detective Sibiya is my witness."

Judge: "You'd better sit down before I have you thrown out."

She sat down anxiously. Something big was about to go down and Ms. Jele could feel it. Sadly, she couldn't do anything about it. Detective Sibiya got on the stand.

Kumkani: "Detective, we meet again."

Sibiya: "I guess so."

Kumkani: (chuckling) “Mr. Sibiyi, if you remember correctly, you’re the one who took the initial statement that night. You even filed a report and wrote that you only saw one gun on the scene, correct?”

Sibiyi: (annoyed) “Yes.”

Kumkani: “My Lord, on the screen you will see camera footage of Njabulo Ncube driving the car he was in that night alongside his brother, the deceased Ntsika Ncube. I am going to show you some profound evidence today.”

He paused the video and zoomed it a bit closer.

Kumkani: “Detective, as you can see. Njabulo Ncube had a gun on his lap, isn’t it so?”

Sibiyi: (uninterested) “Yes. Obviously.”

Kumkani: “I like that answer. Can you tell me what kind of a gun that is?”

Sibiya: "That's a 9mm pistol."

Kumkani: "Very well then. My Lord, in the file you have there, is Addendum 36B, which is the original report Mr. Sibiya wrote as well as the correct one that the head of Ballistics, Mr. Anton Button wrote. I will show it to the court as well. Let us start off with the one YOU wrote, Detective. It says here that YOU saw only one gun and that the very same gun YOU saw is the gun that shot both the deceased and the witness, correct?"

Sibiya: (sigh) "Yes."

Kumkani: "But then, can you please read the sentence YOU wrote here for us."

Sibiya: (annoyed) "The weapon used to shoot both Ntsika Ncube and Njabulo Ncube is Glock 45 pistol."

Kumkani: "I put it to the court, that the two weapons are far different from one another. Now, let me put the second

statement for the court to see. This statement or report if I should call it that, was written by Mr. Anton Button, the head of Ballistics who has over 20 years experience with guns. Detective, kindly read these four highlighted sentences for the court.”

Sibiya: (annoyed) “The weapon found on the scene is a Glock 45 pistol; it has both prints of Mr. Njabulo Ncube and Mrs. Ndhlovu. However, three cases of fired bullets were found on the scene. Two which were removed from Mr. Ntsika Ncube and one that was removed from Mr. Njabulo Ncube. The two removed from the deceased are from a Glock 45, the same weapon found on the scene and conducted in evidence. The bullet removed from Njabulo Ncube, is from a different set of cartridges – a Glock 48, but however, it was not found on the scene.”

Sibiya stared at Kumkani without any amusement.

Kumkani: “Detective, I think you realize what happened here.”

Sibiya: “No, I don’t. Amuse me.”

Kumkani: “With great pleasure. You see, the two brothers did walk in with a gun, but it was not fired nor was it found on the scene. Njabulo took the Glock 45 from the accused’s kitchen and fired two bullets into his own brother. He then walked around the house looking for the accused, but the accused had another gun in her hands – a Glock 48; which she did fire one bullet from into the shoulder of Mr. Njabulo Ncube. But then, what happened to the weapon?”

Sibiya: (shrugging shoulders) “I don’t know. You tell me.”

Kumkani: (chuckling) “YOU, sir, took the weapon and got rid of it. You went back to the house after questioning the accused and charging her with murder and YOU got rid of both guns. You left only one on the scene and made it look like my client murdered someone she had no idea of. She murdered an intruder, which was not even the case. Am I correct?”

Sibiya: (unbothered) “That’s just heresay. You can’t prove anything.”

Kumkani: (laughing) "I thought you'd say that. My Lord, I present to you – camera footage from the accused's house. You see, Detective, you were not aware that the accused had a sealed off basement and the house was full of cameras. Cameras that were quite invisible."

He played the footage and on there was Sibiya and lo and behold, Ms. Jele.

Kumkani: "I shall play the video for us, my Lord. It also has sound, so if the court could be silent, please."

Kumkani was on a roll. He played the video, while Sibiya started sweating instantly, and Ms. Jele looked as if she was about to shit herself. Sibiya walked in and found the forensic team taking pictures.

Sibiya: "Thank you, guys, I'll take it from here."

The rest of the team walked out, while he is seen taking the weapon and placing it in another bag. Ms. Jele is seen walking in her expensive Jimmy Choo's as always.

Sibiya: "Ms. Jele. As you can see I am doing all your dirty work. I expect my full payment as discussed. R250 000 upfront."

Ms. Jele: "You make sure that you don't mess up and I'll be sure to transfer the money first thing in the morning. Be sure that that bitch gets to pay for what her husband did to me. He made me fall for him; made me commit fraud for him; he made me get rid of all the cases against him only for to dump me for her. Now that he's dead, someone has to pay for his sins."

Sibiya: (laughing) "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, right?"

Ms. Jele: "Don't act like you don't have a bone to fry with that dead fucker."

Sibiya: "I just want my money, baby girl."

Ms. Jele: "I'll keep the weapon. As insurance, just in case you fuck me over one day."

Sibiya: "Whatever."

Kumkani paused the video, while Precious's tears were streaming down her face. Detective Sibiya looked like he had swallowed a large substance that just couldn't seem to go down, while Ms. Jele looked like she had seen a ghost. The few protesters who were wearing Tshirts written #HandsOffPrecious! Started shouting "I knew it!" All of a sudden there were murmurs and gasps of shock.

Judge: "Order in my court room!"

The kept quiet, while Kumkani smiled at her.

Kumkani: "No further questions, your honour."

King Sfiso and the rest of her ancestors smiled at her.

Judge: “It is pretty obvious that neither of you take the law seriously, Ms. Jele and you, detective. After immense time wasted on this case, the poor woman was about to go to court for someone she didn’t do. This makes me think how many people you two actually put in court and they might have been innocent. Not only did you forge documents and evidence, but you gambled with a young woman’s life for your own greed and pleasure. I have had enough of this circus. Guards, take those two away. Mrs. Ndhlovu, I humbly apologize for everything you have been through. I sincerely hope that you do manage to sue the state if you wish, I surely wouldn’t blame you. After careful consideration and obvious evidence before me, I now declare this case dismissed with immediate effect. Mrs. Ndhlovu, you’re free to go.”

Everyone was clapping hands, shouting and singing, while Precious collapsed onto her bench with endless tears of joy streaming down her face. It had truly been a rough journey, but she finally managed to be free. She didn’t realize it, but she had to go through that journey to save not only herself, but

also save others. Because of her case, so many cases were reviewed after that, cases that Ms. Jele and Detective Sibiya specifically worked on. Turns out they were both working on cases together, odd enough and based on the backlash that the judges who were working on the trials that had to do with those cases, 260 women were acquitted of their charges a few days later – including Martha, who was one of the people who were also put behind bars by Ms. Jele. Sadly, Ms. Jele was on her way to prison that day, as well as Sibiya, while Precious had officially been declared a free woman. She went on to become the official Princess of Zululand. The people welcomed her with open arms. Glenda of course as well as Njabulo got arrested and charged with murder; Glenda got charged with defeating the ends of justice for burying Gatsha's body. She led them to where she had buried him and he got a proper burial. Lehumo's body also got exhumed from Mamelodi, and she got to be buried alongside her husband. A few months later, Precious was married to Kumkani and she was officially Queen Buhlebendalo Bahumi Ncube-Mdhletse. What a mouthful. She of course had to repeat her first year, but she ended up finishing her law degree and only gave birth to her first son with Kumkani six years after marriage. She still remained good friends with the gang, alongside Mam'Thoko. Hosea finally got his act together and married Bridget. They raised their three children together in Zululand

as well. Things finally fell into place, by the Grace and mercy of God. At times you feel as if the whole world is weighing on you, take time to see that you are actually a small fish in a big pond. There are so many others who are dealing with bigger demons. At times trouble keeps coming your way because you fail to realize it is God's way of speaking to you. Your ancestors will always shed light to you, but if you fail to listen, you will get punished somehow. Trust in the Lord and He shall give you all the desires of your heart – Psalm 37:4. Isaiah 41:10 says to us; "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen and help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Whatever you are going through, never forget to trust in the Lord. The seven steps to delight yourself in the Lord are:

Catch a vision: "I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants." – Genesis 13:15

Disconnect from the World: "Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God?" – James 4:4

3. Throw off Unforgiveness: "Throw off everything that hinders." – Hebrews 12:1

Don't Oversimplify Love: "The greatest of these is love." -1 Corinthians 13:13

Create a Thought-word Connection: “He will have whatever he says.” – Mark 11:23

Preservere in Faith: “Through faith and patience inherit the promises.

“ Hebrews 6:12

Develop a Heart of Gratitude: “Enter into the gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise.” – Psalm 100:4

.....**The End**.....

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