

UTHANDO



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An annoying voice stops him dead on his tracks.

Voice: Uphuma phi?

He gawks at her and closes the door behind him. He watches at her as she drags her feet to stand in front of him.

Buyi: I asked you a question Mthuthuzeli.

He shoves her aside and walks inside the house while she's hot on his tails.

Buyi: You're not about to ignore me Mthuthuzeli where were you.

She screams frustrated. Quickly turning on his heels Mthuthuzeli slaps her so hard. Buyisele gaps with tears blurring her vision. She knows a fight is about to break. Every time her husband comes home he beats her into a pulp for little things. Like he is doing right now.

Mthuthuzeli: Know your place sfebe.

He clicked his tongue and walks to the bed. He sits on the edge and bend down taking off his boots. Buyisile stands there biting her quivering lip to stop a sob to escape her mouth. She knows when she cries harder she will give him enough reason to leave her with broken bones or limping for weeks without any care.

Mthuthuzeli: Make yourself useful and fix my bath water.

He grunts and lays on the bed on his back. Buyisile quickly rush outside to the main house before he gets more angry. She finds her mother in law in the kichen with a scowl plastered on her face. She sniffs and forces her lips to smile.

Buyi: Ma.

Her mother in law just clicks her tongue disgusted by being in the same room with her.

Dalisile: What did you do to make him so angry this time?

The accusations flying out of her mouth cannot be missed by Buyisile. She feels her heart breaking to pieces. Why was she always the one to blame when her husband is wrong. She just asked him where did he come from nothing more and that doesn't give him reason enough to get a slap.

Buyi: I didn't do anything.

She breaths out in a shaky voice.

Dalisile: You're lying maan. I know you.

She screams at her making the tears on Buyi's eyes to discard her face. For once when is someone going to believe her that she doesn't have to do anything for him to beat her up. If he wakes up in the middle of the night feeling like beating her he does that without her pissing him off.

Buyi: Ma believe me I didn't do anything.

Dalisile: Shut up marn. I know my son you probably provoked him. I wish he did more than slapping you. He should have broken your jaw instead so you can be obedient. I don't know what he saw in you your useless marn Buyisile. You agemates have 5-6 children by now and what do you have? Just a loud mouth that spews rubbish every time you open it.

She hissed while her chest moves up and down. If it was up to her she would have been locking her up without any food

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water nor a bath. She doesn't deserve to be treated with such courtesy since she's useless.

Buyi: But ma I'm not ready to have kids. Mthuthuz...

She didn't get to finish her sentence as another slap lands on the same cheek. She looks at her mother in law shocked. Tears roll down.

Dalisile: (screaming) You call your husband by his name? Did you perhaps shoved your respect in your butt? What kind of woman are you who address her husband by her name in public? Have you have no shame at all?

She fires all the questions at once making Buyisile to be dizzy. She didn't eat the previous night because her mother in law eat all the food she cooked. She could feel the cramps on her stomach returning.

Voice: Buyisile?

Her eyes widen while she shakes like a leaf. She forgot her purpose of coming here was to fix him a bath. She quickly bends down to fish for the matches on the last drawer on the cupboard to light the gas stove but her mother in law snatches the box in her hands.

Buyi: (pleading and crying) Ma please I need to fix him a bath before he gets angry. Please.

Dalisile: The forest is full of free wood that you can use. I will not let a useless thing finish my gas stove.

She shoves the box of matches on her bra and makes sure her gas stove is off before walking out of the kitchen. Tears stream down Buyisile she knows that she will get a beating of her life. She walks back to her rondavel and finds her husband dropping a banana peel on the floor. It would be so nice if he cleaned after himself but no she will have to clean after him. She shuts the door and wipes the tears of her face.

Mthuthuzeli: Is my bath ready Buyisile?

Buyi drops her eyes to the floor fiddling with her fingers.

Buyi: Umm the stove is out of gas.

She quickly lies through her teeth praying he buys her lie.

Mthuthuzeli: So did you start any fire to boil my water?

Buyi shakes her head trembling as she sees him stand up and dropping the nails and hammer he was holding. It would be nice of him to buy her a new bed instead of him buying his mother one. They sleep on the bed his mother gave him and the springs of it were bruising Buyisile's body but he wouldn't know that because the man is hardly home.

Buyi: It's been raining since the day you left. The rain just stopped yesterday. I'm sure the wood is still wet. Please myeni wami don't get mad.

Mthuthuzeli: You tell me what to do now Buyisile?

Buyisile: No!

She quickly breaths out but it was already to late. The first punch comes unexpectedly leaving her gasp

for breath.

Mthuthuzeli: Ungitshela ngenzeni manje Buyisile?

She cries shaking her head no.

Buyi: Ngiyaxolisa baba.

She screams pleading for her life but her pleas fell on deaf ears. She crawls running away from his feet connecting on her ribs again.

Mthuthuzeli: Uyaphi?

He asked following after her as she stands up looking a place to hide. She didn't even reach the edge of the bed when she slips on the banana peel and falls on the floor her head piercing through the nails he

dropped on the floor. Blood immediately fills the floor while Mthuthuzeli looks at her lifeless body thinking she fainted.

Mthuthuzeli: I better find my bath water when I came back.

He clicks his tongue and walks out of the room leaving her like that on the floor. He bumps on his mother on his way out of the gate.

Dalisile: Sawubona mfan' wami.

Mthuthuzeli: Sawubona ma.

Dalisile: What did that useless thing do to you this time to make you this angry?

Mthuthuzeli runs his hands on his face frustrated.

Mthuthuzeli: Yeyi ma uBuyisile ujabula kabi mangicasukile.

Dalisile: Ungitshela ngeslima sentombazana?

Mthuthuzeli: I don't know what I saw in her. If the word idiot was a person it would have been Buyisile.

He turns on his heels and walks away leaving her mother with a proud smile on her face. Now that's what she gave birth to. A man who know how to put a woman especially a useless one like her wife in his place. She walks to her house not even bothering to check on Buyisile.

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It's late at night when he comes back home. He finds Buyisile still laying the same way he left her with earlier on. He grunts marching to her and starts kicking her ribs.

Mthuthuzeli: You enjoy making me angry.

He murmurs still kicking her. He frowns when he sees her not responding to him.

Mthuthuzeli: Buyisile?

Silence..He bends down to inspect her but gets the shock of his life. Her open mouth and wide lifeless eyes are staring right back at him.

Mthuthuzeli: Buyisile stop playing.

He shakes her violently.

Mthuthuzeli: Mkami vuka! Buyisile vuka!

He could feel a lump forming on his throat while tears blur his vision. He didn't mean for things to be like this. Yes Buyisile usually pisses him off but he didn't wish death upon her.

YEARS LATER

YEARS LATER

She clicks her tongue picking up her pace as her friend drags her feet. Her stomach has been upset since last night and it only reacted now when she ate her lunch at school.

Uthando: If you keep dragging your feet like that Zobuhle I will leave you behind.

She snaps at her friend fuming. Zozo runs after like she's been chased by dogs.

Zozo : I'm trying to catch up with you but you're walking too fast for my short legs.

She fires back still running after her. Zobuhle gulps and wipes her sweaty forehead. The sun is scorching hot burning them but it seems like her friend doesn't feel the heat like her. Uthando stops on her tracks and wait for her friend to catch up with her. She watches her as she wipes her face with her hands.

Uthando: (sighing) I'm sorry it's just my stomach has been acting up judging by how it keeps aching I might need the toilet soon.

Zozo nods in understand and holds her hand so she doesn't fall behind. They quickly wave at their other friends as they pass them on their usual spot under the shade they normally take a break at when the sun is hot.

Zanele: Haibo we were waiting for you.

Uthando just closes her eyes praying her stomach will not embarrass her. She knows her friends will delay her. Maybe she should have left them behind when the last bell rang but the annoying teacher had to ask her to collect all the peer's books so he can mark them at home.

Zozo: Hurry up Uthando is not feeling well.

Zanele and Ntombi quickly take their schoolbag and strap them on their backs before catching up with them. They start making fun about today's day but Uthando doesn't participate on the fun. Usually she's the one who brings that up when they going back home just to pass time but today her focus is on her stomach. She feels like releasing gas but she knows better than to do so. She holds her breath and squeezes her butt just for the feeling to fade. It takes a few seconds before she feels it fading.

Zanele: Guys the homework Mr Mhlaba gave us I don't understand it. In fact I didn't understand the whole lesson he gave today.

Ntombi: I thought I was the only one. He just used words that confuses me.

A frown covers Zobuhle's face after a while she giggles.

Zozo: Financial maths is not confusing guys. It's actually quite easy.

They roll their eyes of course she would say that. She's an A student who didn't struggle with the subjects like some of them.

Ntombi: Your opinion doesn't count.

She murmurs as they pass their church. They laugh navigating through the forest that leads them to their village.

Zozo: Guys I'm thirsty.

She mumbles seeing a river where they do their laundry. Uthando grunts annoyed and picks up her pace. She should have left her behind a long time ago she would have arrived at home a long time ago.

Ntombi: Come on Uthando I'm sure you can spare 5minutes.

Uthando shakes her head determined to arrive at her house in time. Zobuhle quickly bends down to drink the water with her hands and splashes some on her face. One by one they run to catch with their moody friend. Caught up with her they pant normalizing their hearts beat.

Zozo: I swear today alone I've lost a few pounds. Uthando enjoys seeing me sweating.

They laugh while Uthando smiles. No matter how annoying Zobuhle can be at times she loves her. Their friendship is weird for others but they don't care as long they understand each other they don't care what the others say. Yes Ntombi and Zanele are her friends too but she's not close to them like she is with Zobuhle. The noise of breaking roots of the rusty grass makes them halt on their steps. They look at each other silent asking one another if they all heard the same thing. The noise makes it's way on their ears again. Their eyes widen when they see two man making their way to them. They know what is about to come and none of them wants to fall victim to it.

Zanele: Run!

She screams snapping them out of the daze. They all run separately. Adrenaline rushes through their blood making even lazy Zobuhle to run faster. Uthando can feel hope seeping through her eyes when she see her house. She's just few metres from it and if she can run faster she will be able to make it but sadly the hope she had quickly vanish from her eyes when she's been tackled to the floor. She screams thrashing around. The man just grunts and tie her hands with a rope he had in his pocket. He rises from the ground and picks her up like a sack of potatoes and place her on his shoulder. Uthando screams alerting the village on her misfortune. No she cannot be a victim. She's too young for this and she knows she won't survive it. Pity eyes are gawking at her when they pass through the village. Nobody can do anything about it because it's the law she was born into. Her eyes finds her friends on the corner panting. She burst into tears when she sees them. What does she know about being a wife?

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Through out the journey she tried by all means to escape but her attempts where not helping her situation. She stopped fighting when the man threatened to beat her up. She wonders what will her parents say? Will her father look for her or will her mother do so. One thing that keeps popping up on her mind is how will her so called husband treat her. Will she subject to abuse or will he love her? And who is her husband? She snaps out of her daze when the sound of ululation ring on her eyes. She quickly stumbles trying to find her balance as she's been dropped to the ground by her capture with no care at all.

Dalisile: You did well bafana bami. My son will be so happy to meet her new bride.

Uthando sniffs back the mucus and rises her teary face. She nearly faints on the spot when she sees who her new mother is. No she cannot be married to this family. It has to be a mistake. She bit her quivering lip and shuts her eyes chanting maybe it's a nightmare she will wake up from in the morning and everything will go back to normal. She will be back with her parents and she will have to go to school bickering with Zobuhle on the way. She will still see her friends everyday and they will sit on their shade after school bickering and sharing jokes while offloading their many homeworkers because Ntombi hardly finds time in her house. A caress on her cheek makes her to open her eyes and sadly she's greeted by the same face she thought she saw in her nightmare. Dalisile smiles at her daughter in law.

Dalisile: You're so beautiful I chose well. I can see my grandchildren will be beautiful just as you.

Uthando heart leaps up to her throat while tears discard her eyes. She just got here and already this woman is talking about children. Doesn't she know that she's only 17? But she wouldn't be surprised if she does know because her last daughter in law died under her nose. She cringes as that thought crosses her mind.

Dalisile: Come sisi I've got a lot to teach you.

She turns on her heels making her way to her house leaving Uthando rooted on her feet crying. Fate is playing a nasty game with her life. She cannot be married to Mthuthuzeli. The man is known by the whole village for his cruelty and beside his old enough to be his big brother.

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Zobuhle fixed her grandmother's pillows.

Zozo: Are you comfortable gogo?

The old woman slowly nodded with unshed tears. She hated being a burden to her granddaughter she was missing on life because of her. God should just take her once and for all so that her granddaughter can be free from a burden at such young age. Sighing sadly Zobuhle takes the bowl of porridge and started feeding her. The stroke her grandmother suffered took a lot from them leaving her to grow up before time. She had to step up and take care of her grandmother and brother. She sometimes wish her mother would mistakenly came back just to check upon them. The woman left after giving birth to her brother to finish her studies in Jo'burg

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sometimes wish her mother would mistakenly come back just to check upon them. The woman left after giving birth to her brother to finish her studies in Jo'burg promising them she will come back once she finds the job she desires. Days turned to weeks while weeks turned to months months turning to years waiting for her. She never kept to her promise and Zobuhle erased the thought of seeing her again.

Zozo: Gogo they took Uthando today on our way back from school.

She wiped the corner of her lips and continue feeding her.

Zozo: I don't know who she's getting married to but I wish it will be someone who will love her.

She sighed hoping her grandmother will answer but as usual it was a one sided conversation. Her grandmother slowly shook her head indicating she was full. Zobuhle stood up after wiping her mouth and made her way to the kitchen. She filled a glass with water and made her way back to her grandmother. She bend down and helped her to drink the water. A banging knock on the door make her eyebrows to thinned.

Zozo: I'm coming.

She placed the glass on the floor and made her grandmother to lay on the bed. The knocker is persistent on the door.

Zozo: Yhoo I'm coming.

She marched to the door and widely open it. Her eyes are met by her younger brother who is painfully crying.

Zozo: Khwezi why are you crying?

Voice: Yeyi keep your dog on a tight leash.

Her heart skipped a beat when her eyes locked with her future mother in law. The woman hated her with passion. She was not sure whether was it because she was poor or is it because she was not good enough for her son. The latter seemed to be better but she knew there was no way in hell she knew about her and her son.

Mbali: The next time he thinks he can steal from me I will do worse than spanking him.

Zozo: Ma I'm sorry he didn't mean too.

Mbali: (screaming) You're sorry? That little shit stole a tomato from one of my trucks.

Khwezi: (crying) I found it on the floor sisi.

Mbali: (screaming) You're lying marn.

Zozo: I'm sorry ma it will never happen again.

Mbali: You're damn right it won't happen again. I want that R3 for that tomato right now.

Zozo's heart skipped a beat. Sweat run down her spine while tears blurr her vision.

Zozo: (low voice) We don't have any money right now to pay you.

Mbali: (shouting) What? Child you will have to speak louder than that.

A tear roll down Zobuhle's face followed by many more.

Zozo: (sobbing) I can't pay you right now because I don't have any money.

Mbali clapped once placing her hands on her waist. This child is testing her. Nobody can steal from her and gets away with it especially these hobo's.

Mbali: So whose going to pay for my tomato?

Zozo: (crying) I promise to pay it back on month end when gogo receives her pension money.

Mbali raises her hand and slap her so hard. Zozo bit her lip and let the tears flow while her brother burst into tears. He didn't mean to get his sister in trouble when he picked that tomato on the floor but he was hungry. He also wanted to know how does a raw tomato taste without eating it cooked on his soup.

Khwezi: (crying) Siyaxolisa. (We're sorry.)

Mbali clicked her tongue.

Mbali: I'm giving you three day to bring my money or else I'm going to do much worse than this.

Zozo nodded wiping the tears away but they keep falling.

Mbali: Three days only.

She clicked her tongue and turned on her heels walking away.

Khwezi: (crying) I'm sorry Zozo.

He murmur bursting into tears. Zozo sniffed bending down to her knees and embraced him.

Khwezi: (crying) I was hungry. I'm sorry.

Zozo: (sniffing) It's okay.

She mumbled stroking his back. Where was she going to get that R3 to pay that woman?

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He steps inside his van and closes the door after filling it with gas. If there is less traffic on the way he will arrive home before his mother goes to bed. He switches on the radio to Ukhozi FM to keep him company on his journey. A smile creeps on his face as he thinks about his mother. That woman has been a pillar of his strength through whatever he goes through in life. When they were saying umama yimbokodo they surely were talking about his mother.

Sighing he shuts off the voice in the back of his mind that reminds him home and why he left in the first place. He didn't want to relive what happened that faithful day. What happened to Buyisile was a

mistake and he didn't mean for her to die like that. If he could turn back the hands of time he will. His eyebrows furrow as guilt consumes him.

Mthuthuzeli: You have no heart. You don't apologize to anyone and you don't owe anyone any apology.

He chants the words his mother comforted him with that day. He parks on the side of the road and covers his face with his hands as flashbacks rush through his mind. There he was shaking the dead boy of his wife Buyisile crying. His mother barges in without knocking. She was on her way to lock the gate when she heard her son crying.

Dalisile: (screaming) What did you do to my son wenja?

Her defensive mode was up and ready to defend her son in whatever Buyisile was going to accuse her off. She gasps shocked placing her hands on her hips upon seeing the blood on the floor.

Dalisile: Mthuthuzeli what's going on?

Mthuthuzeli raised his bloodshot eyes to his mother.

Mthuthuzeli: We fought early on and she slipped falling on the banana peel I threw on the floor.

He wipes the tears on his eyes.

Mthuthuzeli: I thought she was faking it earlier on so I left her when I came back she was still laying the same way she was when I left.

He mutters swallowing the lump that was choking him. Dalisile rushes outside and looks around the village walking back inside the room she kneels in front of her son.

Dalisile: She's dead Mthuthuzeli and there is nothing you can do.

Mthuthuzeli shakes his head crying.

Mthuthuzeli: We have to call the ambulance and the police mama. They will understand when I tell them it was an accident when she fall.

Dalisile screeched.

Dalisile: Usuyasanga yini? The police will never listen to anything you say. (Are you insane?)

Mthuthuzeli: Ma ibiyiphutha bengingaqondileukumbulala. (It was a mistake mom I didn't mean to kill her.)

He raises his voice causing Dalisile to slap him so hard on his face.

Dalisile: Usumemeza kanje do you want the whole village to know that you killed someone?

Mthuthuzeli: (sniffing) Cha! (No)

Dalisile: You're not about to embarrass me. I will not have a son who is a criminal.

Mthuthuzeli nods crying.

Dalisile: Remove those tears on your face before they piss me off.

He sniffed wiping the tears on his face.

Dalisile: We have to bury her body. Crying won't help you stand up and dust yourself. I didn't give birth to a weakling.

He nodded like a obedient child.

Dalisile: Go dig outside in the garden so we can bury her.

Mthuthuzeli dragged his heavy body outside. He made his way to the main house to look for the spade. Walking back outside he looks around and start digging a shallow grave. He inspects the grave to make sure it's deep enough before he walks back to rondavel. He finds his mother beating up the body of Buyisile.

Dalisile: Usuzohamba kahle weBuyisile. Usikhonzele la uyakhona. (Farewell Buyisile. Do greet for us wherever you're going.)

She drops the belt and takes the duvet of the bed and wrap it around the body.

Dalisile: Pick her up.

Mthuthuzeli picks the body up and they walk to the garden and dump her body on the grave.

Mthuthuzeli: (crying) Ngiyaxolisa mkami ibiyiphutha. Bengisiyona inhloso yam ngicela ungixolele. (I'm sorry my wife it was a mistake. It was not my intention please forgive me.)

He murmur covering the grave with soil. Dalisile drags him to his room.

Dalisile: If you're standing there who do you think will clean this up?

He sniffed walking out he comes back with a bucket filled with water and mop to clean the room. His eyes can't seem to stop the tears from falling.

Dalisile: Pull yourself together and stop crying like a widow. Your father and I didn't raise any weakling. This is the time for you to man up and hold the bull by it's horns.

Mthuthuzeli shook his head crying as the lump on his throat was making him hard to breath.

Dalisile: Yeyi

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Mthuthuzeli shook his head crying as the lump on his throat was making him hard to breath.

Dalisile: Yeyi ukhalelani? (Why are you crying?)

Mthuthuzeli: (mumbling and crying) Ngiyaxolisa ma. (I'm sorry ma)

She clicked her tongue.

Dalisile: Early in the morning we will go to the river to cleanse ourselves and we will never talk about this again. Siyewana?

He nodded.

Dalisile: You have no heart for love. You don't owe anyone any apology and you don't apologize to anyone. Women are beneath your feet. You make the rules not them. Siyewana?

Once again like obedient mama's boy he is he nods his head.

Dalisile: Angikuzwa. (I can't hear you.)

Mthuthuzeli: (sniffing) I don't owe anyone any apology and I don't apologize to anyone. Women are beneath my feet. I make the rules not them. I have no heart for love.

A smile creeps on Dalisile's lips.

Dalisile: Asambe mommy will fix your bath water. Should I tuck you in like I usually do when you were still a boy?

The smile on her face cannot be missed. She didn't see anything wrong tucking in her 20 year old son. She was his mother after all and mother's love will never deceive him.

The sound of a honk snaps him out of his daze. He opens his eyes and looks at his surrounding he brings the engine to life and drove off pushing that voice on the back of his mind that always reminds him what they did that day. His a 30 old man right now and doesn't need his mother bathing him but knowing

Dalisile she will throw a fit if he doesn't play by her rules.

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Arriving home he finds the gate widely open. He steps outside his van and walks to check his mother before he goes to bed. Seeing the light on his room doesn't shock him anymore. He knows his mother always keeps the room clean and she probably turned the lights on because she knew he was coming. A scream shoots up on Dalisile's mouth when her eyes set on her son. Mthuthuzeli chuckles.

Dalisile: Hawu hawu! Buka umuhle kanjani. (Look how handsome you're)

She muttered engulfing him in a hug.

Mthuthuzeli: Sawubona ma.

He kisses her cheek but Dalisile wants an open mouth kiss. Surely people will understand this is her son she haven't seen in years.

Dalisile: Sawubona mfana kaMa. I want to know all about Durban phela I've never been there.

Mthuthuzeli chuckles and drags the chair and makes himself comfortable. His trip was a sudden one after the death of Buyisile. His uncle told him about a man who needed a driver for his taxi and recommended him since he knew how to drive. It's not like they needed the money because his father left them a whole farm that will keep them going for years until he finds a job but he just needed a change of scenery. This place wastes suffocating him after that incident but two years ago everything changed when he saw the most beautiful girl his eyes have set on.

Dalisile: Khuluma phela. (Talk)

She muttered stumbling towards him with a basin full of lurk warm water and a dish cloth on her shoulder. Mthuthuzeli washes his hands and takes the dish cloth to dry them. His mouth salivates as his mother places a plate of pap spinach and wors in front of him.

Mthuthuzeli: Ngiyabonga. (Thank you)

He murmurs already digging in. Dalisile laughs and sits next to him. Watching him eat brings a smile to her face. God knew when she was praying for a child she was praying for someone who will become like her and God gave her this handsome boy who is a man right now. She cringes as she thought Phumeza her last born who is a rebel. The Lord knows she tried with that girl but she's just in her lane alone.

They chat for hours laughing here and there. The elephant in the room will never be touched again and Mthuthuzeli knows if he addresses what happened that day he will see an angry Dalisile.

Dalisile: You're getting old.

She randomly murmurs.

Mthuthuzeli: Hawu ma I'm not that old.

Dalisile: You are. I need someone who will keep me company here since I stay alone.

He pinches his bridge nose. He knows where this subject is going and he doesn't like it one bit.

Mthuthuzeli: I'm going to bed.

He mumbles standing up to place the plate on the sink.

Dalisile: Hlala phansi Mthuthuzeli sikhulume. (Sit down Mthuthuzeli so we can talk)

Heavily sighing he takes a sit.

Dalisile: Years have passed and I'm getting old Mthuthuzeli ngifuna abazukulu.

Mthuthuzeli: Uzobathola uma iskhathi sikhahle ma. Ngisacela ukuyolala bandla ngikhathele. (You will have

them when the time is right. Can I please go to sleep I'm tired)

Dalisile: Like I said earlier on I'm getting old and lonely. I need someone who I know will take care of you when I die.

He frowns.

Dalisile: I took a wife for you.

He throws his head back laughing.

Mthuthuzeli: Stop playing.

Dalisile: I'm not playing. She's there in your room right now.

His eyes widen.

Dalisile: You will see how beautiful she is. I know my grandchildren will be beautiful like you two.

She squels like a kid who got in a candy store.

Dalisile: Why are you still here? Go and make as many kids you can. She's a virgin that one.

His heart pounded on his chest as he makes his way to his room.

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Word has spread out through out the village that Uthando is married to Mthuthuzeli. She thought by now her mother would have come to fetch her but nothing has happened since she was kidnapped broad day light in front of the whole village by two man she didn't know. It's been three days of hell and she's ready to give up on life. Her skin has turned pale because of the crying she does everyday. Dalisile is on her case everyday. She thought maybe she would be satisfied by now but she always finds something else to insult her with.

Wiping her tears off Uthando makes her way to her rondavel that she was given after the lesson Dalisile gave her.

Her blood runs cold when she hears a male voice outside. Quickly rushing to the bed she opens the blankets and covers herself shivering. She knows her husband is back from his trip and she's scared to death. She holds her breath when the door opens and heavy footsteps follow. Her eyes are wide like they are about to pop out any second. The bed deeps on the side and the blanket is roughly removed from her. Tears stream down on her eyes as she feels her dress being raised to her waist. Her underwear slowly slips of her legs after her thighs were pulled apart roughly raising her head she looks at the man who is about to take her innocence away from her.

Mthuthuzeli: (shocked) Uthando?

His eyes are popped out of their sockets.

Mthuthuzeli: W-w-what are you doing here?

His stuttered staggering with his heart pounding in his ribcage. This is the same girl he saw on the river washing her laundry two years ago but he couldn't approach her because of his reputation.

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Mthuthuzeli could feel his heart thudded in his ribcage as the possibility of finding out the wife his mother was talking about is her. He knew she wouldn't give him the time of the day because everybody knows how violent he is. He loved her enough to let her live her life without him in it but it seemed like faith had other plans for him. Covering his face with his hands he takes a seat at the edge of the bed facing the other way from her. He grunts debating with his mind he knew he couldn't do anything at this point especially when his mother was much involved.

Mthuthuzeli: Please stop crying.

He pleads with her ashamed to even look at her eyes. To him she was the definition of an angel a pure soul in his tainted world. He didn't want to taint her with his demons that is why he loved her enough to let her go two years ago but right now he knew he had to man up and stop hiding from his mother's skirt and protect her with everything he has from his mother. Wait did he just begged her? His mother will throw a fit if she hears about this.

Mthuthuzeli: I'm begging you Uthando stop crying. I won't do anything to you.

He murmurs in a strained voice swallowing his thick saliva. Her tears were piercing through his cold heart making it to skip a bit. Uthando sniffed wiping her tears with the back of her hand her whole body was shaking. Mthuthuzeli sighed leaping up to his feet making her to curl into a ball on the bed hiding her body from him. He stood there just watching her crying and turned on his heels making his way to his car. He pulled the chair backwards after locking the door and closed his eyes. This was a mess he didn't know how he will fix.

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At the main house Dalisile hummed a song with a smile lurking on her lips as she stirs the cup in front of her. She walks out of the house to Mthuthuzeli's room with the cup in her hand. It's his special herbal tea only his mother makes. A frown makes its way on her face when she hears the door of the car being shut she quickly picks up her pace walking to the old van her late husband left behind. She clicks her tongue seeing Mthuthuzeli lying on his back on the chair. Her knuckles hit the window so hard almost knocking the cup she had on her hands. Mthuthuzeli jumps startled by the impact on the window rolling down the window his meet by his furious mother.

Mthuthuzeli: Ma.

Dalisile: (hissing) What are you doing here?

Mthuthuzeli's eyes run around the yard. Dalisile clicks her tongue shaking her head. What a stupid boy he is. Does he know how much it took for her to be here today. Does he know the sacrifices she made for him. Why can't he be an obedient child for once and do everything she wishes?

Mthuthuzeli: I was just looking for my phone.

He lies through his teeth with a low voice.

Dalisile: (shouting) Why are your eyes closed not open when looking for that phone? Are you running away from your responsibilities Mthuthuzeli?

Mthuthuzeli: Of course not. I'm just looking for my phone ma.

Dalisile shakes her head. This child needs to be tamed fast before he slips right through her fingers. Just one sip from this cup everything will fall into place.

Dalisile: Surely you found what you were looking for now.

Mthuthuzeli heavily sighs and closes the window before stepping out

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his mother will not taking this laying down.

Mthuthuzeli: Good night ma.

He mumbles dragging his sagging shoulders to his room. Dalisile chuckles. Durban is messing up with his mind.

Dalisile: Ain't you forgetting something?

Mthuthezeli frowns gawking at her. Sibiya better wake up from the dead and set his son straight before she takes over. How can he forget his special tea?

Dalisile: Your tea.

Mthuthuzeli takes the cup and quickly gulps it down in one go. The burning sensation and bitterness makes his cringe. Dalisile smiles taking the cup from his hand and pout her lips for her night weird kiss. Mthuthuzeli pecks her lips.

Mthuthuzeli: Good night ma.

Dalisile: Night my boy.

She watches him going to his room and shake her head. If he thought he was bringing Durban tendencies in her house then he has another thing coming.

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The door shutting down startles Uthando. She jumps placing her hand on her chest. She was slowly drifting to a peaceful slumber but now it seems like she might not get that anymore. Being in the same room as this man scared the shit out of her. She looks at him with tears already swimming in her eyes while her whole body shaking. She tries to breath but her chest closes on her. Tears discard her face while Mthuthuzeli looks at her in sad eyes. He could see she was scared of him and didn't want to make things harder than they were.

Dalisile: Mthuthuzeli.

She bangs the door snapping them from the daze. Mthuthuzeli sighs as Uthando jumps startled by the banging on the door. Dragging his feet to the door he creaks it open.

Mthuthuzeli: Ma?

Dalisile: Why is it quiet? Are you scared of her? Do I have to be in the same room to ensure the procedure is being followed?

Dropping his eyes Mthuthuzeli shakes his head.

Mthuthuzeli: Cha ma.

Dalisile: Good I thought I had to sit in. I want to hear moans and groans all the way to my bedroom
Mthuthuzeli siyezwana?

He nods like a scared little boy he is.

Dalisile: Make me proud mfana wami.

Mthuthuzeli smiles walking back in the room. He closes the door leaning on it waiting to hear his mother's footsteps but they don't come. He moves from the door to the window and peak on it. He shakes his head as he sees his mother's shadow next to the door. He has to do something before this woman can barge in this room. He marches towards the shaking Uthando.

Mthuthuzeli: (whispering) Ma is at the door and she will not leave until she gets what she wants. You

have to work with me here.

She shudders as he whisper on her ear. She didn't hear a word he said because of fear. Sadness crosses Mthuthuzeli face he didn't want her to be scared of him but he knew it will take time for her to relax around him. Bending down to her earlobe he tries again softly this time.

Mthuthuzeli: You have to do what I tell you to do okay.

Uthando's eyes widen. She shakes her head biting her quivering lip moving backwards. The man was not insinuating they have to have sex right?

Dalisile: Mthuthuzeli.

She bangs the door causing him to curse under his breath. It was clear the girl in front of him was scared out of her mind to trust him.

Mthuthuzeli: Mmmh!

He groans narrowing his eyes to Uthando.

Mthuthuzeli: (whispering) You have to help me.

The girl only shook her head crying which much to his annoyance. His building a foundation of trust in between them but it seemed like he was the only one thinking about the woman on the other side of the door. He knows the minutes she steps inside this room Uthando will never want to be in the same room as him or even breath the same air as him.

Mthuthuzeli: Can you at least meet me half way.

He muttered clenching his jaw. Her tears were starting to irk him. Can't she see his doing the best he can under this circumstances?

Dalisile: Should I come there and teach you how to use your penis Mthuthuzeli?

Mthuthuzeli's eyes popped out of their sockets.

Dalisile: Why is she not screaming?

She muttered in a firmly voice losing her patience. The door knob turns making Mthuthuzeli to quickly drop his pants and his boxers in one go. His soft shafts springs right in front of Uthando's eyes. The thundering on her ribcage increase. Mthuthuzeli grip her wrist and raise her dress over her head and threw her on the bed slightly parting her thighs. She burst into tears laying like a chicken waiting to be roosted. In walks Dalisile not respecting their privacy. Mthuthuzeli drops himself on top of her and groan moving his waist. Dalisile smiles feeling proud of the man she gave birth to. Turning on her heels she walks out of the room and shut the door. Mthuthuzeli moves from Uthando whose crying hysterically. His shaft has harden from being in between her thighs.

Mthuthuzeli: I'm sorry.

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Her phone vibrated on top of the table. Ntombi rolled on her bed and laid on her stomach before stretching her hand to the table. She looks at the caller ID and rolls her eyes answering the call.

Ntombi: Hello?

Mandla: Hey sorry to call you so late but I desperately need to talk to see her before I go to bed. Tell her we will meet at our usual spot.

Ntombi: (bored) Sure Let me quickly run to her house to pass the message.

Mandla: You're a star.

He hangs up. Ntombi tosses the phone on top of her bed and fixed her pillow and laid her head closing

her eyes. Her sleep comes first before anything. She was not going to abandon her comfortable bed to pass the message to Zobuhle. Her house was 5 houses away from Zozo but that doesn't mean she will walk out of her bed. Who said she must not have her own phone in the first place? Doesn't the man that it's her phone and she makes the rules of who she passes the message too and who she doesn't pass it to.

Her phone beep as she closes her eyes. She groaned stretching her arm. Her lips curve into a smile when she read the texts.

Capitec: Payment +R200.00 into SAVINGS ACCOUNT; Ref Mandla; Avail R188.40; 16-May. Info 0860102043.

Mandla: A little something for bothering you this late.

She threw her legs on the air squealing. Zozo wouldn't be mad at her for not passing the message it's already late anyway.

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Zozo knelt down on her mattress and closed her eyes. Tears slipped down her eyes.

Zozo: Father I came before you this evening as one of your children asking for strength. Strength above any strength you have given me before. I ask for guidance to navigate this borrowed life you gave me.

The power went off while she's praying. She cried harder knowing those were the last remaining units not because Eskom cut the power off.

Zozo: I ask for wisdom to make wise decisions. May you always keep watching over us and keep showering us with your blessings in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

She sniffed and wiped the tears with the back of her hand before she rosed up to her feet and open her blankets before slipping. Her brother snoring softly next to her.

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At the river Mandla looked at the time on his phone and sigh. She was suppose to be here right now or at least on her way. He slipped his hands on his pockets and went to take a seat on a big rock that was next to the river. He stretched his neck to see any sign of movement but nothing. He said taking out his phone from his pocket and called Ntombi. The phone rang until it went straight voicemail. He tried again but this time it didn't ring like before but it took him straight to voicemail. He leap up to his feet and slowly made his way home taking the long route that will pass Zozo house thinking he will bump into her on his way.

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At Uthando's house her mother shook her husband who was sleeping. He flipped his eyes open and look at his wife who was leaning on the pillows.

Paul: Why are you not sleeping?.

Hlengiwe: I'm just thinking about Thando. It's been three days already and these people haven't brought her Lobola money.

Paul: (annoyed) Not this again.

He murmur pulling the blankets over his head. Hlengiwe grunted pulling the blankets off him.

Hlengiwe: (yelling) You can't seriously sleep when I'm still talking Paul.

Paul sighed if he can switch his wife with someone else he would do it in a heartbeat. This woman is a replica of the woman he once fell in love with and married too. This replica in front of him was blinded by envy and greed.

Hlengiwe: Tomorrow morning I expect you to go to that house and demand that money.

I also want to be the same level with Mbali and Dalisile. Those woman have been the it of this village and this is my time.

Paul: I thought we spoke about this that we will be fetching our daughter.

Hlengiwe snorted.

Hlengiwe: Fetch who for what? Who do you want to embarrass Paul? Look around you we live in a house that's made of mud while they live in a house that is built in bricks. Wake up and smell the coffee this is our time to shine and if you don't wake up now I'll will not let you drag me with you. I'm tired of living like this. I will not this opportunity pass me by.

She clicked her tongue and furiously pulling all the blankets over her.

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Unedited

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The knock on the door wakes her from her slumber. She opens her puffy eyes and immediately the events that took place last night comes rushing to her like a tornado. She looks at the man beside her and quickly jumps off the bed. Her heart pounding on her chest. The knocker is persistent on the door causing the man in the bed to wake up. Uthando freezes with her eyes popped out.

Dalisile: Uthando?

She screams on the end of the door banging it. Mthuthuzeli groans throwing the blankets to the side and makes his way to the door.

Mthuthuzeli: Ma?

Dalisile: (frowning) Why are you opening the door? Where is your wife?

She mumbles with a cup of hot tea in her hands.

Mthuthuzeli: She's still asleep ma. Did you need anything?

Dalisile: (hissing) If she's still asleep at this time who does she think will fetch the water from the river and cook? I was suppose to have my tea at 05:00am and now it's 05:35am.

Mthuthuzeli: (gasping) Ma it's nearly to 06h00 and already you're screaming so early in the morning. Can't you reschedule your tea time to 08h00 or 09h00 like a normal person?

Dalisile raises her hand and slap him so hard making him to see stars. Where did he learn to spew such garbage with his mouth? He drops his eyes ashamed.

Dalisile: Drink this and stop talking nonsense. I have to take care of you while she's laying there like the madam of the house. What is her real purpose if I have to be making you food and tea?

Mthuthuzeli: I'm sorry mama.

He mumbled rubbing his throbbing cheek frowning. He woke up with his mind and heart not in synch with each other. His mind keep telling him he should have threw Uthando on the floor and let her sleep on it while he took the bed but his heart dispute what the mind is saying. His was in war with himself and he couldn't understand what was going on.

Dalisile: Tell that girl I want my tea in five minutes and come and have your porridge. You're becoming soft and you know how I hate it when you're like this. Pull up your pants up and put your foot down. The girl cannot do as she pleases.

Mthuthuzeli: (low voice) I'll fix it.

Dalisile: You better.

She clicks her tongue shoving the cup in his hand and makes her way to her house. Her heart thudded in her ribcage as the words his son muttered echoes in her ears. That was proof enough that she losing her son and that needed to be fixed.

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Standing there shaking like a leaf Uthando wipes her tears and drops her eyes to the floor to look for her shoes. She slips them on and stumbles to the door. The man in front of her has a frown plastered on his face after gulping the contents inside the cup.

Mthuthuzeli: (frowning) I think I have seen you before. What's your name?

Uthando looks at him like he just lost his mind. This man knew her name last night and now his pretending like he didn't know who she was. If he thinks his confusion can make up for what happened last night he has another thing coming.

Mthuthuzeli: Who are you?

He murmurs in a low voice holding his throbbing head with both his hands. Uthando glare at him and takes her steps to the door but a firm grip stops her on her tracks. She flinches looking at the hand holding her wrist to the man in front of him.

Mthuthuzeli: Who are you?

He roars startling her causing her to jump squirming on his grip. Tears stream down her cheeks as his breathing heavily still griping her wrist. His fingernails were piercing through her skin.

Mthuthuzeli: I asked you are question woman?

Once again he roars and grunts yanking her hand out of his grip. Clicking his tongue he chuckles.

Mthuthuzeli: Why can't you listen at once? Why do you always make me do this?

He mumbles walking to the corner of the room and takes his bag fishing out for his belt. Uthando stomach churns as he marches towards her rolling the belt in his hand. Her eyes are popped out of their sockets while her heart pounds in her chest.

Mthuthuzeli: Do you think I enjoy seeing you bleeding everytime I came back home?

Looking at her face decorated in tears making him more angry. Why was she crying? He hasn't done anything to her and by the time his done with her she will be crying for a valid reason. Swinging the belt it connects with Uthando's skin making her to scream.

Mthuthuzeli: Ukhalelani Buyisile? (Why are you crying Buyisile?)

He grunts swinging the belt over and over her. Uthando screams falling onto the floor.

Uthando: I'm sorry.

She muttered her first words since they meet and they were words didn't make him to stop his assault.

Mthuthuzeli: When I talk you answer siyezwana Buyisile?

Uthando: (screaming and crying) Uthando! My name is Uthando not Buyisile. Please I'm begging you I didn't do anything.

He freezes halfway as he was about to swing the belt again.

Mthuthuzeli: (confused) What did you say?

Raising her head Uthando narrows her eyes at him.

Uthando: (crying) I apologize for everything I did wrong and I will ever do wrong but I'm not Buyisile. I'm Uthando. I can't be suffering for her sins.

Mthuthuzeli: (softly) You said your name is Uthando?

She wipes her tears nodding. He shuts his eyes dropping the belt in his hand.

Mthuthuzeli: Uthando?

He mumbles staggering to the floor. He sits on his butt covering his face while Uthando burst into tears.

Uthando: (screaming) I will never love you. You should kill me like you did to Buyisile because I will never love you. You're unlovable and evil. I loath the day my eyes set on you Buyisile should keep haunting you.

Mthuthuzeli: Shut up!

He mumbled sticking his hands on his ears as the voices scream inside his head.

Mthuthuzeli: I said shup up!

Uthando: I will never shut up Mthuthuzeli. What you and your mother did to me can never be undone. You thought you live your best life while I lay there in your garden that you and your evil mother buried me to? I will never shup up until everyone knows what you did. I will scream until someone hears my cry. I will shout irritating whoever is close by to hear me. You can't stop me now. I'm not weak like I was before.

Mthuthuzeli screams closing his ears as the voices echoes in his mind marching to Uthando and strangling her.

Mthuthuzeli: Shut up Buyisile! You're dead.

Uthando roared in laughter.

Uthando: You can strangle me as much as you want but you will never shut me up again Mthuthuzeli.

Mthuthuzeli: (screaming) Shut up! Shut up!

His grip gets tighter on Uthando's neck while he bangs her head on the floor. Laughter echoes in the room while blood seeping on the back of her head.

Uthando: You can't shut me up! Give up!

She roars in laughter. He screams punching her over and over but she just laughs on his face frustrating him.

Uthando: You can't shut me up.

Throwing her head back she roars in laughter.

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Uthando wakes up from her slumber as the bed keeps shaking. Her heart skips a bit as the man beside her keeps mumbling in his sleep. She slowly jumps off the bed without waking him up she lays on the floor. Her eyes are puffy and her head is throbbing

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she needs to sleep as much as she can before monster in law comes to assign her to her duties. Closing her eyes she breathes out pushing what happened last night to the back of her mind.

After the incident he apologized to her and made a promise he will never touch her until she's ready. She will never be ready especially when there is no love in between. How do you give someone you barely know your innocence that you saved for someone you love? She kept herself for the man who will be lucky enough to make her blush like a retard while her stomach do the flip flaps.

The love her best friend Zobuhle keeps talking about whenever she's talking about Mandla her boyfriend that's the kind of love she also wants and wants to experience but seeing her misfortune that ship had long sailed.

Wiping the tears with the back of her hand she sniffs and lays on the cold floor shivering. Her stomach roars in hunger. Her appetite faded the minute Dalisile told her Mthuthuzeli was on his way back home now she regrets not eating. Heavily sigh she places her hand on floor as a pillow and close her eyes waiting for darkness to take over but it doesn't come. She huffs annoyed and opens her eyes staring at the roof. If she was in her house she would have sneaked to the kitchen to make herself some food but she can't for obvious reasons. Knowing her stomach she won't sleep until she's fed. She resorts to counting down just to pass time. Her ears picking up some mumbling on the man sleeping on bed but she ignores it. The noise continues until she has no choice but to attend to it.

She walks around the bed and kneels in front of him. Releasing a deep breath she shakes him stumbling on her words. The man hasn't given her a right to use his name but his mother made it clear she should address him as baba. To her it would be like giving him parenting rights over her and she didn't need a second father. She left her father at home. Shaking him again Mthuthuzeli jumps off the bed with his eyes out of their sockets. His drench in sweat while shaking like a leaf startling Uthando.

Mthuthuzeli: Uthando?

He mumbles engulfing her in a hug causing her eyes to widen. What the hell was wrong with this man?

Mthuthuzeli: I'm sorry I nearly hurt you.

He murmurs in daze caressing her back. Uthando frowns.

Mthuthuzeli: I thought I was killing her not y...

Uthando interjects.

Uthando: Killing who?

Her voice snaps him out of his daze. He breaks the hug with his eyes popped out. Those were his first words since they meet meaning everything he saw was a dream. He swallow hard seeing innocent face staring right back him. Dropping his eyes he darts his eyes to the floor then to her.

Mthuthuzeli: Why are you on the floor?

Before she could answer the door gets banged.

Dalisile: Uthando?

They both shift their gaze to the door. Mthuthuzeli's eyes widen while his heart pounds in his chest.

Uthando heavily sighs leaping up to her feet there goes her slumber.

Mthuthuzeli: (shaking) Where are you going?

Uthando frowns darting her eyes to the door then at him. Did she perhaps hear the crazy woman alone on the other side of the door? Mthuthuzeli shakes his head running to the door to block her path. It felt like Deja vu all over again.

Mthuthuzeli: Go back to bed.

Has this man lost his marbles? Dalisile will be on her case the entire day.

Uthando: I have to....

Mthuthuzeli interjects.

Mthuthuzeli: I said go back to bed.

He muttered firmly causing her to quickly rush to the bed. He watches as the door knob gets twisted by his mother on the other side of the door and bangs it.

Dalisile: (screaming) Mthuthuzeli open this door.

He marches to the bed and slip in. He drags her from the edge of the bed and they cuddle with his heart pounding in his chest. Uthando freezes holding her breath.

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Zobuhle places the plate of porridge in front of his brother.

Khwezi: Again?

He mumbled annoyed pushing the plate away. Zobuhle sighs and pulls the chair before taking a seat.

Zobuhle: You've got to appreciate the little you have. God might take this porridge and give it someone who really needs it. Learn to be grateful because some people go to bed with an empty stomach.

Khwezi huffs pulling his plate and slowly raise the spoon.

Zozo: Hurry up before you become late.

Ntombi didn't wake her up this morning and she's hoping Khwezi is not late.

Khwezi: (mouthful) Ain't you going to school?

Zozo: No I've got to fetch gogo's medication today. Next time swallow before speaking.

She lies through her teeth. Her grandmother's date was two weeks from now on and maybe she will eventually go to the clinic to fetch that medication surely the nurses wouldn't mind. She didn't want to tell him that she couldn't go to school because she's afraid of bumping to Mandela's mother on the way. The woman only gave her three days to pay her R3 and today was the third day she still didn't have the money.

Khwezi: Bye sisi.

His voice snaps her out of his daze. She fakes a smile as he kisses her cheek and strap his schoolbag on his back before walking out. Zozo buried her face in her hands. Everything was getting to much for her and sometimes she wishes she could have the courage to end it all. Just take the knife or rope and end her miserable life but she didn't have the guts to do so. Her mind always think about her brother what will he become when she ends her life? What will Mandla also do if she eventually take the easy way out? Will he be hurt like she will be if it was him or will he go with his life like her entire existence was not even there?

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At Mandla house

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Mbali squinted her eyes on the number in front of her and nodded.

Mbali: (smiling) The supermarket seems to be doing great.

Lindani: Was this really necessary?

He glare at his wife whose beaming like a retarded.

Mbali: It is necessary my dear husband. I have to know what happens in my supermarket if I'm not there. I can't be paying useless people who are not working.

She closes the book and place them on the empty chair beside her. Mandla walks in the room with his nostrils flaring.

Mandla: Mom did you serious have to throw a fit for a mere three rand?

Mbali scowls ceasing on her movements. The boy didn't just scream at her. Where was his manners?

Mbali: Who are you talking to like that?

Mandla: I'm talking to you ma. Dad did you know your wife slapped someone's child just because she didn't have R3 to pay for a tomato that it was handpicked on the floor.

Lindani: Mbali?

Mbali: What? She had it coming. Who do they think they are eating my products without paying them?

She spat disgusted.

Mandla: He picked the tomato on the floor ma.

Mbali: So what? He found it at my shop so that means it belongs to me.

Mandla pinched his bridge nose annoyed.

Mandla: There was no need for you to slap her ma.

Mbali: She had it coming.

She mumbled dismissively.

Mandla: Had it coming?

He scoffed.

Mandla: In which planet do you live in that makes you think you're the it?

Mbali gasps. She has never heard her son talking to her like this before. Was this child forgetting his place in this household?

Lindani: (firmly) Mandla enough.

Mandla: No dad I'm sick and tired of your wife treating my girl like she's trash. She's human too and has the same blood and feelings she has. I don't know what makes you think just because we have everything we have you should treat the way you're doing. God is not stupid ma he sees the unseen and hear the unheard. Keep provoking him he will take away everything we have in a blink of an eye.

Mbali: (snorting) Your girl?

Mandla: Yes she's my girl because we are in a relationship. I love her and there's nothing you can do about that.

Mbali: (gasping) What? Over my dead body.

She bellows in anger pushing her chair backwards. Her ears have probably heard the wrong thing. Her son didn't just say his in love with a hobo. There was no way in hell she's going to accept that. She will need to revisit that hobo again and do much more worse than slapping her. Doesn't she know that his son is not her type? Her type are those low life cashiers she has on her supermarket or even those who are Dalisile's herdsman.

Mbali: Over my dead body boy. As long you're still staying under my roof you will do as I say. You will not embarrass me like that.

Mandla: Good thing I found a flat I could rent.

Lindani: What are you saying?

Mandla: I'm moving out dad.

He clicks his tongue and fish in his pocket. He take out a R10 and places it on the table.

Mandla: That's for the tomato Khwezi took. Keep the change since money is so much important to you.

Mbali gulps looking at his livid son. She has never seen him so angry.

Mandla: Stay away from my girl.

He furiously walked out of the room. Clearly his mother can't see anything wrong with that. No wonder his girl didn't come and meet him last night. Maybe she doesn't want anything to do with him right now.

Mbali:(screaming) Mandla get back here.

Lindani rose to his feet shaking his head.

Mbali: Where are you going?

Lindani: Away from a wicked woman like you.

Mbali gasps shocked.

Lindani: Tell me mkami what happened to you? Where is the woman I got married too? Being Dalisile's friend has turned you into a heartless person I barely recognise.

He turned on his heels making his way to the garage. He brings the engine to life and speed off his premises.

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Dalisile huffed peeking through the window. The sun was out to play and there was no sign of Uthando. Did that girl perhaps forget her real purpose of coming to this household? If she did then she needs to remind her that. She furiously walked out the house to the their room and banged the door.

Dalisile: (screaming) Uthando?

Silence.....

Dalisile: Mthuthuzeli?

Silence... She clicked her tongue and marched back to her house. She dragged the chair outside and took a seat on the shade waiting for them. Knowing a human body needs food she knew their stomach will eventually lead them to house. Her eyebrows knitted she see's Mthuthuzeli walking out of the room instead of Uthando.

Mthuthuzeli: Ma.

He mumbles walking inside the kitchen. He fills the pot with water and places it on the gas stove whistling.

Dalisile: Where is your wife?

Mthuthuzeli: Sleeping.

Dalisile chuckles.

Dalisile: Where does this girl think this is? (yelling) Go and wake her up.

He ignores her placing two plates on top of the counter and takes out bread on the bread bin. Removing the boiling water from the stove he replaces it with a pan filled with oil.

Dalisile: Did you hear what I said?

Mthuthuzeli: Yeah.

He whistles mixing the water in the basin and walks out of the house to his room. He closes the door with his foot and places the basin on the floor. Her smooth caramel skin is calling for him to caress her

cheek but he doesn't want to startle her. His done enough in the past and doesn't want anything that will mess up this. Feeling someone hovering over her Uthando opens her eyes and find Mthuthuzeli looking at her. Her heart pounds in her chest while her eyes popped out of their sockets.

Mthuthuzeli: Hey I brought you water to bath. You can bath while I fix breakfast for us. I want to take you somewhere.

Uthando nods her head and watch him walking out of the room. She places her hand on her heart to normalize her breathing before slipping out of the bed. The best way to deal with her situation was to do everything the man asks her to do even if it means she had to slave away for his mother.

She didn't want to make him angry. She quickly makes the bed after her bath and walks out with the basin in her hands to discard the water. She forces a smile when her eyes lock with the vicious Dalisile.

Uthando: Ma?

Dalisile clicks her tongue. Just one night with the girl already his son is behaving like a love strike teenager. Uthando sighs it was clear that the woman didn't like her and she was tired of pretending to her. She seemed to forget that they forced her to be here not the other way around. If it was up to her she would be at school like all her peers.

Mthuthuzeli walks out of the house with tray in his hands.

Mthuthuzeli: Breakfast is ready my lady come eat.

Dalisile leaps up to her feet walking towards him. Frowning Mthuthuzeli halts on his steps.

Mthuthuzeli: Ma where are you going?

Dalisile: To eat.

Mthuthuzeli: Oh I thought you already eat I didn't make one for you.

Dalisile chuckles clapping once.

Uthando: It's fine she can take mine.

Dalisile: You heard her give her plate.

Mthuthuzeli: No you can take mine.

Uthando: I insist.

Mthuthuzeli nods and hands his mother the food.

Dalisile: Such a good daughter in law. I chose well.

She praises stuffing her face with food.

Dalisile: You didn't drink your tea this morning. Don't you want a cup?

Mthuthuzeli: No.

He staring at the door Uthando disappeared too. How can he eat knowing his heart is on the other side starving.

Dalisile: Mthuthuzeli eat you food.

Mthuthuzeli: I'm not that hungry.

He mutters stumbling to the kitchen and places his food on the fridge. He pass his mother making his way to the room.

Mthuthuzeli: Ready?

Uthando nods leaping up to her feet from the bed and follow behind him after he takes his car keys on top of the table. Dalisile's eyebrows furrow when she see's them walking to the car.

Dalisile: Where are you going?

Mthuthuzeli: I'm taking her to town.

Dalisile: Uthando bring me a dish cloth and cover this food for me.

Uthando nods and makes her way to her and take the plate while Mthuthuzeli hops inside the van. Walking back she hands her the dish cloth. Dalisile wipes her hands and rise up to her feet and walk towards the car. She opens the door and settles herself in. Uthando stops dead on her tracks seeing her seat occupied.

Mthuthuzeli: Ma I thought you heard me when I said I'm taking Uthando out.

He emphasized narrowing his eyes at his mother.

Dalisile: She will be left behind to clean and cook while we are gone. Mthuthuzeli let's go.

She bangs the door and buckles up. Defeated Mthuthuzeli brings the engine to life and drives off with a lump in his throat. How could his mother do this to him. His trying by all means to win her over but every time he tries something his mother sabotages his efforts. Where to from here?

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Ntombi popped her bubblegum and took another selfie. Break time came earlier than she expected and she couldn't wait to spend the money she had in her account.

Zanele: Where did you say you got the money again?

Ntombi rolls her eyes as she eye her suspiciously. Detective Zanele is out to play again which much to her annoys. Couldn't the girl just buy what she wants without asking questions? Now she really regrets not waking Zozo up like she normally does everyday.

Ntombi: My savings.

The lies flying out of her mouth sometimes also makes her to believe her own lie. Zanele nods moving with the queue.

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The trip was suppose to be about him and Uthando but his mother suddenly turned into to mother and son duo. Packing everything in the back of the van and closes the canopy before jogging to side.

Dalisile: Thank you my baby for grocery you bought.

He fakes a smile nodding.

Dalisile: I still have somewhere to pass before we head home.

Mthuthuzeli shuts his eyes releasing a deep breath. The woman was getting on his nerve and it seemed like his delaying him on purpose.

Mthuthuzeli: I thought you bought everything you needed?

Dalisile: I'm running out of your special tea. I know how much you love it.

He nods bringing the engine life.

Dalisile: You will have to wait for me somewhere. I'll walk from the robots to there.

He frowns narrowing his eyes at his mother. Dalisile waves her hand dismissing him. He signs and drives off while she directs him.

Dalisile: Turn left here and park the car here. I'll be right back.

Mthuthuzeli: Ma didn't you say I should take you to a pharmacy?

Dalisile: There is one down the road. Walking will get me there faster than the car because there's no traffic I need to wait for.

She opens her door and steps out of the car leaving his son dumbfounded. He sighs shaking his head and make a U-turn driving to KFC. He parks it on the driveway and step out of the car. Marching inside the shop he halts on his steps when his eyes lock with his sister. He frowns making his way towards her table.

Mthuthuzeli: Phumeza?

Phumeza: Bhuti.

Mthuthuzeli: What are you doing here? Should you be at school?

Phumeza snorts.

Phumeza: I graduated 6 years ago.

His swallows hard and pulls the chair to take a seat.

Mthuthuzeli: I didn't know.

Phumeza scoffs.

Phumeza: Of course you wouldn't know bhuti. Nobody cares about me in that house except malume.

Mthuthuzeli: That's not true and you know it.

Phumeza: It is true. I accepted it a long time ago that I'm an invincible human being to my family.

Mthuthuzeli: So if you graduated years ago why didn't you tell us?

Phumeza: I once called mom but she didn't pick up my call.

Before he could reply their uncle makes their way towards them with a white kid behind him.

Voice: Mommy.

He runs into Phumeza who has a smile on her face. Mthuthuzeli's eyes widen.

Ndaba: Mthu.

He pats his back and pulls a chair to take a seat. Phumeza kisses his son all over his face causing him to erupt in laughter.

Phumeza: (Did you have fun?)

Little Leon nods his head. Mthuthuzeli watches the interaction with question swimming in his head. Looking at Phumeza he can't seem to stomach that his sister is all grown up and even has a child. The years really flew by he was aware that people grow up as the years go but he didn't think his sister was also on that list. Has he been a terrible big brother that he missed so much of her life?

Leon: Mommy his staring.

He leans on his mother attempting to whisper but his big voice makes it seem like he was not. Phumeza and his uncle burst into laughter breaking Mthuthuzeli trail of thoughts.

Leon: Mommy who is he?

Phumeza: That's your uncle baby.

She shifts her eyes to her brother.

Phumeza: This Leon my son.

Mthuthuzeli gulps nodding. He heavily sighs.

Mthuthuzeli: You have a child? How old is he?

Phumeza: I have two actually. My first born Leah is 7 and you've already meet Leon.

Mthuthuzeli: (gasping) 7? Where is he now?

Phumeza: She has school to attend so I left her behind with my husband.

He sucks in a breath. Everything was getting too much for him. Has it been that long that he missed almost half of his sister's life.

Phumeza: How are things at home?

She muttered placing Leon on his seat shifting the attention away from her. Mthuthuzeli shifts his eyes from the boy and heavily sighs covering his face with his hands.

Mthuthuzeli: Where do I start?

Ndaba: From the beginning mshana.

He shakes his head placing his elbows on the table and start to narrate everything to them. From Buyisile missing as the lie they keep telling everyone to the recent events of being married.

Phumeza: How old is this girl?

Mthuthuzeli shrugs his shoulders.

Mthuthuzeli: I don't know.

Phumeza: Which grade is she in?

Dropping his eyes he shrugged. Phumeza groans resisting the urge to smack his brother across the face so he could come back to his senses.

Phumeza: What do you know bhuti?

Mthuthuzeli: Phumeza?

He muttered in a reprimanding tone.

Ndaba: His right mshana what do you know? From what I've heard from you you're not sure whether your mother followed all the traditional methods to take her from her home and people. For all we know your mother might be harbouring the poor girl in her yard without paying a single cent to her family.

Mthuthuzeli blows out air leaning back on his chair. His uncle was right he didn't have time to ask if everything was paid fully in her home. He just forgot everything upon seeing her at his home.

Phumeza: You have to stop listening to ma concerning your life. I don't blame sisi Buyi for running away if I was in her shoes I would have done the same thing.

Mthuthuzeli swallows hard as guilt knocks out air from his lungs.

Phumeza: The girl is young and probably scared out of her mind. Be patient with her.

Mthuthuzeli: (sighing) What such I do then in order hfor to trust me. She's scared of me.

Phumeza: Like I said be patient with her. Send her back to school.

Mthuthuzeli rises her eyes and glare at her.

Phumeza: Don't look at me like that bhuti do you want a wife whose not educated as you?

He drops his eyes shaking his head.

Phumeza: Then send her back to school. Sit down with her and set our boundaries that she will jot cross.

Ndaba: (nodding) You're sister is right. Give her years to mature and be the woman you want her to be. Getting married to someone whose young gives you the privilege to mold her into the kind of person you want her to be.

Phumeza: Start saving for her education. Once she passed her matric if she says she wants to go to varsity don't stand in her way. Be her cheerleader because that's an investment one day you will be proud of. Invest in her education and be much hands on. One day you will thank me.

Mthuthuzeli sighs trying to grasp everything they were saying. His brain felt like it will explode any second from now on.

Phumeza: Where is she now?

Mthuthuzeli: We left her back at home.

Phumeza: You got to be kidding me. You left her home while you're gallivanting with your mother in town how do you expect her to trust you then?

She yells gaining the attention of the other diners.

Mthuthuzeli: What do you expect me do Phumi?

Phumeza: Move her with you in Durban.

Mthuthuzeli shakes his head.

Mthuthuzeli: I can't because I stay in a hostel.

Phumeza: So what? You want that poor girl to hate you for the rest of his life because that's exactly where this is going if she keeps staying with mom.

Mthuthuzeli snorts.

Mthuthuzeli: You're making ma to sound like an evil villain.

Them: Because she is.

They muttered in unison.

Ndaba: Stop drinking tea. Man don't drink tea.

Before he could defend his mother his phone chimes in his pocket. He fishes out and answer the call.

Mthuthuzeli: Ma?

Phumeza rolls her eyes.

Phumeza: His a lost case this one.

She mumbles to their uncle who nods his head. Which men in the history of their family has Mthuthuzeli seen drinking tea?

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Bending down she removes a thorn from her shoes before knocking at the door. Being in that house gave her enough time to escape. The walls of that place were slowly closing on her and the people surrounding her are suffocating her to death. The door opens and her mother emerges with a scowl plastered on her face.

Hlengiwe: Uthando?

Tears discard on Uthando's cheeks. She throws herself on her mother hoping the woman will console her but instead Hlengiwe pushes her away.

Hlengiwe: What are you doing here?

Uthando: (sobbing) I came home ma. I don't want to be in that house anymore.

Hlengiwe: (frowning) What do you mean you don't want to be in that house?

Shaking her head Uthando sniffed back the mucus and wiped the tears with the back of her hand.

Uthando: I don't want to get married ma. I want to study and be independent. I don't want something that will hold me back I want to be the first woman in this village in our youth to graduate.

Hlengiwe chuckles clapping her hands. The child was testing her patience. Look at talking about graduating and not wanting to be married does she know how hard to find a husband when she gets that independence she wants?

Hlengiwe: Why are you selfish Uthando?

Gasping Uthando's eyes widen.

Uthando: Ma?

Hlengiwe: I'm asking why are you selfish? Do you know how hard is to find a good husband when you're independent? Man don't like women who are independent because their success tends to get on their head. Awusho ke mntanami ufuna ukuphenduka inhlekisa kulomuzi? (So tell me my child who do you want to turn into a laughing stock in this village?)

The glimpse of hope Uthando had just vanish while her heart scatters on the floor into million of broken pieces. This is not something she was expecting from her mother maybe her father would have been the one turning his back on her but she didn't expect her mother to be the one throwing her on the lions den.

Uthando: Mama angifuni ukushada nalowo mlisa. Sicela uzame ukuqonda. (Mother I don't want to get married to that man. Please try to understand.)

She drops to her knees folding her arms in her chest crying.

Uthando: Ngizoba yingane elalelayo kusukela manje ngizokwenza noma yini oyishoyo ngicela ungangiphindiseli emuva. (I'll be an obedient child from now on I'll even do anything you say please just don't send me back.)

Hlengiwe screeches and roughly grips her upper arm.

Hlengiwe: Ngiyala ukuphendulwa inhlekisa ngenxa yakho. Uyazi ukuthi unenhlanhla kangakanani ukushada kulowo mndeni? Uyazi ukuthi zingaki amantombazane akulo muzi afisa sengathi ngabe uwena njengamanje? (I refuse to be turned into a laughing stock because of you. Do you know how lucky you're to get married to that family? Do you know how many girls in this village wish they were you right now?)

She shoves her clicking her tongue. Uthando falls on the ground crying.

Uthando: (crying) Ma?

Hlengiwe: Ngisize-ke uphakamise lezo milenze ecashile uhambe ngesango ongene ngalo. Leli akuselona ikhaya lakho. Angifuni ukuphinde ngikhulume nawe ngalento noma ngizokukhombisa unyoko. Kuyini lokhu? (So help me and lift those skinny legs and walk right through the gate you entered. This is no longer your home. I don't want to talk to you about this again or I'll show you your mother. Nxaa what is this?)

She slams the door in her face. Uthando rise up to her feet and sit by the door waiting for her mother to open the door for her. She was probably playing a prank on her she will walk out of that door and scold at her for sitting in front of the door. Everything will go back to the way they were before this nightmare begun. Wiping the tears away she leaps up to her feet and twist the doorknob

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she will walk out of that door and scold at her for sitting in front of the door. Everything will go back to the way they were before this nightmare begun. Wiping the tears away she leaps up to her feet and twist the doorknob opening the door.

Hlengiwe: You came back today and I haven't cooked yet.

She muttered emerging from the kitchen. She halts on her steps.

Hlengiwe: What are you doing here? Didn't I tell you to go back?

Uthando: Ma I...

Hlengiwe interrupts her placing her hands on her waist.

Hlengiwe: Yeyi yeyi ngiyahlolwa la. (I'm being tested here.)

Uthando: (sobbing) Ma please.

Hlengiwe furiously march towards her and throws the door open. Gripping Uthando's arm she shoves her outside. Uthando staggers with tears blurring her vision. Reality slowly sinks in on her that her mother was throwing her into a lion's den.

Hlengiwe: Ingabe uyazi ukuthi unenhlanhla kangakanani? kanti usekhafula ehlikihla ngomlomo. Uthando unenhlanhla enkulu futhi ufuna ukuyilahla leyo nhlanhla ngenxa yobugovu. Phezu kwesidumbu sami. (Does she know how lucky she is? And yet she is spewing rubbing with her mouth. Uthando is very lucky and she wants to throw that luck away because of selfishness. Over my dead body)

She yells on the other side of the door agitated.

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Slowly walking back at home Uthando feels like she's carrying the whole world up on her shoulder. She quickly wipes her tears and picks up her pace when her eyes land on the car driving in the yard. They are back she was hoping for a little time to herself. Dalisile slams the car door with a scowl plastered on her face.

Dalisile: I will not have a daughter in law who gallivants the whole neighborhood gossiping about God knows what.

Mthuthuzeli: Ma?

He murmurs in a reprimanding tone.

Dalisile: What? This is how everything starts if we allow her to gallivant like this she will slip right through our fingers. The next thing we know she will be a gossip queen and I will not have her dragging my name through the mud. Tame her fast Mthuthuzeli before I do it for you.

Mthuthuzeli sigh shaking his head as his mother storms to the house. His mother was becoming impossible to live with.

Uthando: (low voice). I'm sorry I didn't know I was not allowed to live the yard.

Mthuthuzeli shakes his head.

Mthuthuzeli: Don't mind her.

He muttered retrieving the grocery from the car and walk to the house. Uthando wipes her tears and makes her room.

Voice: Dalisile?

Uthando peeks on the window and see Mandla's mother walking in the yard. She closes the curtain and lay on the bed.

Dalisile walks out of the house to attend the voice whose calling her. Her lips stretch into a smile upon seeing her friend. She ushers her inside.

Mbali: Sawubona Mthuthuzeli.

Mthuthuzeli nods his head.

Dalisile: Bring the chairs Mthuthuzeli.

He walks inside the house and emerges with two chair.

Dalisile: Pour us the cold drink you bought.

Mthuthuzeli glares at her. The woman knows that the plastic from shoprite belongs to his wife. He sighs and stumbles inside to rinse the glasses.

Dalisile: Don't forget the biscuits.

She yells outside. Mthuthuzeli shakes his head and pulls out the tray from the second drawer and place everything on top of the tray. He will have to replace what his mother took.

Mthuthuzeli: I'll be in my room if you need me.

Dalisile nods and watch him walking away. He stumbles to his room forgetting the plastic behind.

Mbali: Yeyi mngani ngizwile ukuthi umthathele umfazi ngacabanga ukuthi kungani ngingayi ukuzibonela. Uyazi ukuthi abantu banomsindo kanjani kulomuzi. (Friend I heard you took a wife for him and I thought why wouldn't I go see for myself. You know how people are noisy in this village.)

Dalisile: Uzwe kahle. Ukuguga kwakhe nami ngidinga abazukulu abazogcwala igceke lonke ngohleko nomsindo. (You heard right. His getting old and I need grandchildren who will fill this whole yard with their sound of laughter and noise.)

Mbali: Ucabanga ukuthi uthathe isinqumo esifanele? (Do you think you took a right decision?)

Dalisile: Ngiyazi ngikwenzile. Nami ngiyaguga futhi ngingase ngife ngokushesha ngakho-ke ngifuna ukufa ngazi ukuthi indodana yami inomuntu ozoyigada lapho ngingekho. (I know I did. I'm getting old too and I might die very soon so I want to die knowing my son has someone to look after him when I'm not there.)

Mbali nods in understanding.

Mbali: Tell me friend how do you do it?

Dalisile: (frowning) Do what?

Mbali: How do you make him to listen to everything you say. I've been watching him since I got here and he listens to everything you say. So how do you do it?

Placing the glass back on the tray Dalisile leaps up to her feet.

Dalisile: This is not something one can discuss outside. You might not know whose listening follow me.

She picks the tray and walks inside with Mbali hot on her tails. She pauses seeing the plastic on top of the table. She peeks inside and chuckles. Nobody was going to eat KFC in her house while the owner was not eating. Mthuthuzeli is testing her patience. Clicking her tongue she pulls out the paperbag from KFC and places it on top of the table. She walks to the cabinet and takes out a plate and starts dishing up. She places the plate on the tray and moves to the dining room.

Mbali: I wonder what did I bath with today.

She murmurs taking a piece from the plate and shoves it in her mouth.

Mthuthuzeli finds Uthando sleeping in the bed. He smiles bending down in front of her and places a kiss

on her forehead. This was his second chance and he was not going to blow it away. He slowly tiptoes trying to wake the sleeping beauty and walks out of the room to the kitchen. His eyebrows furrow looking at the paperbag on top of the table. He picks it up and finds it empty. He runs his hands on his face frustrated. Marching to the dining room his knees buckle while his whole body feels like cold water was being poured on him. There was the takeaway he bought for his wife being eaten by his mother and friend. He made it clear to his mother that she must not touch that plastic. He releases a deep breath trying to calm himself. His blood was boiling.

Mbali: (mouthful) So how do you do it?

Dalisile: There is a tea that I make him drink everyday. I sometimes pick some for him when his going back to Durban so he wouldn't slip from my fingers.

Mthuthuzeli's heart thudded in his chest. He looks at the two woman in disgust as they continue talking not aware that he was in the room.

Mbali: What's in the tea?

Dalisile: Just a little something I got from a sangoma to control him. If I just seat back and do nothing I might just bury myself.

Mbali: So you're saying you're feeding him umuthi hiding it behind tea?

Dalisile picks up her glass and sips on it.

Dalisile: Correct. This morning he didn't drink it and I have to make sure before dawn he drinks it. His been like a puppy trying to please that girl.

She spat feeling her anger rising.

Dalisile: Can you imagine he even bought her KFC while he didn't buy me anything?

Mbali claps once.

Mbali: You have to give me some of that tea. Mandla is starting to become a problem too. He yelled at me this morning because of that hobo Zobuhle.

Dalisile: (shocked) Ini?

Mbali: I'm telling you mngani my son says he is in love with her.

Dalisile: Don't worry wena just make sure he drinks the tea regularly and everything will fall into place. By the end of this week he wouldn't want anything to do with that girl.

Mbali smirks nodding.

Dalisile: Take another piece mngani we will not starve while food is here in front of us.

Mbali chuckles taking another piece of meat.

Mthuthuzeli: Ma?

The glass Dalisile had in her hand slips out of her falling and scattering on the floor. Dalisile rises to her feet with her eyes widen.

Dalisile: (shocked) Mthuthuzeli?

Looking at this woman he once called mother he feels all the love slowly fade replaced by hatred. His sister and uncle were right. It's the damn tea she feeds him that makes his not see a single fault she does.

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Dalisile gulps her saliva and shifts her eyes to Mbali who has a horror look matching hers. Her heart pounding in her chest violently could leap out any minute from now on. She stretches her lips into a smile hoping he didn't hear anything.

Dalisile: Mthu my boy.

She cautiously took her calculated steps towards him.

Dalisile: Do you need anything?

Mthuthuzeli smacks his lips shut looking at his mother with a disgusted look written all over his face.
Dalisile giggles washing away the awkwardness and the tension in the room.

Dalisile: I know what just you need. A hot cup of tea.

She muttered stumbling to the kitchen.

Dalisile: See Mbali I told you that my boy can't go a day without drinking his special tea.

Mthuthuzeli: Don't bother.

He sneers making his mother to freeze on her tracks. She slowly turn to face him with her eyes popped out.

Dalisile: Mthuthuzeli what's going on?

Mthuthuzeli: I should be asking you mother what's going on?

He arch his brow narrowing his bloodshot eyes at her. He felt so stupid for placing all his life in his mother's hands. She trusted this woman more than anything. Since she was his mother he knew she couldn't hurt him boy he was so wrong. No wonder Phumeza doesn't alert them about her life this woman was a devil himself.

Dalisile: Mthuthuzeli are you talking to me like that in front of my guest?

She yells placing her hands on her waist. Did he perhaps heard everything? Gulp the thick saliva she sucks in her breath seeing that his not intimidated by her raising voice. This boy has suddenly forget her.

Dalisile: How long have you been standing there?

Mthuthuzeli: Long enough to hear what kind of person you are.

She gasps widen her eyes. She never thought in in her wildest dream she will hear Mthuthuzeli talking to her like this. His gone forever from her grip and she wishes she insisted he drank the tea this morning. This was partly her fault. She failed him.

Shifting her eyes to Mbali who keeps looking from left to right whenever one of them is speaking. Couldn't she see her presence was not needed anymore?

Dalisile: Mngani we will talk later. I'll accompany you home.

Mthuthuzeli chuckles.

Mthuthuzeli: Oh no ma you're not about to do that. Don't you want your "mngani" to hear how much evil you're?

Dalisile gasps and quickly march towards him slapping him so hard. Mthuthuzeli chuckles slapping his forehead dramatically.

Mthuthuzeli: Stupid Mthuthuzeli forgot that you're in this together.

To say his livid was an understatement. The man was seething blaming himself for always turning a blind eye on everything his mother did from Buyisile's death to now. Maybe this was Buyisile fighting for herself through his mother in that garden they dumped her body in like a dog. Regret and guilt washes over him.

Mthuthuzeli: Everyday ma you make me drink tea. "Special tea" as you call it knowing you're feeding me umuthi.

He deep voice boomed around the house scaring the two women in front of him.

Mthuthuzeli: What kind of woman does that to her own child?

Dalisile: Mthu....

He raises his hand interrupting her. She shuts her lips and narrow her eyes at him. The veins in his forehead were popping while he kept clenching his jaws. Dalisile places her hand on her chest trying to calm her raising heart. This person in front of her was a person she has never set her eyes on.

Mthuthuzeli: You look at me everyday knowing exactly what you're doing to me. Do you like it when I'm this violent person who is feared by everyone?

His question keeps flying out of his mouth making it difficult for Dalisile to answer them.

Mthuthuzeli: When was the last time I had someone who I can call a friend?

He places his hand on his clenched jaws pretending to be thinking.

Mthuthuzeli: Oh yes I was six when you told me cut him off because he was influencing me. How could a six year old influence one another?

Dalisile: If I didn't break that stupid friendship you wouldn't be here today.

Mthuthuzeli snorts.

Mthuthuzeli: When are you going to take responsibility of your own actions ma?

Dalisile: (shouting) You're not about to talk to me like you're falling on top of the mountain Mthuthuzeli I'm still your mother.

Mthuthuzeli: I'm pretty sure your womb is rotten because no sane women would do something like this to their own child.

He yelled raising his deep voice. He chuckled shaking his head.

Mthuthuzeli: What happened to Sibiya ma?.

Dalisile's eyes popped out of their socket while a shiver ran down her spine.

Mthuthuzeli: (screaming) Don't bother lying to me because I saw you that night ma.

If her eyes where not out of their sockets then now they were. Her heart pounding in her chest so hard it made it difficult for her to breath. Her chest closed up on her causig her to hold it while her knees failed her.

Mthuthuzeli: I might have been stupid for years ma but I'm not blind.

Mbali: (panicking) Mngani?

She tries to catch her as she falls to the floor. Mbali used her hands to fan her while calling her name. Mthuthuzeli shook his head and quickly turned on his heels marching to his room. He shivers as he thinks about his late wife Buyisile. If he could turn back the hands of time he would do things differently. He throws the door open in his room and quickly stumbled to the wardrobe to pack his clothes. He drags his suitcases passing the screaming Mbali inside the main house and place them on the back of his van and walk back to his room to wake Uthando up.

Uthando curled herself into ball shivering. She sighs in her sleep frown upon hearing someone singing. She forces her legs to follow the voice and it leads her to the garden. Ceasing her steps she squints her eyes to the woman sitting in the garden on top of the row of cabbages facing away from her.

Voice: I could feel your heart thudded in your chest.

Uthando places her hand on her chest feeling the organ beating abnormally.

Voice: I'm not going to hurt you. I'm harmless.

She muttered leaping up to her feet and turn to face Uthando. Her lips stretch into a smile.

Buyi: (frowning) You're so young. I can't believe he went after a kid after me.

She yelled agitated.

Buyi: He has no shame.

She clucked her tongue walking towards Uthando who staggers back frightened. Buyisile stops on her tracks chewing her bottom lip.

Buyi: Trust me nana I'm harmless

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feeling the organ beating abnormally.

Voice: I'm not going to hurt you. I'm harmless.

She muttered leaping up to her feet and turn to face Uthando. Her lips stretch into a smile.

Buyi: (frowning) You're so young. I can't believe he went after a kid after me.

She yelled agitated.

Buyi: He has no shame.

She clucked her tongue walking towards Uthando who staggers back frightened. Buyisile stops on her tracks chewing her bottom lip.

Buyi: Trust me nana I'm harmless if I wanted to hurt you I wouldn't have met you like this.

Uthando skeptically nodded.

Buyi: I'm Buyisile Mthuthuzeli dead wife.

She crack up into laughter.

Buyi: Sorry I'm still abusing the privilege of laughing without fearing I might be beaten into a pulp even though I have been dead for years.

She spat clicking her tongue fuming.

Buyi: These people made my life a living hell when I was alive and I couldn't sit back and watch them do the same thing with you.

Uthando coughs hysterically after being choked by her saliva.

Buyi: Mthuthuzeli is scared of his mother he sometimes makes me want to come back from the dead and smack him back to his senses. I would be lying if I said he didn't love me he did in his own way but his mother got in the way.

Uthando: W-w-what do you mean?

She fumbled on her words finding her voice.

Buyi: That woman is dangerous. She has a stupid tea that she feeds him everyday.

Uthando: (frowning) Tea? What does tea have to do with everything?

Buyi: It has to do everything. I died because the man was stupid and weak. He trusted his mother more than me his own wife.

Before Uthando could reply she heard a voice calling out for her.

Buyi: Be careful.

She flips her eyes open after hearing Buyi's last words. She finds the seething Mthuthuzeli on the side of the bed.

Mthuthuzeli: Pack your things we are leaving.

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Later that day Zobuhle made her way to the river and looked around sadly sighing. She was hoping she will see her friend. She hasn't spoken to her since that day they took her away from everything she knows and loves. Huffing annoyed she stretches her neck squinting her eyes looking for any sign of movement. She places her freezing hands on her face and blow air in them to unfreeze them. Why did she agree to sneak out in the first place? Roots breaking makes her to raise her head. She finds her boyfriend Mandla walking towards her with smile plastered on his face.

Mandla: My future wife.

Zobuhle blushes melting shifting her gaze away from him.

Zobuhle: Do you know how long I've been standing here? I could have frozen until I die while waiting for you.

Her teeth clattering as she yells. Mandla chuckled she looked so damn cute when she was mad.

Mandla: I'm sorry nhliziyo yam I knock off late.

Again the stupid heart melts involuntary hearing such words. Such a deceiving organ that confused one's mind.

Zobuhle: You're lucky I can't get mad at you for too long.

Mandla chuckles wrapping his arms her waist and capture her lips. She looks away blushing after breaking the kiss.

Mandla: (smiling) I got you something.

He fishes in his pocket and takes out a phone.

Mandla: I couldn't bring it with the box because I accidentally spilled juice on it. When I saw it at Pep I thought of you.

Tears blurr her eyes as she gaps.

Zobuhle: (breaking voice) You didn't have to.

Mandla: You're using your friends phone and it irks me that sometimes I can't call you at night to wish you a good night or in the morning. Our calls are limited and sometimes your friend doesn't pass some messages. Like she did yesterday.

Zobuhle: (sniffing) What message?

Mandla: It doesn't matter anymore baby We will get all the privacy we need from now on.

Sometimes Ntombi would read her messages and she understood that it was her phone but a little respect and privacy was what she was hoping for since they were friends. She wipes her tears and stood in her tiptoes kissing his lips.

Zobuhle: Thank you.

Mandla: You are welcome sthandwa sam.

Zobuhle: I have to go back before Khwezi can notice I'm not home.

Mandla: How I wish I could spend the day with you just wrapped in your arms.

Zobuhle: (sadly) Me too.

Mandla: Here buy yourself something nice.

He pulls his wallet in his pocket and hands a R500 notes.

Zobuhle: (gasping) Mandla?

Tears welled up in her eyes. She shakes her head.

Zobuhle: I can't take this.

Mandla: You can baby. Let me spoil you and take care of you.

She burst into tears.

Zobuhle: (crying) I don't understand how a guy like you can even look at a direction of a poor girl like me. You know I can't give you anything back because I don't have anything.

Mandla engulfed her in his arms as she cried painfully. Knowing Mandla's mother she will swear and embarrass her if word got out that she's dating her son. She gasped for breath as she chokes on her tears. It was no secret at how poor she was to compared to him and everybody in this village used that to belittle her except for her best friend Uthando.

Mandla: Your love is all I need and it enough for me. You don't have to give me anything in return except

your love.

She stayed in his arms crying until she had hiccups.

Zobuhle: Thank you.

Mandla: As long as I'm alive I'll do anything for you okay?

She nods blinking the tears threatening to roll down her face. They silently walked to her house while her thoughts were all over the place. She looked at the new Samsung A 03 core and money in her hand. Now she can pay for that tomato Khwezi eat. Her heart pounded in her chest what will she say to her

grandmother and where will she say she got them from?

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He kills the engine and sigh stepping out of the car. Walking to her side he opens the door for her.

Mthuthuzeli: Come.

Uthando steps out of the car while Mthuthuzeli closes the door behind her. He engulf her trembling hand on his and they made their way inside. Uthando's heart thudded in her chest as the walked inside the hostel. She looked around seeing a lot of men walking up and down. Opening the door he lead her inside. She moves closer to him as the men inside whistle. He needs to buy a door he thought as he closes the curtain from the preying eyes. He takes a seat on the bed and pats the empty space. Uthando slowly sat down.

Mthuthuzeli: This is where we will be living from now on. I know it's not your ideal place but its something. I have a past and an ugly one that I'm sure you're aware of but I'm pleading and begging you do not judge me about my past mistakes. They are there for a reason and I'm learning from them. From here on wards we are going forward. I can't send you back home because of how things are done in our village. You will be with me most of the time and if I'm not there I'll show your someone I trust who can look after you until I came back.

He heavily sighs.

Mthuthuzeli: How old are you?

Uthando: (low voice) 17.

He nods counting.

Mthuthuzeli: Starting from tomorrow you're going back to school. I can't have a wife whose not educated as I am. I'm giving you 5 years to mature and live your life the way you see fit after that you will have to start your duties.

Uthando's hands tremble in her lap. Mthuthuzeli chuckles.

Mthuthuzeli: Not like that. You will take me as your roommate for the next five years. I will not touch you or anything. After 5 years that's where the relationship begins.

Uthando nods in understanding. 5 years is a lot of time to live her life before her life gets trapped again.

Mthuthuzeli: Did ma pay your lobola?

She shakes her head. He sighs.

Mthuthuzeli: I'll sort that out tomorrow .

He murmurs in deep in his thoughts.

Mthuthuzele: It's the least I could do for you.

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3 YEARS LATER

3 YEARS LATER

Mthuthuzeli fold the newspaper under his armpit and stepped out of his taxi. Making his way inside the caravan Uthando jumps into her feet while Joyce stirs up her pots.

Mthuthuzeli: I got the paper.

He places into front of her with trembling hands Uthando takes a seat in the plastic chair and sucks in a breath before paging through the paper.

Joyce: Mthuthuzeli a word.

They walk outside the caravan and Mthuthuzeli closes the door behind him.

Mthuthuzeli: What is not?

He murmured annoyed.

Joyce: How long will this keep going?

Mthuthuzeli knots his eyebrow chewing his lip.

Mthuthuzeli: What are you talking about?

Joyce: I'm talking about this arrangement. It's not working for me anymore.

Mthuthuzeli heavily sighed.

Joyce: Looking at you and her playing happy family is killing me. I have to pretend to this girl that I'm not sleeping with her husband everyday.

Mthuthuzeli: Why are you acting up now?

Joyce clucked her tongue.

Joyce: I've been here for you for years and you went out and married someone else knowing exactly I was in the picture. I was there when you were this animal taking you beatings almost everyday single day of my life not knowing when will it be my last and yet she is coming up from nowhere and got everything while I got what beating and being your sperm dish?

She spat bitterly.

Mthuthuzeli: I don't know why do side chicks always cause trouble.

He mumbled inaudible under his breath.

Mthuthuzeli: What do you expect me to do Joyce? I can't live my wife for your or any other woman for that matter.

Joyce clicked her tongue.

Joyce: Then I'm telling her. You brought this girl in my personally space knowing exactly I've been your girlfriend for years.

She yelled causing Mthuthuzeli to place his hands on her mouth shutting her.

Mthuthuzeli: Are you crazy?

He grabs her upper arm and drag her further away from the door.

Mthuthuzeli: You're not about to ruin my life because of your insecurities. I spend more time with you more than I do with her that should be enough for you.

Joyce fold her arms across her chest.

Joyce: Well that's not enough. I also want the house you're building for her.

Mthuthuzeli groaned. Why did he trust Joyce with Uthando in the first place? The woman knew their relationship had no label so why is she complicating things now?

Mthuthuzeli: You're half the age she is and yet your complaining about a mere child?

Joyce scoffed.

Mthuthuzeli: And you act surprise when I choose her over you. Joyce I've got my hands full with her and I don't need this right now. I expected better from you so if your not willing to stay in your lane then fine by me. I'll find someone else to be my sperm dish.

Tears welled in Joyce's eyes. Her heart broke into pieces that cannot be mended anytime soon. Oh the love she had for this man.

A scream from inside the caravan breaks their daze. The door gets thrown open and Uthando runs outside.

Mthuthuzeli: What is it?

Uthando: I passed.

A smile creeps on his lips. He walks towards her and scoops her in his arms. He spins her around causing Uthando to roar in laughter while tears of joy streamed down her cheeks. Joyce sadly looked at them and wiped the tears away with the back of her hand but they kept falling.

It was no secret that the man loved his wife even the blind could see that but that little hope has never killed anyone. 10 years with this man with no ring. He was the same person who said marriage was not something in his mind yet here he is married with someone else. Oh she wished to plucked her hand on her heart and erase anything to do with him but the stupid organ wouldn't forget him even if she wanted to.

Uthando: Why are you crying sisi Joyce?

She snaps out of her daze and fakes a smile.

Joyce: I'm just happy for you Nana. Congratulations.

Uthando beams.

Uthando: Thank you. I've got to call my best friend I'll be right back.

She turned on her heels and ran back to the caravan to make a call. The past two years have been wonderful to her. True to his word the man has been living up to his promises. He sent her back to school the following day she moved to the hostel and she was so happy. He was her roommate like he said and they have been trying to live with each other. She was surprised when she drove her to plot and told her that's where he house will be. Her heart danced with joy knowing she wouldn't have to spend the rest of her life living with the creeps in the hostel. Mthuthuzeli introduced her to Joyce who owned a caravan across the taxi rank. She spends more of her time when Mthuthuzeli is at the rank and sometimes sleeps over her house when he drives outside Durban.

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Khwezi picked up her ringing phone and ran outside with it. He tripped on his own two feet hanging up the call. He rised to his feet and dusted his clothes before running to the back where Zobuhle was.

Khwezi: Sisi sisi.

Zozo dropped the dress she had in her hands in the basin and wiped her hands on her top rushing to him.

Zozo: What's going on?

Khwezi: Your phone was ringing.

He panted handing the phone over. Zozo brought the screen to life and unlock the password. The phone rings again before she could check who the caller was. She smiled and pressed the green button while Khwezi runs back inside.

Zozo: Hey.

Uthando screamed on the end of the line. She giggled removing the phone from her ear before the girl can damage her eardrum.

Uthando: I did it.

Zozo: (frowning) Huh?

Uthando: I'm going to varsity. I passed my matric.

She froze with her eyes popped out of their sockets. Her heart rate picked up speed in her chest. This girl doesn't she know things for playing are made in China?

Were the results really out today?

Uthando: Did you hear what I said Zozo?

She breaks her out of her daze.

Zozo: (skeptical) Yeah.

Uthando: I'm going to varsity wee oo. Oh I can't wait.

She gushes dreamily over the phone.

Zozo: (smiling) Congratulations.

Uthando: Thank you mngani. Has Mandla arrived with the paper?

Before she could reply Khwezi walks towards her with the newspaper.

Zozo: Let me call you back. Mandla just brought the paper.

Uthando: Okay.

She hang up and grab the paper.

Khwezi: Bhuti Mandla said I should tell you goodluck and he will say you later.

She nods bending down and flip through the pages. She throws the pages carelessly on the floor frustrated. Finally she finds her school name and look for her exam number. Her bottom lip quiver while tears discarded her eyes. She choked in a sob and sat butt flat on the grass. Her phone ring in her pocket. She fished it out and burst into tears answering the call.

Mandla: Hey babe did you get the paper?

Zozo: I didn't make it.

Mandla: (confused) Huh?

Zozo: (sobbing) I didn't pass Mandla. I wasted my time and brain for weeks all for nothing.

Mandla: Hey don't talk like that. You didn't waste anything baby. Maybe they made a mistake.

She cried harder.

Zozo: What kind of mistake is that? Passing my matric was my ticket for a better life.

Mandla: Babe you're breaking my heart. I'm coming.

Zozo: (crying) No I need to be alone.

Mandla: I'm coming.

He disconnected the call. She covered her face with her hands bursting into tears. Her phone rang beside her. She looked at the caller ID and declined Uthando's call.

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At Ntombi house

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she looked at her parents who sat across her excited. Dropping her eyes to the coffee table her heart thudded in her chest while her hands trembled.

Mpumi: Come on Ntombi just pick up the paper already.

Her mother muttered impatiently. Ntombi picked up the paper with her heart about to leap out of her throat. She knew she didn't write her final exam last year and it would be a waste of time looking for her examination number on the newspaper but she didn't want voice that out loud.

Mpumi: What is so difficult in looking for your school?

She muttered snatching the newspaper from her hands and place it on the table. She dipped her saliva in her finger and paged through the paper.

Mpumi: There.

She muttered pointed at her school name. Ntombi's chest closed up on her while her heart pounded violently on her ribcage. She raised her head and looked at her parents who are beaming from ear to ear and drop her eyes to the paper. With shaky hands she turned the paper to her eye sight and went through each exam number looking for a familiar number she knew.

Mpumi: Come on Ntombi.

Her husband chuckled beside her and kissed her cheek. The woman was eagerly excited you would swear she was the one who was a matriculant last year.

Mlungisi: You're such a bully woman. Let the child take her own time.

Mpumi: I can't help it baba I'm excited.

Mlungisi: (chuckling) I can see mama but wait.

Ntombi: Here am I.

She muttered breaking the moment. Her mother leaped up to her feet and quickly round the table. Squinting her eyes she screams.

Mpumi: My baby passed baba. She passed her matric with a Bachelor.

She screamed engulfing Ntombi in a hug. Mlungisi chuckles and joined the group hug. He places a kiss on Ntombi's forehead.

Mlungisi: Congratulations Ntombi kaBaba.

Ntombi fakes a smile.

Ntombi: Ngiyabonga baba.

Mpumi: I have to throw you a mother of all party this village has ever seen. They have to know my baby is the future president of this country. I'm coming back I have to make phone calls.

She walked out of the room leaving his husband dead in laughter. Oh the woman might seem like a hard nut to crack on the outside but inside she was soft like a marshmallow.

Mlungisi: You made us proud my girl. I'm sure you can see how hyperactive your mother is.

He chuckled.

Mlungisi: I'm afraid that's what we will talk about for the rest of this week.

Ntombi drops her eyes and nods. If they only knew that was not her exam number.

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Dalisile sat under the shade facing the tar road. It's been three years and the last time she saw her son was when he fired all questions at her at once like a police officer. She sadly sighed and look around the yard. The house has turned to a quiet on without him. Loneliness and boredom was slowly creeping up on her. She has seen Uthando walking up and down the village wish her friends but the girl just passes her like she doesn't her.

She once tried to talk to her but the skinny girl just shut her down quickly than she anticipated. Her response was that Mthuthuzeli gave her clear instructions that she must never in her life talk to her again. She must pass her like she doesn't her and that's what she's been doing. To say she's hurt would be an understatement.

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In Lagos Nigeria Idunnuola cradled her big stomach dragging her swollen feet making her way out of the house to the meter taxi waiting for her outside. She hopped in and greeted the driver before closing the door behind her. Leaning in the window she placed her hand on her stomach and heavily sighed. Any day from now on she could give birth but the man she's suppose to be by her side was not there. The last time she saw him was 8months ago. Being married to him only brought pain and suffering. It was clear as broad day that he didn't love her and just married her for the sake of being married. Arranged marriages where a common thing happening around and she also happened to be lucky one's who got married to the man of her dreams. Adesola was a crush from back in the days when they were kids. She thought the feeling was mutual because the man always flirted with her but little did she know that it was a way of rejecting her nicely. He is in deed a child born in riches like his name and that was also a bonus that attracted her to him. If only she could turn back the hands of time she would have done things differently. She bitterly chortle as she thinks about the meaning of her name. Happiness is not something she knew ever since she got married her parents choose a wrong choice of word for her.

Driver: Ma'am we have arrived.

His voice breaks her out of her daze. She shifts her eyes to her surroundings and in deed she was at the parking lot of the mall. She took out her wallet and pay the driver.

Happiness: Thank you.

She murmurs stepping out of the car and closes the door. She took her calculated steps inside the mall and made her way to the boutique for kids. She's been delaying the shopping hoping and praying her husband could return home so they could do it together but it seems like the man was not interested.

Two hours later she walked out of the boutique with her bags to the nearest restaurant she could find. She was tired and needed to sit down.

Waiter: Table for one ma'am?

He muttered helping her with bags.

Happiness: Yes please and thank you.

The waiter ushered her to her table and placed her shopping bags on the floor. She picked the menu on top of the table and went through it while the waiter opened his notepad to jot down her order.

Waiter: What will you be drinking?

Happiness: Orange juice will be fine for now.

The waiter nodded and turned on his heels. Her phone chimes in her purse. A smile creeps on her lips when she sees the caller ID.

Happiness: Nne (Mother.)

Ewatomi: Idu nwam ka i mere?(Idu my baby how are you?

)

Happiness: Adị m mma na gị nne?

(I'm fine and you mother?

)

Ewatomi: Na nwa (And the baby?)

Her smiles widen while she placed her hand on her stomach. The waiter places the glass in front of her and turned in his heels to attend other customers.

Happiness: Nwatakiri ahụ bụ ezigbo nne. Kwụsi nri gide onwe gi na anyị abụọ dị mma.

(The baby is fine mother. Stop stressing yourself we are both fine.

)

Ewatomi: Kedu ka m ga-esi ghara inwe nchekasi gbasara gi mgbe i na-achọ imụ nwa mbụ gi. O doro m anya na obi di Ade uto.

(How could I not stress about you when you're about to have your first baby. I'm sure Ade is so happy.

)

Her smile drops while tears welled in her eyes. She bit her quivering lip to suppress a sob to escape her mouth.

Happiness: (breaking voice) Ya riri nne n'añụ.

(His overwhelmed with joy.)

She lies through her teeth.

Happiness: Ọ na-ewere m dị ka akwa ebe ọ na-emebi m rere ure. (He treats me like an egg while spoiling me rotten.)

The lies keep flying out of her mouth voluntary. She didn't want to tell her parents that she was not happy in her marriage anymore. She still had hope to fight for her love and was just waiting for him to come back to his senses.

Ewatomi: Chukwu di nma adam nke ahu bu ihe m na-acho gi. Kedu mgbe i na-alota? (God is good my daughter that's what I've always wanted for you. When are you coming home?)

)

Happiness: Nne m ga-aga. Onye no n'onu uzọ.

(Mother I have to go. Someone is at the door.

)

Ewatomi: Idu i ga-alota bef..(Idu you have to come home bef.. (tu tu tu)

She rudely disconnects the call before her mother could finish talking. She drops her face to her hands and burst into tears. Going back home will turn her into a laughing stock. Both her sisters are happily married and that would make her returns goods. Going back to go back home and be with her family was not an option. She wanted to stay at her house waiting for her husband to come home to her and her child.

At the same restaurant Idu is in Adesola's keep beeping indicating a text. He ignored all of them and placed his undivided attention to the beautiful woman in front o him. Tiwa giggled blushing. The man was making her to feel like a teenager all over again.

Ade: Did I tell you how much I love you?

Tiwa smiled nodding.

Tiwa: I love you too.

Ade gets off the chair and lean over the table and captured her soft lips. She smiles through the kiss and savour the sweetness of his tongue dancing with hers. He pulls out leaving her wanting more. His phone beeped again he picked up from the table and lowered the volume not bothering to look at the text. Tiwa raises her head and see a pregnant woman walking in.

Tiwa: Shame she must be tired.

Ade: Who?

Tiwa: The lady that just walked in. She's heavily pregnant with a thousand of shopping bags. Where is her husband? He should be doing that with her and not her walk around alone. She looks like she could give birth any time from now on.

Ade didn't bother shifting his eyes on her and look what has gained her attention.

Ade: Stop bothering yourself about other people while I'm here in front of you.

Tiwa giggled shaking her head.

Happiness picked up her napkin and wiped herself clean. She leaned back on her chair waiting for the bill. She heavily sighed looking at her swollen feet they seem to be much more worse than they were this morning. She placed her hand on her stomach caressing it gently. Exhaustion was making her to be drowsy. All she needed was her bed maybe a bath will follow after she woke up. She waves her hand gaining the waiter's attention.

Happiness: Can I have the bill please.

The waiter nodded before turning on his heels. He comes back a few minutes later and hands her the bill. She pays the bill and rise up to her feet to make the last trip to the bathroom. She flushes after her business and walks to the sink to wash her hands. Walking out of the bathroom her ears picks up a familiar sound of laughter. She frowns shaking her head she probably imagining it because there was no way Ade was in the same restaurant as her. She walks to her table to pick up her shopping bags. The laughter makes it it's way to her ears again. She chews her bottom lip fishing for her phone in her purse. Scrolling down the contact list she places a call. The phone rings until it takes her to voicemail. She sighs and shove her phone in her purse. She chuckles shaking her head it's definitely her brain making out every laughter to sound familiar to her. The constant yearning has made her lose her mind. She raises her head to the couple walking to the same direction as her and gets the shock of her life. There is the man whose suppose to be by her side in this condition she's in with another woman walking out of the restaurant. Her chest closes on her while lip quiver. She drops the bags and clutches her chest.

Waitress: Ma'am? Ma'am are you alright?

She rushes to her aid. She drags a chair on a vacant table and helps her to sit down. She turns on her

heels running to the kitchen for a glass of water while Idunniola gasps for air. She opens her mouth trying to breath but the air doesn't reach her lungs. Her moist eyes widen. The waitress runs back with a glass of water. She pauses and curse under her breath.

Waitress: Can somebody call an ambulance.

She screams gaining the attention of other diners. The manager runs to them with a phone on her ear.

Adesola picks up his belongings from the table and lshoves them in his pocket. He leaps up to his feet and rounds the table to Tiwa's side. He pecks her lips before helping her to her feet. Tiwa giggles shly a picking up her purse. Ade clamps his hand on hers and they make their way to the entrance of the restaurant the same time as Idunniola. They walk to the door. The waitress screams gaining their attention.

Tiwa: What's going on inside?

She mumbles peeking through the window.

Ade: None of our business babe let's go.

He holds her upper arm trying to drag her away from the from the window of the shop but Tiwa stands rooted on her feet curious.

Ade: Tiwa come on.

Tiwa: There's something going in there.

She muttered walking back to the restaurant. Adesola jogs on her side.

Ade: What if they are holding them hostage? Do you want to be one of the hostages? I for one know I don't want that. Come let's go home.

Tiwa sighs and follow behind him. A speeding ambulance passes them as they step inside the car. It was nearby in the neighborhood when it made a U-turn.

Tiwa: What is going on on there?

Ade shrugged bringing the engine to life. Tiwa steps out of the car and stretch her neck to look at the paramedics rush inside with the stretcher.

Tiwa: I'm coming.

She closes the door and walks in the shop. Adesola groans in annoyance and steps out the car. Didn't the woman know curiosity killed the car? She was damn noisy at times at that irked him. He picked up his pace when his eyes fell on a familiar dress. Even if clothes were the same he knew that dress because he was the one who bought for Tiwa but instead Idu found it in the shopping bags thinking it was hers. Tiwa waves her hand to him but he ignores her rushing to the ambulance.

Ade: Idu? Idu?

The paramedics look at each other. Tears continue to stream down on Idunniola's cheeks as she looks at him.

Ade: Idu? What happened to my wife?

Tiwa gaps in shock while her eyes widen. This woman was his wife? She took pity on her while she walked in the restaurant not knowing she was the wife. She swallows hard.

Paramedic 1: Sir we have to rush the patient to the hospital and you're delaying us.

Ade: I'll follow behind you.

They push the stretcher inside the car and close the door behind them. They jog to the front and speed off. Ade turned running to his car but a grip on his arms stops him. He frowns looking at the waitress that stopped him.

Waitress: Sir these are her belongings.

He nods and snatches them off her grip and steps inside the car. Throwing them in the backseat he brings the engine to life forgetting about the woman he came with. Tiwa ran after the car screaming his name.

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At Zobuhle's house Zozo switched off her ringing phone and wipes the tear that escaped her eye. Locking the front door she walks to her grandmother's room and bends down to her side. A lump burning in

her throat makes the tears to involuntary discard her eyes. She sniffs and wipes them with the back of her hand but they keep falling.

Zozo: Gogo

Her lips quiver as she looks at her sleeping grandmother.

Zozo: I tried gogo but I keep failing. I'm tired of this life.

She bit her quivering lip to suppress a sob to escape her mouth.

Zozo: When is it going to end? Why does it have to be us who is on the receiving end? Why does God let us suffer so much if we are one of his children?

She fires all the question once crying. Her cries were heart piercing that could move those who have a

cold heart. She sniffed back the mucus and tears.

Zozo: I love you so much gogo and I'm sorry that I'm doing this to you but I can't take it anymore.

She looks at the chair and rope she brought earlier on.

Zozo: (Crying) Please forgive me and tell Khwezi I love him.

She rise up to her feet and wipes the tears but they keep falling. She picks up the chair and stumble to the middle of the room where the globe is. She walks back to her grandmother's side and plants a kiss on her forehead causing the old woman to open her eyes just as she picks up the rope. She wraps it around her neck and ties it. Tears stream down her cheeks and she walks to where the chair is. She climbs the chair and throws the rope on the roof.

Gogo: Zo....Zo.

The old woman calls out in her frail voice causing Zozo to cease her movement. She knows there are only two people in this house and that's her and her grandmother because Khwezi is outside playing.

Gogo: Zo.

She tries again in her frail voice. Zozo turns and locks her eyes with hers. Tears stream down her cheeks.

Zozo: (shocked and crying) Gogo.

She quickly unties the rope around her neck and jumps off the chair.

Gogo: Wh..

She pauses collecting her words.

Gogo: Wh...at.. are... you.... doing?

She manages to form a sentence this time. Tears stream down on Zozo's face. She runs to her grandmother and engulf her in a embrace.

Zozo: Kubuhlungu gogo. Make it stop please I'm begging you.

She burst into tears.

Gogo: D...e..ath ..is..not always the answer. Killing yourself.. Won't change anything.

She slowly cooed easing up her aching heart. Oh if she could she would take the pain away and wipe her granddaughter's tears away. If it was up to her she would never let her cry again. The only tears she wanted to see falling from her multigrain face were tears of joy.

Zozo: (crying) It's painful gogo. Make it stop.

Her screams were muffled by her grandmother's chest. Tears discarded the old woman's eyes. Somehow seeing her granddaughter crying like this and almost committed suicide breaks her heart.

Zozo: (gasping) Please make it stop.

She gasp for air crying painfully.

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At the back of the ambulance Idunnuola closes her eyes wheezing as the scene replays in her mind. She gasp removing the oxygen mask as it seemed like it was making it difficult for her to breath. She clutches her chest as it closes up on her. Her eyes roll to the back of her head as her high blood pressure causes her epilepsy to take over. The last time she had one was when she found herself on the floor on the kitchen while the food was scattered on the floor and the plate she had in her hands in pieces few months ago. She didn't remember anything from the time she fell and to the time she woke up. The last thing she remembered was walking in the kitchen to make herself a sandwich. She shook violently on the stretcher while the driver finally steps on the gas; driving off the robot as it turns green.

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At Happiness house Ewatomi smiled after speaking to her daughter. She connects the charger and places it next to the TV stand. She walks to the ensuite in her bedroom and fill the bathtub with water. The heat outside had her sweating even though she was inside. She strips naked and steps inside the bubble bath. She hummed relaxing as the water makes contact with her body. She sinks in further relaxing and closes her eyes. Nothing beats a bubble bath with finger foods and wine on the side which she regret not preparing them. She opens her eyes yawning. She rubs her eyes as the sudden urge of sleep takes over her. She sinks in the tub closing her eyes letting herself to fall into a deep slumber. Someone who just walked in out on her would swear the woman was trying to kill herself because she was under the water not breath but that was not the case.

While she's under water she feels a slap on her cheek causing her to open her eyes. She's met by a set of

eyes that are furiously staring her. She knows those eyes even in her sleep because they belonged to her late mother.

Ewatomi: (shocked) Mother what are you doing here?

Her mother raised her hand and slap her again. Ewatomi gasps widen her eyes before rubbing her throbbing cheek.

Mother: You're ignorant Ewa.

Ewatomi: What are you talking mother?

Mother: I've been watching you for years crying for baby to save your marriage and this is the thank you I get after giving you one on a silver platter.

The woman bellowed in anger. Ewatomi's eyebrows knotted.

Ewatomi: (confused) What are you talking about?

Her mother shook her head and turned on her heels.

Ewatomi: Mother?

She runs behind her while her mother ignores her. She picks up something wrapped in a white sheet causing Ewa to halt on her tracks.

Mother: I give you a child all you had to do was to keep her happy. She only wanted to be happy but it seemed like she's unappreciated. I took them back with my great granddaughter.

Ewatomi's eyes widen while her heart skips a beat.

Ewatomi: You took who? Mother who did you take...

Her voice trails off as her husband who just came back from work pulls her out of the water. Ewatomi gasps emerging under the water.

Jimoh: What is the meaning of this Ewa?

He yells picking her up. The beating of her heart in her ribcage was abnormal. She wiggles out of his arms and tries to run to lounge but she falls.

Jimoh: Ewa?

He calls out to her but the woman ignores him and runs out of the ensuite naked.

Jimoh: Chineke . Ewa?

He runs after almost slipping on the slippery floor that she fell on seconds ago. Ewatom's body shook as she makes a conference call to her children while tears blur her vision. She panics as they take longer to pick up the call.

Jimoh: Ewa?

He muttered walking in the room. Again she ignores him starts to pace up and down. Jimoh looks at his wife who seemed like some whose losing her mind. Has the woman perhaps lost her mind; that was the question swimming in his head.

Them: Nne. (Mother)

They muttered in unison after picking up. She exhales loudly and drops the call and places her phone on her chest. They were okay and she didn't have to worry about anything.

Jimoh: Ewa?

He yells snapping her out of her daze. Ewa shifts her eyes to him

Jimoh: What is the meaning of this?

Ewa: Nothing my husband I just missed them.

She lies through her teeth dismissing the altercation she had with her mother.

Jimoh looks at her as she forces her lips to smile. He shakes his head.

Jimoh: Whenever you're ready you will let me know what are you hiding.

Ewatomi scowls shifting her weight off her feet and drop her eyes.

Ewatomi: You're just being paranoid.

Jimoh: (sighing) Okay I'll take your word for that.

Ewa smiles walking to their bedroom. She throws the phone on top of the bed and walks to the closet.

Jimoh: Did you manage to convince Idunnuola to come home?

He muttered sitting on the edge of the bed. Ewatomi's eyes widen when the wheels in her head turn

Idunnuola didn't pick up the call when she called. She feels her knees weakened on her while her heart skips a beat.

Ewatomi: No.

Jimoh: Ewa?

Ewatomi: (crying) No

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Ewatomí: No.

Jimoh: Ewa?

Ewatomí: (crying) No no not my Happiness.

She runs to her phone and place a call. Her phone rings until it takes her to voicemail.

Jimoh: (alarmed) Ewa what's going on?

Ewatomi: (crying) Not my Happiness.

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At Wind Of Grace Hospital the paramedics finally parks the ambulance. They step out and rush to the back and open the door. They eyes popped out of their sockets when they land on Idunnuola whose having a seizure.

Paramedic 1: God no.

They rush inside and places the oxygen mask on her and pull the bed out of the car and run inside. A doctor who was in the reception about to knock off drops his things.

Doctor: What do we have?

He murmur rushing to her aid.

Paramedic 2: Pregnant and shortness of breath.

Doctor: And the seizure how long has she been like this?

He mumbled pushing the stretcher further inside.

Paramedic 2: The seizure must have started on our way here.

Doctor: Take her to theatre.

Shifting his gaze away away from the paramedics.

Doctor: Page doctor Mahlangu and prepare for surgery you will be scrubbing in .

He barks orders looking at the intern doctor nearby and turned on his heels rushing after the paramedics. The intern doctor raise her fist and cheered in excitement.

Adesola drives in the parking lot and parks his car. He steps out and slams the door before rushing inside.

Ade: My wife was just brought in by...

The receptionist interjects nodding.

Receptionist: They are still busy with her sir. She's in the theatre and it might take hours. Sit on the bench and wait for the doctor.

He sighs making his way to the bench. He takes a seat and covers his face with his hands. His phone chimes in his pocket. He fishes out and answer the call.

Ade: What?

He snapped agitated.

Tiwa: Hey which hospital did they take her too?

Ade: Wind of Grace.

Tiwa: I'm coming.

Ade: Don't bother.

He hangs up on her and bury his face in his hands. Regret washes over him as he thinks about his unborn child.

Inside the theatre room the doctors harbour around Happiness. An emergency C-section had to be performed to remove the baby.

Doctor Mahlangu: (sighing) A still born.

He mumbles looking at the baby in his hands.

Doctor Mahlangu: I don't know when was the last time I had a case like this.

Doctor Ikeja nods looking at the baby in pity. The case was rare to them and it's a bitter pill to swallow especially to the mother whose expecting to give birth to a healthy baby. The heart monitor beeping causing a frenzy making them to panic. Doctor Mahlangu hands the baby to a near by nurse while Doctor Ikeja rushes to her side. Happiness shook having a seizure.

Doctor Ikeja: (yelling) We are losing her. We are losing her.

Idunniola continue to shake on the bed. The nurse drags the defibrillator machine.

Doctor: Charge at...

He doesn't get to finish his sentence as the heart monitor goes off.

Doctor Ikeja: Charge

He yells placing the defibrillator on her chest. The nurse does instructed.

Doctor Ikeja: Again.

He pumps her chest hoping for a heart beat but it doesn't come. The heart monitor only shows a flatline indicating no sign of life. He sighs dropping the defibrillator and looks at the clock on the wall.

Doctor Ikeja: Time of death 13:45pm.

He sighs removing the gloves off his hands.

Doctor Ikeja: This is the part on ny job I hate doing.

Doctor Mahlangu: Me too brother. Me too.

They sigh walking out of the theatre room and walk down the corridors of the hospital the same time Tiwa walks in. She rushes to Adesola and wraps her hands around him. Adesola doesn't bother raising his head to look at the intruder.

Tiwa: Baby I came as fast as I can. How is she?

Ade ignores her and continues draining himself on the pity and blame party. The sound of a clear of throat makes him to jump to his feet.

Ade: Doctor how are they?

Tiwa rise to her feet and walks towards him. She warps her hand on his waist and places her head on his arm from the side. The doctors look at each other and look back at the scene in front of them. Ade clicks his tongue and yanks Tiwa's hands off him. He pushes her aside Tiwa staggers almost losing her balance.

Ade: Doctor how is my wife?

Doctor Ikeja: Sir does your wide suffer from epilepsy?

Ade's eyebrow furrow. He folds his lip in between his teeth.

Ade: What is that?

Doctor Mahlangu resist the urge to face palm himself. It was clear indication that the poor woman was alone in this relationship. She might have lost her life because of his infidelity.

Doctor Ikeja: It's a seizure disorder.

Ade: (shocked) Idunniola has that?

At Wind Of Grace Hospital the doctors look at him like he has grown two heads.

Doctor Mahlangu: Yes she had that.

Ade: What causes it?

Doctor Ikeja: Sir can we move to my office? There is something we like to discuss with you regarding your wife.

He nods and the two doctors lead the way to Doctor Ikeja's office. Tiwa heavily sighs and seats on the bench waiting for Ade. They close the door behind them Ade seats on the empty chair while Doctor Ikeja rounds his table to sit on his chair facing him and Doctor Mahlangu stands rooted on his feet.

Doctor Mahlangu: To answer your question that you asked outside; Epilepsy may occur as a result of genetic disorder or an acquired brain injury such as trauma and stroke.

Ade: (frowning) You're telling me my wife has that?

Doctor Ikeja: Yes she had that.

Ade shook his head coming back to his senses. He doesn't care whether the woman has AIDS or even dying tomorrow because she means nothing to him. She's just a ornament that decorated his house. Being in her presence pisses him off.

Ade: She looks healthy to me.

Doctor Mahlangu face palmed himself. This man was ignorant judging by scene that happened before they moved to the office it was clear as daylight that the man was hardly home with his wife.

Doctor Ikeja: Sir I don't think you understand how dangerous the disorder is.

Ade chuckled and lean back on his chair.

Ade: Then amuse me doctor.

Doctor Mahlangu: It's a disorder in which the nerve cell activity in the brain is disturbed causing seizure. Treatment can help but this condition can't be cured.

His chest moved up and down as he bellowed in anger. A woman died for goodness sake and here he is making fun of that. Where was his sympathy?

Doctor Ikeja: As my fellow colleague has said there is no cure for this. It's one dangerous disorder a human being can live with.

Ade: You know for a second I thought you called me here to tell me something important. She's not the first one to have that condition and you and your big words make it seem like she's dying or something.

Doctor Mahlangu: Can you atleast pretend like you cared about her and stop making it obvious to others that you didn't care about her.

He clicked his tongue and furiously walked out of the office slamming the door behind him. Ade smacks his lips shut taken back by his anger. Doctor Ikeja sighs.

Doctor Ikeja: Your wife gave birth to a stillborn baby.

Ade: You medical terms are too big for me. Use proper English.

Doctor Ikeja leaps up to his feet and walk to the cabinet to pour himself a glass of water. He has never seen anyone so egoistic as this man sitting in front of him. He should have left with Doctor Mahlangu instead or handed the case to someone else. This man doesn't give a shit about that woman. God will have to forgive him for thinking like this but he made the right choice of taking them away from him because he didn't deserve them.

Doctor Ikeja: A stillborn baby is the death of a baby in the womb after 20 weeks of the woman's pregnancy. In simple terms your wife gave birth to a dead baby.

He places the glass on the cabinet and walk back to his desk. Ade eyebrows furrow.

Ade: How is that possible? Is it caused by this epilepsy you talked about?

Doctor Ikeja: In most cases it is caused by high blood pressure umbilical cord problems with the placenta infections poor lifestyle choices birth defects.

Ade: So her disorder didn't have to do with anything with the death of my child?

Doctor Ikeja runs his hands on his face frustrated. Didn't the man hear a word he said?

Doctor Ikeja: Yes epilepsy is one of the many causes of a stillborn.

Ade nods leaping up to his feet.

Ade: Thank you I'll take my leave now.

Doctor Ikeja: That's not all.

Adesola halts on his steps. Turning on his heels he looks at his wristwatch and gives the doctor a vicious glare.

Ade: Doctor stop wasting my time whatever it is don't bother telling me. I've got places to be.

He marches to the door and twist the doorknob.

Doctor Ikeja: You're one piece of shit I've ever met in my life. Sparing two minutes of your precious time to hear about your wife won't kill you. I'm so glad the woman died with her baby along because you don't deserve them.

He snapped agitated. Ade freezes on his steps and turn to the doctor with his eyes popped out of their sockets.

Ade: (shocked) What did you just say?

Doctor Ikeja: If you were listening attentive the minute we walked in this office you would have noticed we used past tense regarding her not the present tense.

Ade's knees buckle while his heart rate picked up speed. He holds the door for balance as he knees fail him. He falls on his knees on the ground trying to grasp everything was said to him. His brain felt like it could explode any time as the information sinks in on him that she will never see her again.

Doctor Ikeja: You can throw your pity party outside my office.

His voice snaps him out of his daze. He raises his head and tears filled his eye while regret clamps him like a second skin.

Ade: She's dead?

His voice is barely audible it need one with great sense of hearing to hear what he said.

Ade: She's dead?

He repeats raising his voice while his lips quiver.

Doctor Ikeja: Yes she is. Her blood pressure was too high. We tried bringing her back but it was too late.

Ade shook his wiping the tears with the back of his hand and leaps up to his feet.

Ade: How much did she pay you?

Doctor Ikeja: Excuse me?

Ade: How much did she pay you to tell me this bullshit? For a second I almost beloved you all but the mambo jumbo you uttered about her dying is bullshit. I can't believe she would stoop so low just to gain my attention. She's so pathetic and its sicken to say the least. Tell her I said she must not use other people to fight her battles.

He clicked his tongue marching to the door.

Ade: (mumbling) Stillborn my left foot.

He chuckles shaking his head.

Ade: (mimicking the doctor's voice) Epilepsy disorder is one dangerous disorder a human being can live with. That woman is too healthy to have that. Even if her medical records say she has it I wouldn't be surprised if she bought a doctor to write that for. She's too desperate seeking for my attention which I wouldn't give her even if she was the last woman on earth. Tell her I will never love her and her plan failed.

He slams the door behind leaving the doctor with his jaw on the floor. He stumbles towards the corridors navigating his way to the entrance. Tiwa rise to her feet when her eyes fell on him.

Tiwa: What did they say? Is she going to be okay?

She fires the questions at once panicking. Being a homewrecker is not in her DNA.

Ade: Let's go.

He muttered bypassing her not sparing her glimpse. Tiwa picks up her pace and forces her short legs to follow those gigantic footsteps. The man was in a hurry to get out of this place and she couldn't wait to be away from the preying eyes before she asks him the questions that have been in her mind. She huffed and buckles up before turning to him.

Tiwa: Aren't you going to answer me?

Ade: No because it has nothing to do with you.

Tiwa clicked her tongue and opened the door. She steps out and walks away from him. Ade steps on the gas and rolls down the window driving beside her.

Ade: Get back in the car woman.

He hisses.

Tiwa: No.

She turns to him with a tears threatening to fall down her face.

Tiwa: You're married Adesola and you never in once telling me that.

She yelled wiping the tear that escape her eye.

Tiwa: Who do you want to be seen a homewrecker? Because I know for a fact it is never a man's fault. It is always a woman's fault and I

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Tiwa Ibrahim refuse to be on that statistics of being another's woman pain.

Ade parks the car and steps out of. He makes his way to her.

Ade: I don't love her but you.

Tiwa snorts sniffing back the mucus.

Tiwa: Is that suppose to make me feel better? (Yelling) You took vows in front of people and God that she will be your forever.

Her stomach churned as an imagine them standing in front of the priest. The road trips they took the shopping and the sex they had was all a lie. He didn't belong to her but someone else. A bile rise from the back of her throat as she thinks about the sex they had in the shower this morning.

Tiwa: Oh God I think I'm going to be sick.

She turned and bend down emptying everything she had earlier on the floor. Tears continue falling down her eyes. Ade quickly rush to her and pushes her braids to the side. Tiwa furiously grab her braids from him and push him off her. She raised to her full height and wipes her mouth with the back of her hand.

Ade: Baby why are you acting up now? I don't love her. I only want you in my life.

Tiwa: Which part of being married don't you understand? You lied to me for months knowing you left a woman in your house. (Chuckling) No wonder you didn't want us to go to your house.

Ade: Tiwa there is no relationship between me and that woman. She has the ring and my surname that's all but you have my heart.

Tiwa scoffed throwing her hands dramatically on the air.

Tiwa: Leave me alone from now on and go back to your wife. She needs you more than I do.

Ade's heart thudded on his ribcage. He rushes to her side and grabs her hands but Tiwa yanks his hands off her.

Ade: We can talk about this.

Tiwa: Stay away from me.

She turned on her heels and walked away leaving him calling her name. She wanted to be very far away from that man as possible. She holds the wall for support and lean on it bursting into tears. Why do men always do this to women? That was the question running through her mind as she cried her lungs out not caring about the cars driving in the parking lot. For sure when everything was alright between him and his wife he would have ran back to her leaving her with a broken heart. The heart will definitely heal but one thing she was sure of the mind will never forget.

WEEKS LATER

At Happiness house Ewatomi sat next to her husband in the lounge. Grief was still alive and fresh from their minds. Burying one of their seed was not part of the plan. When she got that call from the hospital that afternoon it was just a confirmation of what she really knew. Her mother took away her first born her happiness. Adesola parks his car outside and lean back on the headrest. He picks up his phone and the envelope on the passenger seat. He opens it and scatter the papers on the seat. He opens the camera in his phone to take a picture. He packs the papers back on the envelope stepping out of the car firing a text to Tiwa. The woman didn't want to see him and was not picking up his calls.

Ade: I hope this will change your mind. I'm leaving her for you that's how much I love you.

A knock from the door makes her shift her gaze from the wall she's been staring at. Jimoh wipes her tears with the pad of his thumb. She frowns playing her hands on her face and finds it wet. She sighs gawking at her husband.

Ewa: I'm sorry.

Jimoh shakes his head.

Jimoh: I understand.

He pecks her lips and makes his way to the door. He opens it and regrets attending the knock. Adesola walks in wearing shades with an envelope in his hands. Ewa's lips quiver looking at the man who was her daughter's husband. Where was he when they buried her daughter?

Ade: Good afternoon my elders.

Jimoh nods and ushers him inside.

Ade: I'm afraid my visit is not a pleasant one.

He shifts his eyes to Ewatomi whose holding in her tears.

Ade: Mother can you please call Idunnuola for me. This something she also has to hear.

The thread Ewa was holding on just breaks. Tears stream down her cheeks.

Jimoh: Son I'm afraid Idu is longer here with us.

Ade: Okay where is she? I need her to sign the divorce papers. I can send them to her new address.

Ewatomi muffled sobs turned into a scream. Jimoh's eyes get moist with unshed tears. He swallows the lump in his throat and releases a breath collecting his words.

Jimoh: On 1 January at 15:00pm we got a call from the hospital.

Again he swallows hard biting his quivering lip. Ade eyebrows knotted.

Ade: Okay what does that have to do with anything?

Jimoh: The person who called us told us that our daughter is no more. (Crying) She's died and we buried her the same weekend.

Ade's eyes popped out of their sockets. Shaking his head he leaps up to his feet.

Ade: I refuse to be deceived by you too. She also got through you guys? Damn she's good.

He makes his way to the corridors navigating his way to her bedroom screaming her name. He opens door to door calling out to her but sadly she doesn't answer.

Jimoh: I knew this boy loved our daughter.

Ewatomi looks at him through her eyelashes and smacks her lips shut. She's too drained to argue with anybody right now. Ade walks back to the lounge and stands in front of the couple.

Ade: Where is she?

Jimoh: I will show you.

He wipes his face and stretches his hand to Ewa but she shakes her head. Heavily sigh he plants a kiss on her forehead and walks away to his car with the impatient Adesola. They drive about an hour until they reach their destination. Ade frowns when he steps out of the car and look around the graveyard.

Ade: What are we doing here?

Jimoh: Follow me you will find out soon.

He muttered making his way to Happiness grave. Air gets knocked out on Adesola when his eyes set on what is written on the tombstone. He staggers losing his balance.

Jimoh: This is her resting place.

Ade: No.

He shakes his head and brings his hands to his face. He closes his eyes and rubs them before opening them. The bold words that will haunt him for eternity are staring right back at him.

Beloved Mother

Idunniola Happiness Emeka

April 06 1989- January 07 2022.

Think of as me living in the hearts of those I've touched. For nothing loved is ever lost and I have loved so much.

He shifts his gaze to the one beside it.

Here lies

Ife Emeka

07 January 2022- 07 January 2022.

I hate to leave you all behind but we'll meet again one day.

Ade: No.

He shakes his head narrowing his eyes at Jimoh.

Ade: No this has to be mistake.

He muttered in disbelief. Tears filled Jimoh's eyes.

Jimoh: (breaking voice) I'm sorry but it is true.

Ade: No Idu is alive. I know she is. This is not true.

He muttered laughing in disbelief before breaking into a sob.

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Driving back home tears blurred his vision making it difficult for him to see. He parks the car on the side of the road and burst into tears. The lump in his throat choking making it hard for him to breath. His hands shook as he rolls down the window to get fresh air. Why did Idu had to go they even talked? Their relationship was a rocky one and painful that he will never get the chance to rectify his mistakes again. He places his head on the steering wheel crying his lungs out as the imagine of the two grave besides each other cross his mind. Idu was gone and their baby was also gone before he could hold him/her in his arms. Maybe this was his punishment for treating her the way he was treating. A very painful punishment he will have to live with for the rest of his life. He sniffs raising his head and took out his handkerchief in his pocket to wipe his face. He tosses it on the passenger seat and steps on the gas driving to a near bar. Being at home sitting around will make him think about her and he didn't want to think. He wanted to numb the pain from his heart or making it go away if possible.

Parking the car in the parking lot Ade steps out and makes his way inside the bar. He navigates his way through the crowd at the door and pulls the chair making himself comfortable before narrowing his eyes at the bartender.

Ade: Whisky neat.

The bartender nodded and pulls out a glass out of his cabinets and place it in front of him. He pours the whisky and hands it to him. Ade knocks it down in one go and pushes the glass towards the bartender.

Ade: Another one.

The bartender does at his told and hands him his poison after filling up. Again he knocks it down in one go making the bartender to cringe. Doesn't he feel the burning sensation from the back of his throat all the way to his stomach? That was the mystery question the bartender asked himself. Knowing the type of people he served on the regular basis he knew alcohol was a way of them shutting out the real emotions and feelings. They want to live in a temporary state that makes the so happy they even forget their problems.

Ade: Another one.

The bartender pulls the glass.

Ade: Actually bring me the whole bottle.

He muttered placing his belongings on top of the counter.

Ade: Keep them safe with you.

The bartender nodded picking up his belongings knowing the drill which comes with the job. If he could count how many times people trust him with their belongings he will loose count. He hands him the bottle and watch him driving it straight from the bottle like his drinking water. He shakes his head whatever his going through must be deep for him to be like this.

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The following morning Uthando walked in the third lecture of the day. Her first day seemed to be going smoothly for her. She looked for an empty chair and spotted one on the front row. She picked up her pace and sat next to a guy who smiled at her. She smiled back and took out her notepad and place it front of her before closing her bag and place it on the floor. Being in a new city that you're not familiar with scared her to death. She was far from home and the person who she thought would be here with her is not picking up her calls. She doesn't know what she did wrong to make Zobuhle to not pick up her calls or blue tick her texts on WhatsApp. Sometimes she doesn't even bother opening them even though Uthando could she was online. She sighed and bend down to look for her phone in her bag. She brought the screen to life and look at the time. The lecture was 15 minutes later. She tossed it back in the bag and lean back on the chair. A smile creeps on her lips when she remembers how excited she was when Mthuthuzeli drove her to Jo'burg. She couldn't sleep the night before and it seemed like time was moving in a snail pace on purpose. She inwardly laugh at herself for constantly waking up every 5minutes to check the time. She remembers when she woke up at 03:00am with Mthuthuzeli.

Mthuthuzeli: (frowning) Why are you up at this hour?

Uthando: I couldn't sleep.

She heavily sigh and lowered herself next to him on the bed.

Uthando: My excitement deprived me some sleep.

Mthuthuzeli chuckled slipping the belt around his Brentwood pants. He walked to the wardrobe and pulls out his jacket and put it on.

Mthuthuzeli: Well I have to go to work. Try to get some sleep.

She shook her head.

Uthando: I don't think I would.

Mthuthuzeli: I'll be back at 07:00am to pick you up.

He walks towards her and bends down to drop his famous forehead kisses. She's used to them as the years progressed. He picks the car keys and walks out of the house. Uthando sigh and lie on her back on the bed. She hears the gate being opened and the sound of the engine starting. She quickly rush outside to the taxi and knock on the window. Mthuthuzeli rolls down the window.

Uthando: Can I come with you?

Mthuthuzeli's eyebrows furrow while he brought his lips in between his teeth.

Mthuthuzeli: I don't think that's a very good idea. You need much sleep you can get. Jo'burg is not around the corner.

She pouted and give him her puppy eyes.

Uthando: (softy) Please.

Looking at her face and her lips Mthuthuzeli shut his eyes and composing himself. It was getting difficult day by day to live with her and not shower her with the love he has for her. 2 more years to come and she will finally be his. He reminded himself of that everyday when the sudden urge of walking in her room and kiss the day lights out of her rose from time to time.

Mthuthuzeli: Okay you can come.

She squealed in excitement and run back to the house. A few minutes she walked wearing her coat and locked the door. They were renting a two bedroom house while waiting for their house. Sometimes it made things awkward around them because she still didn't know how to act around him.

Mthuthuzeli: Buckle up.

She pulled the seatbelt and lean back on the headrest. A light tap on her shoulder brings her out of her trail of thoughts. She blinks and looks at the guy next to her who nudges his head to the front.

Voice: Miss?

Shifting her gaze away from the guy she follows the sound of the voice and finds a man standing in front of her.

Lecture: Miss?

He repeats again. Uthando swallow the thick saliva in her mouth.

Uthando: Miss Dube.

Lecture: Thank you for joining us.

He walks to the front and stand in front of the board.

Brian: As I was saying I'll be your lecture until the third year. My name is written on the board.

Uthando eyes darted to the board and read the name.

Uthando: Brian Booyesen. BYC (Basic Psychology.)

She mumbled inaudible. His handwriting was beautiful compared to hers. Was she deep in her thoughts that she didn't see him walking in and introduced himself?

Brian: I've got three simple rules that each and every student complies to.

1. Every topic we cover up we will write a short quiz to pick up your brains.

2. I hate being disturbed during my time unless of course you have a question.

3. I pardon late comers but don't make it a habit. It's best being late than not showing up at all.

He picks up papers on his desk and hands the guy next to her.

Brian: Take one and pass. It's a short quiz just to pick up your brains. I want to know what am I dealing with.

He mutters walking back to his desk and leans on it crossing his arms. Absentmindedly Uthando passes the stuck of papers without take one for herself. Her eyes were glued on the man in front of her. His three piece suit made him look like he stepped out of a cover of a magazine. Her hands itch to run them in his smooth caramel skin. His blue eyes were clear indication that he was white even though their skin tone can be mistaken as a black person. His full lips and strong jaw line wanted her to kiss them just to get a taste. She licked her lips and went down eye fucking him narrowing her eyes to his muscular arms that were restrained by the shirt he was wearing. Oh how would she love to be wrapped around those arms. Her stomach flipped as she went down on him and zoomed on his zip. I wonder how big is he? She thought lingering longer in his zip. A chuckle snapped her out of her daze. She rose her head and find a pair of blue eyes looking at her. Locking eye with him she sucks in a breath as the world around them suddenly disappears making it just being the two of them. The zoo in her stomach comes to life while she feels her panties getting moist. She throws her leg on top of the other to sooth the itch between her thighs. His intoxicating cologne filled the whole room making difficult for her to breath. She bit her lower lip shifting uncomfortably on her seat. Again her bubble was bursted when he called her name causing her to pool her panties. The deep baritone voice will make one cum without being touched.

Brian: Miss Dube.

She dropped her eyes embarrassed. She looks around and see the students walking out after placing their papers on the desk. She looks in front of her and frown. Bending down on the floor she looks for her paper but his next words makes her cease her movement.

Brian: You didn't take one.

She widen her eyes. Her heart pounded in her chest. She rose to her feet.

Uthando: I'm sorry sir my mind was..

He interrupted her.

Brian: Was not in class but behind what's hidden underneath this clothes.

She swallow hard dropping her eyes.

Brian: Ms Dube I suggest you get over your little fantasy you have right now. You're not the first student and I know you won't be the last. This face right here is not going anywhere any time soon. So next time you walk in my class I won't tolerate what happened today.

Uthando nodded with her eyes still on the floor.

Brian: I'm glad we had this conversion. Now shuu off you go.

He muttered waving his hand dismissively walking around the desk. He pulls his chair and takes a seat.

Uthando: (low voice) I won't happen again.

Brian nodded.

Brian: I believe you. Close the door behind you.

Uthando quickly walked out and shut the door behind her. She leaned on the wall placing her hand on her chest. What was that? She has never such feelings about a man before. He definitely took her breath away. Wait.. Did he just shoo her away like a dog? She fished for her ringing on her bag and sighed seeing the caller ID.

Uthando: What does he want?

She mumbled shoving the phone in the bag. It pings indicating a message.

Bhuti Mthu: How is your first day?

She shook head and stepped on her heels going to her next class.

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Later that evening how would she love to be wrapped around those arms. Her stomach flipped as she went down on him and zoomed on his zip. I wonder how big is he? She thought lingering longer in his zip. A chuckle snapped her out of her daze. She rose her head and find a pair of blue eyes looking at her. Locking eye with him she sucks in a breath as the world around them suddenly disappears making it just being the two of them. The zoo in her stomach comes to life while she feels her panties getting moist. She throws her leg on top of the other to sooth the itch between her thighs. His intoxicating cologne filled the whole room making difficult for her to breath. She bit her lower lip shifting uncomfortably on her seat. Again her bubble was bursted when he called her name causing her to pool her panties. The deep baritone voice will make one cum without being touched.

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Later that evening Dalisile pulled the hosepipe to her garden and went back to the tap to open the water. She picks up the hosepipe from the floor and water her plants. She moves row to row making sure each plant gets enough water. She passes the cabbage row and feels a grip on her leg. She lifts her leg trying to move to the next row but the foot is rooted on the floor. Frowning she bends down to inspect the problem. A scream shoots out of her mouth when she see's a pair of nails piercing her skin. She knows those short nails even in her sleep. The only person who had those nails in this household is the one they buried her right here in the same garden she was in. She clutches her chest while the hosepipe splashes her with water. She gaps dropping it down trying to run to the house but her leg isn't bagging. Tears discard her eyes as her heart pounded so hard in her ribcage while her whole body shook in fear. Her neighbour runs in the yard following the scream. She finds the distraught Dalisile in her garden still crying while the hosepipe is wetting her. She runs to the tap and close it and rush to her.

Neighbour: (alarmed) Makhi what happened?

Dalisile continues to cry as the pain in her leg intensify.

Neighbour: Makhi?

She shakes her gaining her attention. Dalisile opens her moist eyes and look at her neighbour.

Neighbour: Should I call an ambulance?

Dalisile nods. The neighbour runs back to her house to pick up her phone. Running back she finds Dalisile blinking rapidly. A frown settles in between Dalisile eyes when she set her eyes at her neighbour.

Dalisile: What are you doing in my yard?

The neighbour frowns.

Neighbour: You asked me call an ambulance for you Makhi don't you remember?

Dalisile: Even if you were the last person on earth I wouldn't ask help from you. You want to pour muthi in it?

She points an accusing finger in her direction. The neighbour gasped in shock.

Neighbour: Dalisile?

Dalisile: Leave my yard.

She clucked her tongue turning on her heels and march to the house leaving the neighbour with her jaw dropped. She claps once in disbelief and walks back home. Dalisile's hands shook as she fills the glass with water. She brings to her mouth but it doesn't reach it slipped and falls on the floor due her trembling hands. She bends down to pick up the pieces and winces when one pierce through her skin.

Dalisile: (annoyed) Arg marn Buyisile this is your fault.

She clicked her tongue and pulled the chair to take a seat bringing her bleeding finger in her mouth. She sucked the blood.

Dalisile: Why can't you be obedient just for once? Even in death your still stupid.

She shouted sucking the blood out of her finger.

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United.

Uthando picked up her pace making her way to her room after her last class. If someone have told her that walking from the corridors of the campus looking for lectures halls was this difficult she would have probably say the person was bluffing. She yawned pushing the door open and walked in. She finds her flatmate Yanga humming in the kitchen.

Uthando: Why didn't you tell me the first day is exhausting?

Yanga chuckles shrugging her shoulder before turning to give the tired girl her undivided attention.

Yanga: You were excited and I didn't want to burst your bubble. I was like that on my first day too.

Uthando throws the bag on the couch and walks further to the kitchen.

Uthando: What are you making?

Yanga: I figured you will be hungry after the long day you had so I thought why not make something simple as pap tomato gravy and wors.

Uthando's mouth salivates while her stomach growl. They share a look before breaking into fits of giggles.

Yanga: Why don't you take a bathe so long while I sort out the food.

Uthando smile nodding.

Uthando: Thank you.

She mumbled walking to the couch to pick up her bag making her way to her room she shuts the door and throws herself on the bed. Her phone rang as she closed her eyes. She flips them open and fish for it. A smile forces to break from her lips when she sees the caller ID.

Uthando: Hello.

Zozo: Hey how are you?

Uthando: I'm so glad to finally get your call. I can sleep better at night knowing you're still alive.

Zozo chuckled on the end of the line.

Zozo: I assume your talking about the rain well our village is among those not affected. So how are you?

Uthando: I'm fine just in a foreign place alone.

Zozo sighed on the end of the line. Ghosting her best friend was not something she wanted to do but she needed time to face her shame alone without anyone trying to console her.

Uthando: What happened Zo?

Zozo: Well let's just say things didn't go the way I wanted to be.

Uthando brings her lips in between her teeth frowning.

Uthando: Meaning?

Zozo: I didn't pass my matric.

Uthando: (shocked) What?

She jumps on the bed to seat on her butt. This girl better be playing. She's the smartest person she knows. If she had to bet on her last money for someone who will pass was her.

Zozo: Yep that's what happened. I didn't want to take your calls because I felt like you would rub salt into the wound gloating at my face.

Uthando: Zozo I would never do that to you.

Zozo chuckled on the end of the line.

Zozo: You know what's funny?

Uthando: What?

Zozo: Even Ntombi passed.

Uthando widens her eyes.

Uthando: Tell me you're joking.

Zozo: Unfortunately I'm not. Her mother throw her a number of all parties I've ever seen. I had to hear from around because she didn't invite me to the party.

She sighed on the end of the line.

Zozo: I'm sorry for going MIA on you but I just needed time to face my reality.

Uthando nods.

Uthando: I understand. So where to from now on?

Zozo: I honestly don't know. That certificate was my best shot for a better life. I don't know where to go here but I was thinking on going to town to draft my cv and start looking for a job. Sitting around at home drives me crazy.

Uthando: Which subject didn't you pass maybe you can upgrade them?

Zozo: I don't know I haven't fetched my certificate nor statement. I just saw my exam number not being there and I knew what that meant.

Uthando sucked in a breath tongue tied. She didn't know how to comfort her friend and maybe she was right to distance herself from her because she sucked in this.

Zozo: Anyway enough about me and my depressing life. Am I forgiven?

Uthando giggles.

Uthando: Of course you're.

Zozo: So how was your first day?

Uthando beams lay on her stomach.

Uthando: My day was good but tiring. Walking down the campus looking for my next class with no one beside made me miss you so much. At some point I wanted to cry because every one was walking freely in pairs while I was a loner.

Zozo: I'm sorry. I don't even want to imagine what you went through if it was me I would have set down and cried then and then.

Uthando laughs. Knowing how fragile her friend was she knew she was not lying. A knock on the door disturbed her before she could reply.

Yanga: Uthando the food is ready.

She yelled on the other side of the door and walked away.

Uthando: Zo I...

Zozo interrupted her.

Zozo: I get it. Go eat we will some other time.

Uthando: Okay I'll call you before I sleep.

Zozo snorts on the end of the line.

Zozo: As if I will hear that phone. You know I'm a heavy sleeper.

Uthando giggles dragging herself out of the bed.

Uthando: That's why I have to make sure I call earlier.

Zozo rolled her eyes smiling on the end of the line. She pushed the annoying voice that constantly chanted that she needed to isolate herself from anyone because she was pathetic and no one wanted her around.

Uthando: I love you okay?

Zozo: I love you too.

Uthando disconnected the call and made her way to the kitchen to wash her hands.

Yanga: Boyfriend?

She mumbled wiggling her eyebrows. Uthando laughs shaking her head.

Uthando: No it was my best friend.

Yanga nodded and picked the plates on the table and hand one to Uthando. She murmurs a small thank you before digging.

Yanga: I was think maybe we get another roommate.

Uthando paused and placed the spoon back down on the plate. She looked around her flate and sadness washed over her. The flat was suppose to be a place where she created memories with her friend. Mthuthuzeli rented out the flat for them knowing Zobuhle couldn't pay rent. It was a way to easy up the load up on her shoulder than letting them to wait for their bursary to pay for their accommodation while they sleep on the streets.

Yanga: I mean we could use the money and maybe split it in half. The landlord doesn't have to know about this.

Uthando faked a smile nodding. She was not ready to give up the third room to a stranger but Mthuthuzeli and Yanga were right. The rent money can be what she will be living off without bothering Mthuthuzeli.

Uthando : (sighing) Okay.

Yanga: Great! I'll post it on Facebook and I suggest you do the same. I'll also draft some poster and paste them outside campus.

Uthando nodded with a breaking heart as reality sank on her. She was far from anyone she loved and knew.

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Groaning Adesola ignored the yelling voice at the background of his room. He hears the person clucking and their footsteps fade away. He sighed in content and snuggle closer to the pillow. The footsteps come back again and before he know he jumps out of the bed screaming as the intruder splashes him with cold water. He shivers ready to yell at the intruder but his anger quickly melts away when he set his eyes on his furious mother.

Ade: Mom.

He winces as his voice comes out groggy. His throat was dry as the desert. He rubbed the fogginess out of his eyes. His head throbbed and he cursed under his breath.

Bimpe: This is what you've become Adesola.

She muttered in disgust.

Bimpe: You think alcohol will solve anything? You've got no one to blame my boy than yourself.

She hisses. Tears threatened to spill out of Ade's eyes. He swallow hard as the lump rose in his throat. He could feel himself becoming sober minute by minute. He turned on his heels and made his way to lounge with his mother hot on his heels. Bimpe leaned on the doorframe folding her arms across her chest and she watches her son pacing up and down the room looking for any sign of his alcohol. Ade hold his throbbing his head and made his way to the study but abruptly halts on his heels as he hears his mother's next words.

Bimpe: Don't bother looking there cause I throw everything away and spilled some on the sink.

His knees buckle while his throat dried up.

Ade: No no no!

He picked up his pace and barge in the room and start looking. He needed to numb the pain and alcohol was doing a very good job doing so for him. He groaned holding his head that felt like it was splitting into halves. He walked out the room defeated and found his mother sitting on the couch unbothered by his behavior.

Bimpe: Good looks like I got your attention now.

He lowered himself on the couch and picked up the bottle of water that is placed in front of him. He twisted the cap and chunk the contents down his throat. His mouth filled with saliva as he gulps the water. He resist the urge to throw up.

Bimpe: You look older than your age.

She shook her head still have the disgust look plastered on her face.

Bimpe: What are you planning to with your life? You think shoving alcohol after alcohol down your throat will make your problems vanish?

She yelled. Ade winces as her voice went straight to his throbbing head.

Ade: It numbed the pain.

Bimpe: For a while though because when you wake up your problems are still there.

Ade: Mother you don't understand.

A tear escaped his eye.

Ade: I did this and this is the punishment I have to live with for the rest of my life.

Bimpe: So what? You did this to yourself.

She snapped agitated.

Bimpe: So we have to feel sorry for you because you don't know what to do with the guilt in your conscience?

She snorted rolling her eyes.

Bimpe: Talk about double standards Adesola.

Ade's tears involuntarily fell. Bimpe chuckled.

Bimpe: I'm not about to feel sorry for you. I'm just glad the poor girl is resting with her child alongside her. You don't deserve to be loved because you're an animal.

Ade's heart broke. Hearing those words coming from the woman who gave him life meant that he really messed up.

Bimpe: Cry me a river Adesola and while you're at it make your way to the airport.

He raised his glossy eyes narrowing them at his mother.

Bimpe: Your father refused to do the chemotherapy. Patience needs someone she can trust with the businesses while she looks after your father.

Ade sniffed back the mucus and tears. While he was drowning himself with alcohol his father health was deteriorating. Is this some sort of punishment for him to lose the people around him through death?

Bimpe: Clean yourself up. Your flight is in the evening.

She muttered walking to the door. He nodded rising up to his feet maybe being in a new place will make him to forget for a while because this house and everything inside reminding him of her.

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At Mandla's house he smiled as he finds his door wide open. Excitement runs through him knowing his girl is inside. He walks in and finds her folding his laundry while a gospel song was playing softly on her phone. Zozo rised her eyes and their eyes locked.

Zozo: Hey.

She dropped the T-shirt on the bed and leaped up to her feet. Mandla stumbled towards her and brought his face close to hers.

Mandla: Hey beautiful.

His breath fanned her face. Her cheeks heat up she stands on her tiptoes and captures his lips. A smirk broke on his lips as wraps his hands around her waist. The kiss gets heated and their clothes fly around the room. Zozo laid on the bed while Mandla settled between her open legs.

His fingers dipped into her folds and she saw stars in her vision. She bit her lips bringing her hands to pinch her nipples. Mandla pushed two fingers into her while running his thumb over her bud.

Zozo: Mandla

She moaned spreading her legs to the fullest extent. His fingers felt delicious spreading her legs to the fullest extent. His fingers felt delicious but she wanted and needed more.

Zozo: Mandla

She breath out.

Mandla: Yes baby.

Zozo: Please.

He knew what she wanted and if it was any other day he would toy with her until she's pushed to her limits but his painfully erected cock needed to be inside her. He pulled his fingers out of her center and quick replaced them by his cock. They both moaned loudly as their bodies connected rejoicing at the feeling of each other.

Mandla: I love you.

He whispered thrusting back and forth. One of his hands held one of hers and rocked into and the other moved between her legs strumming that bundle of nerves the way she liked. Zozo screamed.

Zozo: God..I love you too.

She reached up and kissed him gliding her tongue along his lips before he open his mouth for her. His tongue connected with her own and helped to suppress some of the moans flying out of her throat. Sparks begin to nip out of her while tears pooled out of her eyes as her body shook giving in to her orgasm. After a few more thrust Mandla began to feel the sensetation of impending orgasm. He groaned releasing inside her while Zozo clenched down on him milking every drop of cum he has.

Mandla: Fuck.

He turned to kiss the palm of her hand before pulling out of her and lay beside her. He pulled the blanket over their waist while Zozo laid her head on his chest.

Zozo: I spoke to Uthando today.

She muttered as he absentmindedly tracing patterns on her skin.

Mandla: Really? What did she say?

Zozo: She was so happy from hearing from me. At first she was worried that the floods affected us but I assured her that they haven't reached our village.

Mandla: Did she say how is varsity treating her?

Zozo: Our conversation was cut short by her roommate calling her but she assured me that she will call before she went to sleep.

Mandla: Tell me baby when are you going back to school.

Zozo dropped her hand that was stroking his jaw huffing.

Zozo: I'm thinking of going to town to look for a job.

Mandla pushes her gently from him and narrow his eyes at her.

Mandla: And school?

He arched his brow. Zozo sat up.

Zozo: We both saw how it went right?

Mandla: Baby I didn't spend hours and hours helping you to study for weeks for only you tell me your going to look for a job in town.

Zozo rolled her eyes.

Zozo: What do you expect me to do Mandla? I tried studying like a normal person but ended up failing anyway. Maybe I'm not cut of for finer things in life.

Mandla scoffed placing his palms on her cheeks. He caressed his right cheek.

Mandla: Don't ever doubt yourself my love. Have you taken the time to fetch your statement and see which subjected you failed?

Zozo dropped her eyes.

Zozo: No.

Mandla: Exactly! So you don't know which subjected you failed and which you passed. How will you know if you don't take the first step by fetching your results.

Zozo: I don't want to see them. They might be worse than I thought.

Mandla: The only way for you to know is by fetching your results and go back to school after that. Even it means sitting behind the desk for 12 months.

Her eyes widen.

Zozo: You joking right?

Mandla: Do I look like I'm bluffing to you? Do you want to earn peanuts because of your lack of education. Do you love seeing Khwezi crying his peers making fun of him because of where he comes from?

Her eyes get moist with tears. She dropped them shaking her head not trusting her voice. She wanted to crawl far away from him and cry.

Mandla: Then you're going back to school sthandwa sam tomorrow.

Her eyes popped out of their sockets.

Zobuhle: Tomorrow? Don't you think that's too soon?

Mandla: No the sooner you do this the better it becomes for you.

He rised her chin and his eyes soften when he saw the tears in her eyes. He pecked her lips wiping them.

Mandla: I'm might feel like your enemy right now but I'm doing what's best for you. I'm trying to control you or anything baby but I hate seeing you like this. The spark you once had in your eyes has dimmed and if it was up to me I would take away the pain.

Zozo nodded sniffing.

Zozo: Okay. I will go back tomorrow.

He smiled before capturing her lips.

Mandla: This room needs furniture baby. It becomes awfully quiet when you're not around. I sleep earlier than my normal time. When are we going to town to buy one?

Zozo: I don't know.

She shrugged.

Mandla: (smirking) You have to know phela people have to know when they pass near my room and see the furniture inside that my wife bought it for me. I have to brag about it.

She rolled her smiling while he climbed on top of her but Zozo pushed him off.

Zozo: Nope I'm in control now.

He smirked and laid on his back placing his hands under his head.

Mandla: The floor is yours.

Zozo licked her lips sinking his cock deep inside her. She closed her eyes moaning while he groans. She bend down to his earlobe and whispered seductively.

Zozo: Don't cry.

Mandla chuckled.

Mandla: Baby you wou...

He hisses as she brought one of her hand and caressed his balls moving.

Mandla: Fuck.

Zozo smirk and slowing her movement and looked at him as he becomes vulnerable under her mercy. If her grandmother saw the half of the things she does with this man she would collapse then and there.

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In the wee hours of the morning at OR Tambo International Airport Ade stepped out of the plane and made his way to the tarmac and found a man with a big board written his name. He walked towards him and greeted him and the man greeted him back before taking his luggage and stumbled towards the car. The entire ride to his father's house was a quiet one. The man only nodded or shook his head to respond to whatever he was saying and at some point he gave up asking questions. Arriving at his father's estate the man walked to the boot to retrieve his luggage while he stood there admiring the mansion before him. He knew his father was loaded but he didn't think he was that loaded. The house in front of him was twice the size the house he and his mother have. The man jerked his head towards the door and stumbled towards it. He closely followed behind him like a lost puppy. The door widely opens and a beautiful woman whose beaming from ear to ear welcomes them.

Patience: Ade my boy welcome home.

She opens her arms for him and engulf him in a hug. Ade froze in her arms with a questionable look.

Patience: Vuyo thank you so much for your trouble. You will be rewarded.

She muttered breaking the hug and turned to the man beside him.

Vuyo: I was just doing my job Mrs Emeka

Ade's eyes popped out of their sockets. So this woman was her step mother. She was half his father's age and if his not mistaken they might be on the same age or he was older than her. He heard that that his father took someone young as his second wife but he didn't think he might someone his age. This woman could be his potential girlfriend if circumstances were not like this. She giggles waving her hand dismissively at Vuyo. The big rock on her left finger catches Ade's eyes.

Patience: Always so formal.

Vuyo: Where should I put this?

He mumbled indicating to Ade's luggage.

Patience: The second wing. I asked someone to prepare it just for him.

Vuyo nodded and walked away leaving him with his jaw to the floor. Patience turned to Ade whose eyes hasn't shifted from her.

Patience: I'm so glad to finally meet you. Your dad has told me so much about you and I'm happy to finally put the face behind those stories.

She went on and on while Ade looked at her asking himself why was a gorgeous woman like her settle for an old man like his father. Perhaps it was money because there was no way it they were in love. She paused fiddling with her hands.

Patience: Sorry I talk too much right? I get like that when I'm excited.

She muttered tucking a loose strand of her hair behind her ear snapping Ade out of his daze.

Ade: No.

He firmly muttered making her to furrow her eyebrows.

Ade: I'm just tired.

He lied through his teeth swallow hard. Her innocent eye staring him back makes him wonder does she gets satisfied by his father's sex game cause he was sure due to prostate cancer that his father has the woman was starved in the bedroom.

Patience: I understand. You will follow this path and it will take you straight to your wing. Feel free to do anything. This is your home my boy. I'm going to check on your father.

She muttered turning on her heels. He arched his brow. That was the second time she called him boy.

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Zobuhle tied her shoelaces and stood up and took a huge breath. The skirt was tight on her curves and the shirt was making her hard to breathe. Gaining weight while she felt the world was mocking her was something she questions everyday. She looked down the road as the street got busy as students rushed to school. After her suicide attempt she decided to deactivate her social media accounts so she couldn't see what her peers were posting. Their post made it seemed like they were rubbing salt on her wound as she ended up ignore phone calls. She only answered Mandla's call. She wanted to lick her wounds before she could rise up again.

Khwezi walked in the room and frowned seeing his sister in her school uniform.

Khwezi: Sis are you going back to school?

Zozo nodded.

Khwezi: I thought last year was your last year.

Zozo heavily sighed.

Zozo: I thought so too. Come we have to go before we a late.

She muttered walking to her grandmother's to check up on her.

Zozo: Gogo I'm going to school will be alright all alone?

The old woman smile seeing the determination on her granddaughter's eyes. The fire burning in the can't be extinguished.

Zozo: I'll place everything where you can reach them.

Again the old woman nodded. Zozo plants a kiss on her cheek before standing up.

Zozo: I love you gogo.

Gogo: (smiling) I love you too my baby and I'm proud of you.

Zozo's heart swelled while her eyes get moist. Her grandmother's speech was getting better day by day. She shook her head blinking the tears away.

Zozo: I'll ask Ntombi's mother to come check on you okay.

She muttered walking out of the room. She picked her bag and strap it on her back. Her anxiety rose while her heart thudded on her ribcage. Not knowing what to expect when she arrived there made her nervous. Her stomach twisted and turn making her to want to use the bathroom. She washed her hands after her business and stumbled to where her brother was.

Zozo: Ready?

Khwezi nodded and walked out first while she locked the door. She engulfs her sweaty hand with his as the made their way to Ntombi's house.

Zozo: Knock-knock.

She muttered walking in as the door was opened. Ntombi's mother smile seeing her.

Zozo: Sawubona ma

Mpumi: Haibo Zozo I thought you guys left the village.

Zozo: (frowning) We left? Where would we go?

Mpumi: Didn't you mother come to fetch you during the holidays?

The frown in Zobuhle deepens.

Zozo: I haven't seen my mother in years. I'm sure I pass her everyday on the road if she has not changed her looks.

Mpumi: But Ntombi said your mother fetched you when I asked her to invite you to her party.

Zozo shrugged while Mpumi chuckled. It was clear that her daughter was lying and she wondered what else is she lying about.

Zozo: Ma can you please check on gogo during the day.

Mpumi: Of course my baby you don't have to worry I'll Ntombi to look after the shebeen while I'm in your house. She has nothing to do anyway since she took a gap year.

Zobuhle sighed in relief and placed the keys on top of the counter.

Zozo: (smiling) Thank you so much.

She mumbled making her way to the door.

Mpumi: Where are you going?

Zozo: To school ma. I've decided to pick up my life.

Mpumi: Didn't you watch the news yesterday?

Zozo: Our TV is broken.

Mpumi sucked her breath nodding. She didn't have the courage to tell the girl what that she turned famous over night. One thing for sure she was proud of her for proving people wrong.

Mpumi: Let me not keep you.

She walkwe out and found Khwezi waiting for her on the gate. Her phone vibrated on her pocket. She pulled out and read the text.

Mandla: I know it's not your first day at school but good luck baby. I'm proud to call you my woman and I love you.

She beamed and shoved her phone back in her pocket. Two people were proud of her and she couldn't disappoint any of them. Their encouraging and comforting words made her nerves to calm down. She could do this.

At Joyce's house she turned in her sleep patting the space beside her and found it empty. She flipped her eyes open and looked outside. The sun has not risen yet and the hens are still making noise waking people up. She fished for her phone under the pillow. Bringing the screen to life she turned on the torch and turned it to Mthuthuzeli's side of the bed. She found the space the same way it was before she fell asleep. She swallowed hard and scrolled down her contact list. She placed a call and wait for him to answer. The phone rings unanswered. Tears stream down her cheeks and she tries again. The phone takes her straight to voicemail this time. She threw the phone on the bed and brought her knees to her chest placing her head on them. Her heart break seconds by seconds. Mthuthuzeli was hurting her and it seemed like he didn't care. The love she has for that man has made to be stupid and naive. She wiped the tears with the back of her hand and tried calling him again.

Joyce: Baby please just come back. I'll stop being a nuisance and I'll stop nagging you about making our relationship known by people. I'll stop comparing myself to Uthando and I will know my place as a side chick but please don't live me. I won't survive without you. Please just come back.

She bursted into tears and dropped the call leaving him a voicemail message.

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Zobuhle took a deep breath and wiped her moist palms in her skirt as she walks inside the school premises. Her heart thudded in her ribcage and she felt like it could leap out of her throat. She paused hearing the pastor preaching meaning it the assembly has started. She walked behind the classes and quickly snuck in her class without being seen by anyone as they pray. She looked around the classroom and memories of the year she had previously come rushing in. She walked to the desk she sat last year and smiled seeing the small handcrafted ink they made with her desk mate that they were here. She laughed as tears blurred her vision and walked to the desk on the back blinking rapidly. She sat down and bend down her head after placing her phone on silent calming her nerves. A few minutes later the class gets filled with students. She sucked in her breath as her anxiety rises again.

Voice: Sorry sisi this my desk.

She rose up to her feet and moved from the desk. She could feel eyes burning through her skin as she walks out of the class to look for the caretaker. They harsh whispers become loud causing tears to discard her eyes. She was sure they are say she's stupid. She took out her phone trying to call her

boyfriend but gets startled by her teacher's voice.

Miss Nyathi: Zobuhle?

She rised her glossy eyes to her and found the woman with a wide smile plastered on her face.

Miss Nyathi: I thought my eyes were wrong. Oh I'm so happy to see you. You had us worried when you didn't show up in Jo'burg for the award ceremony.

She squealed marching towards her and engulf her in a hug. Zozo frowned.

Zozo: Award ceremony?

Miss Nyathi: Come I have show my students the product of my own hands.

She dragged her back to the class she just came from. The class became dead silent as they walk in. They stand up and greeted her. Miss Nyathi greeted them back and the students sat down.

Miss Nyathi: Class today I have some very special. You remember the first assembly we had when the schools opened. The student who passed with 7 distinctions?

The students nodded skeptically.

Miss Nyathi: This is the student the principal was talking about.

Zozo gasped shocked.

Zozo: What?

Miss Nyathi: Zobuhle Nene who placed this school on the map. Everyone in South Africa knows our school because of her. This student is the one who makes me rush here everyday to teach each one of you. Please don't drop my reputation while it's still rising.

Her heart pounded in her chest while her hands trembled. She looked at the class and back at Miss Nyathi as the room starts to spin. She staggered with tears streaming down.

Miss Nyathi: Zobuhle are you okay?

Zozo shook her head breathing heavily.

Zozo: I....

Her eyes rolled to the back of her head before she collapsed on the floor.

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Yanga made her way to the kitchen and passed Uthando watching TV.

Yanga: I thought I was alone in the house.

She muttered opening the cabinets looking for a glass. She filled it with water and gulped it down.

Uthando: My classes start this afternoon.

Yanga: Well I've got love and leave you. I will print those posters before going to class.

Uthando nodded as she walks to the door. Before she can open it someone knocked outside. She opened it and found Mercy standing there. She cringed

Mercy: Hi.

She waved her hand with a smile plastered on her face. Yanga faked a smile nodding.

Mercy: I'm here regarding about the room.

Yanga: We already have...

Uthando interjects opening the door widely for her.

Uthando: Come in.

Mercy walked in her heel clicking on the tiles making a statement.

Mercy: I'm Mercy.

She stuck out her hand for a handshake which Uthando gladly took and shake her hand while Yanga watched her in disgust.

Uthando: I'm Uthando and this my flatmate Yanga.

Mercy: Seen her before on campus.

She meekly say gawking at Yanga.

Yanga: Excuse us for a second. Thando a word.

She jerked her head to the kitchen.

Uthando: You can look around so long. The room is the last one.

Mercy nodded and padded to the room her heels clicking. Yanga dragged the fascinated Uthando to the kitchen.

Yanga: Whatever it is we are not going to live with girl.

Uthando's smile dropped while a frown settled in between her eyes.

Uthando: Why not.

Yanga: She's bad news and we don't need her.

Uthando: She looks harmless to me.

She shrugged looking at the corridors where Mercy disappeared too.

Yanga: (hissing) She is harmful. We will just tell her that someone already took the room.

Uthando: Why?

Yanga: Trust me you will thank me later. Everything she touches gets taunted.

Uthando's shoulders sag. She looks at her roommate and heavily sigh. Yanga was in her second year while she was on her first that means she knew something about Mercy which she doesn't. Looking back at the corridors she exhales loudly she really liked Mercy and was looking forward to stay with her.

Uthando: Okay.

Yanga: (smiling) We will find someone better than her.

She patted her on the back and walked out of the house. Mercy cat walked to the lounge. Her make up was perfectly done while her manicured nails were clutching her handbag. Uthando grinned at her asking herself where does she get the energy to look so hippped up and beautiful in the morning.

Mercy: I love the room and the space it provides. I'm taking it.

Uthando: (sighing) I'm sorry to say this but my flatmate has already found someone.

Mercy rolled her eyes.

Mercy: I know a lie when I'm being fed one. She told you to say that right?

Uthando: Is that obvious?

Mercy chuckled. The door opens and Yanga walks in breathing heavily.

Yanga: Forgot my laptop. I'm going to print those posters before going to class.

She mumbled walking to her room.

Mercy: Sweetie you're a terrible liar.

Uthando giggled.

Uthando: That I am. I hate lying.

Mercy: Then don't. Don't let someone control you. You're also paying rent here just like her. You left you're mother behind and this is the time to get young and shit. If I had to live here I'll give you a new make over from your closet to how you behave who is that?

Uthando nodded smiling.

Uthando: Okay.

Mercy: Okay what?

Uthando: The room is yours.

Mercy squealed and rush to engulf her in a hug. Yanga shook her head as she walks back.

Mercy: You will not regret it.

She broke the hug and walked to the door. Uthando looked at her legs as she made her way to the door. She stepped effortlessly on the floor with bending her knees on those shoes. If it was her she would have stepped on her toes a few times before she could get to the door not to mention her bent knees.

Mercy: I'm not sure when I'll be moving in but expect me some time this week.

Uthando nodded with a smile.

Mercy: Chao doll.

Uthando: Bye.

The door closes behind her. Yanga sharply stares at her and shook her head and stumbled to the door.
Uthando rolled her eyes

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what?

Uthando: The room is yours.

Mercy squealed and rush to engulf her in a hug. Yanga shook her head as she walks back.

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Mercy: Chao doll.

Uthando: Bye.

The door closes behind her. Yanga sharply stares at her and shook her head and stumbled to the door. Uthando rolled her eyes Mercy was right she left her mother behind and definitely didn't need another one. She's young and has to let loose. Her heart skipped a beat as her mind thinks about her lecturer Brian. Maybe she could ask some advice from Mercy since she seemed like a cool one than her newly found mother Yanga.

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At Wits University Brian greeted his colleagues and made his way to his office. He placed his belongings on the table and made his way out of the office and locked it behind him. He's classes started in 30minutes from now and he needed something to beat time. He walked to the office he just passed before walking to his and found his colleagues. A married couple who shares the office.

Brian: This is not your bedroom people.

The couple laughed breaking the kiss. Thandeka wiped the lipstick in her husband mouth and shifted on his lap so they can face Brian.

Thandeka: This is our office Brian and you're in our space. We can even kick you out if we want.

Brian chuckles.

Brian: Always a bully.

Thandeka rolled her eyes smiling while her husband laughed.

Fezile: Leave my wife alone Brian.

Brian raised his hands in surrender laughing.

Thandeka: So how was your first day yesterday?

Brian: Like any other day. Nothing exciting yours?

Thandeka: Same here.

Fezile: You know I was disappointed when I didn't find the genius in my course.

They frown.

Thandeka and Brian: Genius?

They muttered in unison.

Fezile: Come on guys don't you watch the news?

Thandeka: Don't have time for them.

Fezile: I know my dear wife that is why I'm your missing rib so I can keep your update about what's going on in our country.

Brian: I hardly have time to watch them.

Fezile: We have a student who I'm sure is in her first year this year who passed with 7 distinctions. She's the first student in her generation to pass so well. Bursaries and scholarships want her even

varsities too.

They gasps.

Brian: I passed with 5.

Thandeka: Mine was 4.

Fezile: Well she is genius and I would have loved to have her in my course. I love students who strike for their education and those who work hard to achieve their goals.

Brian: Here you go with your motivational speech shit.

He rolled his eyes running his hand on his hair. They laughed.

Fezile: I just love education and I believe no child is stupid. It's just that the generation we are in has everything in reach they don't work hard for everything. I was just surprised that there was someone who can come removed me from the ladder and placed me on the second stair while she sat on my spot. This girl is going places and I'm sad that she hasn't come forward to claim her prize.

Thandeka: Baby what are you talking about?

Fezile shook his head and took his phone on top of the desk and logged in on YouTube.

Fezile: I forgot most people don't watch the news.

He searched for Sabc and pressed play on the day the matric results where out. Brian rounded the table and bent next to them. They watched the minister delivering her speech and went on thanking about each learner who wrote their matric even though they didn't pass. She moved to the top achievers and started from the highest to the lowest. Sweat ran down Thandeka's spine as Zobuhle's name was called out loud. Her hands quiver while her eyes popped out of their sockets. The organ than can kill a her thudded in her ribcage and she breathe heavily. She shut her eyes chewing her inner cheek. No that's impossible it has to be someone else not her. People have similar names and surnames all the time.

Brian: So you're telling me she didn't come to the award ceremony.

Fezile: Yep and that's not all.

He scrolled down to yesterday's news.

Anchor: Today's top story; the department of education is pleading with the community to help them to look for the world's top achiever. The student by the name of Zobuhle Nene has not come forward to claim her prize. The minister has been trying to get hold of the school but due to the floods in KZN she's afraid she might have been one of the victims or she might have killed herself after not seeing her name on the paper like all students. Whoever has any information about this please contact the number on the bottom of the screen.

Thandeka clutched her chest struggling to breathe. She gasps leaping up to her feet. KZN Zobuhle Nene that's the only confirmation she needed that it was her. Fezile paused the programme bringing her out of her trail of thoughts as she paces up and down the room. They share a look with Brian.

ile: You're okay baby?

Thandeka: Yea I just need some air.

Fezile: Are you sure; you seemed shaken.

Thandeka: (snapping) I said I'm okay dammit.

She quickly took her phone on the table and dashed out of the room.

Brian: And then?

Fezile shrugged pressing play on the screen.

Fezile: No idea.

They continued watching the news. Meanwhile Thandeka closed the door in the bathroom and lean on it. She unlocked her phone with her shaky hands and went to YouTube to watch the news. Tears discarded her eyes and she copied the number on the bottom of the screen and called it.

Voice: Hello?

She bit her lip as the lump chokes her.

Voice: Hello?

Thandeka: (breaking voice) Hello.

Voice: This is Mthunzi from Sabc how am I help you?

Thandeka: (sniffing) I might have some information about the student the department is looking for.

Mthunzi: You might or you know?

Thandeka: Both.

Mthunzi: Ma'am which one is which? We've got a lot of people calling claiming they know her and some even went through extra miles saying they were her.

Thandeka: (sniffing) I know her personally.

Mthunzi: How do I know you're not lying?

Thandeka: (snapping) Because I'm her mother dammit.

Her eyes widen while the phone slips out of her hands. She hasn't acknowledged she had children in years. She covered her mouth with her hand bursting into tears.

Thandeka: I'm so sorry Zozo.

She bursted in tears sinking to the floor while Mthunzi screams on the phone.

Thandeka dusted her skirt and made her way to the sink. She opens the tap and bends down to splash cold water on her face. Her make-up is ruined and now she regrets acting impulsively. It's not like the child will appreciate her methods of what she did. She just panicked when the anchor mentioned her name. Reality has finally come back knocking some sense into her. Zobuhle is just going to ruin her life and she didn't need her and her brother to do that. She worked so hard to be where she is right now and she didn't need them messing that up for her. She shouldn't have acted that way and if her husband wasn't so distracted by what they were watching he would have picked up on her suspicious behaviour. The girl is not even here with her but she's already ruining her life. Imagine if she would have turned out to be a student here at the same varsity she teaches that could mess up her life big time. She has done enough for the girl and prays somehow she's one of the victims that got swept by the floods. God knows she's not evil but just protecting her marriage.

With that thought in mind she wakes out of the bathroom to her office. She opens her bag to take out her make-up bag. She composes herself and places the bag on top of the time before walking to her first lecture of the day. Falling apart now is not an option. The girl is probably dead and she has nothing to worry about.

THREE MONTHS LATER

Zobuhle walked to Mr Gumede's office to submit her assignment. She paused lowering the volume of her headset and knock on the door. The voice shouts come in on the other side. She pushes the door and made her way in. Mr Gudeme raised his head seeing her and smiled.

Fezile: Ah if it isn't my favorite student.

Zozo giggled pulling out her assignment on her bag.

Zozo: I'm here to submit sir.

Fezile smiled nodding.

Fezile: Right on time. I love students who know what they came here for. You can place it over there.

Zozo placed her assignment on the box he showed her and murmured a small thank you before she turned on her heels.

Fezile: Tell me Miss Nene are you the only child at home?

Zozo frown halting her steps at the question. She turned to face him.

Zozo: No sir. There is my younger brother after me why?

Fezile: You're the first born?

Her eyebrows knotted as she nodded.

Fezile: Are you sure?

Zozo: Yes if I may ask why are you asking?

Fezile shook his head.

Fezile: It's just that you look like my wife. Haven't you bumped into her? She's also a lecture here.

Zozo shakes her head.

Zozo: No I haven't and I'm sure my grandmother would have told us if we had other siblings.

Fezile: (frowning) Grandmother? Where are your parents?

Zozo shrugged. She could feel her heart tugging each time someone mentions her parents she wanted to cry her eyeballs out. They are probably out there living their best life while she and her brother suffers. Why didn't they abort them if they didn't want them. A tear rolls down her face down to her neck

snapping her out of her daze. She frowned bringing her hands to her face and comes back with a moist palm. She quickly wipes them with the back of her hand furiously while Fezile watches her closely.

The girl looked like his wife and each time she does something it's like his seeing his wife in her early ages. The way she laughs smiles giggles her habit of chewing her nails when she's deep in her thoughts were all similar to what Thandeka does on a daily basis. Zozo was just a mystery to him on how could she act and look like his wife but have different surnames. The first time he saw her he was sure that they were related but Thandeka laughed at the matter and dismissed it without seeing the girl. She was positive that they were not related and he took her word for it. This is a case of each person born has a replica around the world but Thandeka didn't have to travel the world to find hers because she was right here in front of him.

Zozo: Have a great day sir.

She embarrassedly muttered sprinting out of the office. She wipes her face and made her way to the library pushing everything that happened at the back of her mind. Her phone chimes in her hands as she opens the door. She slowly closed the door and lean on the wall picking up the video call.

Zozo: (smiling) Sthandwa sam.

Mandla: Nhliziyo yam.

Her hearts melts while she blushes. She has heard this man calling her that for years but it doesn't get old on her. It's like it's the first time he calls her that.

Mandla: I've got a surprise for you.

He shifts the phone to her grandmother before she could reply. Zozo's smile widens.

Zozo: Gogo.

Her grandmother smiles seeing her granddaughter. She will sleep better tonight after she saw how she is instead of hearing her voice over the phone.

Gogo: My baby how are you?

Zozo: I'm fine gogo even though I lost a few pounds. School is draining me.

Gogo screeches on the end of the line.

Gogo: I know you're lying Zozo. You're not eating too well on purpose.

Zozo sighed shutting her eyes out. Her grandmother was right she has been starving herself food since Uthando commented about her weight a while back. She remembers those words like yesterday.

Uthando: The way you're fat someone might mistaken you as my old sister. Stop eating everything in front of your eyes cause you're embarrassing me.

After hearing those words she had to cut down on her eating habits. As much as the words seemed like an insults she knew that she was right. She had to stop eating too much. She sighed.

Zozo: I don't have time to cook gogo because I'm always busy.

Gogo shakes her head.

Gogo: (softly) Don't over work yourself sthandwa sam your body needs food to live too. I don't want you to overwork yourself and end up in hospital.

She clears her throat as tears threatened to spill out of her eyes.

Gogo: (softly) You're the only person I know who can take us out of this situation.

Zozo raised her head blinking rapidly. Those words were like her personal motivation to work hard in her studies. Her grandmother and brother were depending on her and she couldn't let them down.

Zozo: Okay gogo I'll eat.

The old woman smile at the end of the line causing her to smile too. Her smile was contagious and always warmed her heart.

Gogo: Let me give Mandla his phone back before he murders me. He keeps stealing glances at me probably saying I'm wasting his time.

Zozo bursted into laughter and Mandla joins her at the end of the line.

Mandla: Gogo you know I will never do that.

Gogo giggled waving her hand dismissively.

Gogo: I know you wouldn't say that straight to my face.

They laugh.

Gogo: I love you sthandwa sam and I'm proud of the person you became. You didn't let your background to define you. You strive through every obstacles and challenges that were on your way and you came out victorious.

Tears stream down Zozo's cheeks. She sniffs wiping them back.

Gogo: I want you to shine like a star at night. Shine my baby and show them who you are.

Zozo shut her eyes taking each word she said and placed it in her heart.

Zozo: I love you too gogo.

The old woman smiles before handing the phone. Mandla walks out of the house for privacy.

Mandla: Hey.

Zozo smiled through her tears.

Zozo: Hey.

Mandla: I miss you.

Zozo : I miss you too baby

He sighs.

Mandla: I just wish I was there with you but at the same time I know I'll just be a distraction to you.

She rolled her eyes smiling.

Zozo: I could use one.

She mumbled wiggling her eyebrows. Mandla roared in laughter.

Mandla: Someone is growing.

He teases. Zozo giggles.

Zozo: Live me alone. You're the corrupting my mind.

Mandla smirked.

Mandla: And I enjoy each and every minute of it. I live to see your cheeks turning a dark shade while you eyes shy away.

Zozo giggles.

Zozo: Stop it

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I'm in public. People are staring at me while others stuck their tongues out.

Mandla laughs on the end of the line.

Mandla: Okay I'll call you back later. I'm taking gogo to her check up.

Zozo: (panicking) Is she okay?

Mandla: Don't worry it's just the usual routine check up.

She sighs.

Zozo: Good Lord I thought something happened to her.

Her phone vibrates indicating a incoming call. She looks at the call.

Zozo: Babe there is an incoming call.

Mandla: Okay I love you.

Zozo: Love you too.

She blows a kiss and he catches before he hangs up. She slide the green button answer the call.

Zozo: Hi.

Uthando: Girl where are you?

She cheerfully muttered causing Zozo to remove the phone from her ear. The girl almost broke her eardrum with her noise.

Zozo: I'm about to walk inside the library why?

Uthando: Live that and come to my room now.

Zozo: (frowning) What's going on?

Uthando: I've got us tickets for the concert in Potchefstroom.

Her frown deepened.

Zozo: What concert? What are you talking about?

Uthando: There's a live concert of Amoroto and we my friend are going there.

Zozo sighed.

Zozo: You know we can't because the exams are around the corner and we have to be prepared.

Uthando scoffed.

Uthando: There exams are a week from now on. You have been writings your whole life please don't make it sound like it's your first time.

Zozo: You know I like to be prepared.

Uthando: And you will be but please my babe come with me. You know how I like their music and I would be delighted to have you by my side. Imagine us being the first people in our village to see them live. Let's let loose before we get wrapped up by school. (Pleading) Please come with me.

Zozo sighed knowing she couldn't say no. She knew how much she loves their music and maybe she is right. She needs to live a little and let loose.

Zozo: Okay I'm coming.

Uthando screamed on the end of the line while she giggled.

Uthando: You will not regret it.

Zozo: You're dramatic you know that right?

Uthando: I'm too happy to answer that. I love you bye.

Zozo shakes her head with a smile lurking on her lips.

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Wiping his hands with the dishcloth Mthuthuzeli pushes the chair back and rise up to his feet. He sighed in content and slip his hand on his pocket to look for his wallet. Joyce walks out of the caravan to take the plate.

Joyce: You didn't sleep home last night again.

She murmurs taking the plate and wipes the table. Mthuthuzeli places a R50 note on the table and turned on his heels ignoring her. Joyce scoffs.

Joyce: You're not about to ignore me Mthuthuzeli where were you?

Mthuthuzeli: Can we not do this right now?

He muttered defeated.

Joyce: No we are doing it right now. I want to know who is she?

She spat bitterly.

Joyce: (shouting) What's her name Mthuthuzeli?

Mthuthuzeli: Joyce you're attracting attention to us and you know how much I hate it.

Joyce: (screaming) Then tell me her name so I can deal with her now. I want her to hear me and live my man alone.

Mthuthuzeli sighed popping his knuckles. The woman was getting crazy day by day and it was impossible to live with her. He stumbled to his taxi avoiding the noise but Joyce follows close behind him yelling.

Joyce: Who is she?

Mthuthuzeli: Joyce I'm telling you this for the last time. (Hissing) Lower your voice when you're speaking to me. Even my wife doesn't talk to me like she's falling on top of the mountain.

The only person who has the right to ask me that is in varsity so please stop acting like my wife because I don't owe you shit.

He slams the door and brings the engine to life before driving off leaving her with tears streaming down her cheeks. She sniffs looking around and finds almost half of the rank looking at her.

Joyce: (screaming) What are you looking at?

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She looks at the tickets in her hand and smiled pulling the drawer and place them inside. She stumbled to Mercy's room and push the door without knocking. She gasps at the scene in front of her.

Uthando: Mercy is that what I think it is?

Mercy: If you're talking about the rolled up note and the cocaine on top of the table then yes it is what you think it is.

She mumbled unbothered looking at the roof. Uthando walks in further in the room and shuts the door with her foot.

Uthando: How long has this been going on?

Mercy chuckles.

Mercy: You sound like your mother Yanga right now.

Uthando snorted.

Uthando: Don't compare me with that robot.

Mercy: Then have a taste. This stuff takes you to paradise while your problems vanish at just one sniff.

Uthando looked at her and shifted her gaze back to the cocaine on the table. Her heart pounded as she took the step towards it.

Mercy: Just one sniff and you will feel like me. You can finally have the courage to tell that lecture you like how you feel. I promise I won't judge.

At the thought of Brian crosses her mind she smiled. The man was making her to feel things she has never felt for any man before. Maybe Mercy is right after sniffing the cocaine she will have the courage to tell him. She sucked in her breath before she knelt in front of the table.

Uthando: How do I do this?

Mercy flipped her eyes and jumped off the bed. She took the card and scoop some of the cocaine on it then closed her left nostril before sniffing. She closed her eyes and rubbed her nose as it shoots straight to her head.

Mercy: Use the note like your smoking but the difference is that your doing it with your nose. Take it easy.

Uthando slowly nodded and picked up the note and brought it to her nose. She pushed back all her fears and took the first sniff.

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Mandla tapped his fingers nervously on his lap as they wait for Khwezi outside his school. He looks at Zobuhle's grandmother on the passenger seat and sighed knowing it was now or never.

Mandla: Gogo I have something to ask you.

The old woman turned to him. He swallow hard while his heart skipped a beat. He rolls down the window to get air.

Gogo: What is my boy.

He covers his face with his hands.

Mandla: I don't want to be seem as disrespectful or anything but I'm humbly kneeling in front of you to ask for your blessings. I love you granddaughter and I don't see my future without her. She's the apple of my eye and the best thing that has ever happened to me. I'm not saying I want to marry her right now because she obviously has to graduate first and settle in building her career but someday I want to make an honest woman out of her.

Gogo: Mandla.

His heart pounded so much that it could leap out of his throat. He felt like he could piss in his pants. Did he say something wrong or the proposal didn't come out the way he wanted. He sucked his breath still covering his eyes with his hands. He didn't need to look at the old woman to know she didn't like that idea.

Gogo: Mandla.

She called out again.

Mandla: Gogo.

Gogo: Look at me.

Slowly removing his hands from his face he raised his head.

Gogo: (smiling) I would be honoured to hand my daughter to you.

His eye popped out of the sockets.

Mandla: Gogo please don't play with me.

Gogo: (laughing) I'm too old to be playing with you son. I've seen the love you two share even you pretended to be friends.

He chuckles.

Gogo: Your love is pure and beautiful reminding me of the good old days when I was still a spring chicken.

Mandla bursting into fit of laughter.

Gogo: You can laugh all you want but I was once a catch in my days.

He clutches his stomach laughing. Gogo joins him.

Gogo: Don't play with my baby Mandla she's all I have.

Mandla nodded

Mandla: I won't gogo. She's my queen that one.

The school bell rang announcing school out. Mandla smiled looking at Khwezi stumbling to the car. He greets them before stepping inside. He steps on the gas and drove off happier than he was when he called Zobuhle. Now the only thing is to tell his father before he can propose.

A giggle shoots out from Uthando's lips. The temporary state of mind she was in felt like paradise and she didn't want to wake up from. She bends down to sniff again and rubbed her nose. She stumbles to the bed and throws herself on top of it. Mercy looks at the girl who keeps giggling and somehow her voice got deep with each giggle that came from her mouth. She crawls towards her and bends down to peck her lips. Uthando raises her head and narrow her hooded eyes at her. She bites her lips upon seeing Brian's full plumped lips. She darts her tongue out to lick her lips while Mercy follows the movement with her eyes. She places her palms on her face and crushes her lips on hers. Uthando gasps causing Mercy to let her tongue to invade her mouth. She moans crawling closer to Mercy. Uthando closed her eyes imprinting each moment on her mind. The way he was holding her and the way his urgent kisses got turned her on. She could feel her panties wet as she savour each moment of the kiss. She breaks it gasping for air. She looks at Mercy and finds her licking her lips. Mercy raised her hand to her breast. She slowly caress them through her top. Uthando moans shutting her eyes.

Mercy: Can I?

She murmurs holding the hem of her top. Uthando nodded with her eyes still closed and raise her hands. Mercy slip the top of of her head and unclip her bra. Uthando sucks in her breath waiting in anticipation as Mercy grips her left breast. Twisting the bud Uthando moans bringing her hand to the other breast. She twists the nipple with the same pressure Mercy was using and moans out loud. Mercy unzips her jeans and sneak her fingers to her core. Uthando jumps startled at the intrusion.

Mercy: I'm sorry we can stop if you want.

Uthando: No.

She blurts out and stood on her feet on the bed before throwing her jeans and underwear to the floor.

Uthando: I haven't done something like this before.

Mercy smiled in approval and stood up too. Striping naked she lays Uthando on her back and opens her legs. Uthando's heart skips a beat as Mercy opens her folds with her fingers. She stares at her core for a whole before she covers her mouth with her core. Her hole clenches right in front of Mercy's eyes. Mercy leans in and licks a broad stripe from her entrance to her clit. Uthando twitches her hips as Mercy holds her still before repeating the action. Saliva drips down Mercy's cheeks as she spread her pussy lips. Her thighs shake around Mercy's head causing her tighten the grip on her legs. Uthando's breath hitches as Mercy wraps her lips around her clit and suck. Mercy flicks her tongue on the sensitive bud. She spread her knees and slips a finger in her throbbing clit.

Uthando: (moaning) Brian ... I.

Words gets stuck up in her throat as the pleasure intensify. Tears spill out of Uthando's eyes. If she had to give out her virginity to anyone it would be him in a heart beat. She has never felt so much pleasure in her life she was sure she was dying. Mercy let's her take the lead Uthando rubs her pussy sloppily against her tongue as she brings herself to orgasm. She clutches the bed cover screaming.

A smile threatens to break at Uthando's lips as she picks up her clothes on the floor. She turns to Mercy who has a grin plastered on her face.

Mercy: I enjoyed that.

Uthando: (smiling) Me too. Maybe we can do it from time to time.

Mercy lips curve.

Mercy: I would like that too.

Uthando nodded before walking out of her room. She paused on her steps seeing Yanga and Zozo walking in.

Uthando: (grinning) Hey guys.

Yanga: Someone is in a good mood. Care to share the secret ingredient that made you so happy?

Uthando: My lips are sealed.

She mumble skipping to the kitchen with a smile on her face. Yanga looks at Zobuhle who just shrugged her shoulders and made her way to Uthando's room. She placed her bag on the floor and look for her charger. She closes the bag and connects the charger on the plug. She switches it on and floods of missed calls from Mandla comes through.

Mandla: Gogo is doing well. The doctor is happy with her progress. She said she might be able to walk again. Your phone was off and I thought I should let you know. I love you.

She smiled and fires back her own text.

Zozo: Thank you baby for everything. And I love you too.

She places her phone on the floor and made her way to the others. She looks at her friend who kept shifting on her weight unable to sit down.

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Adesola looks at his father as he coughs hysterically. The man was get worse each day and that shuttered Ade's heart. He still needed his father especially now but the man was one step closer to his deathbed. He leaps up to his feet and pour water in a glass and helps him to drink. He murmurs a thank you before leaning in the pillow behind him and close his eyes.

Damola: I'm tired of holding on son.

Ade shook his head with tears threatening to stream down his cheeks. He brings his hands in his face and rubs them.

Damola: I want you to take care of everything.

Ade: No dad for everything. And I love you too.***

She places her phone on the floor and made her way to the others. She looks at her friend who kept shifting on her weight unable to sit down.

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Damola: I want you to take care of everything.

Ade: No dad you're not dying. You still have a lot to live for.

Damola lips curve into a sad smile. He didn't want to do this to his family but he was tired of seeing them suffering because of him. He wanted so much of them and he wouldn't blame his wife Patricia if she choose to walk out of that door.

Damola: (chuckling) I'm not dying now son but in a couple of months I won't be here with you.

Tears stream down Ade's eyes. Death has temporarily found a home in his life. Everyone close to him is being taken by death and it pissed him off he couldn't do anything about it.

Damola: This is not the time to be breakdown Adesola. This is the time you hold the bull by it's horn whatever shit life throws at you. I've got businesses that needs you and you won't be able to handle them if you're this weak.

Ade sniffs back the mucus and wipes his tears with the back of his hand.

Ade: I know nothing about being a drug lord dad.

Damola: You will learn as time goes by. The ring of circle of people you meet trust no one but yourself and Vuyo. His been with me from day one and he will never lead you to your downfall. I'm leaving the responsibility of the family to you. You're a man now Adesola you will look after your family. My wives should not struggle with anything while you're in charge boy or else I'll fuck you up through the grave.

He firmly muttered emphasizing his point. Ade swallows hard.

Damola: Trust Vuyo with your life. His the only person in this game that you can lean on. He knows all my contacts and he will teach you everything you have to know.

Ade nods.

Damola: We have to get you an I.D for citizenship.

Ade: Where will I get that?

Damola: Leave that to me son.

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Driving back home Mandla was in deep thoughts. He couldn't believe how easy it took the old woman to bless him. Her blessings were the only things standing on his way and he was sure his father wouldn't have a problem. His mind slipped to the questions swimming in his head only Zobuhle can answer. What if she doesn't want to get married? What if she leaves him after he proposed or what if she decides she doesn't love him anymore? What if he found someone better there and she will break their relationship? The 'what if's' in his mind caused him a migraine. He groans pushing those insecurities at the back of his mind. The only person who can take him out of his turmoil was miles away from him. He snaps out of his daze as the car in front of him abruptly stops in the freeway.

Gogo: Oh nkosi yam.

Her body jerks to the dashboard while Khwezi flies to the front seat. Mandla curses under his breath.

Mandla: What is he going?

He clicks his tongue out and stuck his head out of the window.

Mandla: (yelling) What are you doing?

The driver in front of him rolls the window and show him the middle finger before he drives off. Mandla clicks his tongue and shift his gaze to the hooting car behind him.

Mandla: Sorry.

The driver nodded in understand and switched lanes overtaking him. He removes his head from the window and clicks his tongue.

Mandla: I don't know why people who can't drive are allowed on the road. Are you guys okay?

Khwezi nodded rubbing his forehead.

Mandla: Khwezi seatbelt.

Khwezi huffs strapping the seatbelt. The seatbelt was limiting from moving around from one window to the other.

Gogo: His probably drunk as we speak.

She chirps in placing her hand to normalized her heart. She can't die now because of a reckless driver without seeing her daughter graduating and marrying her off to the man she loves.

Mandla: This is the one of the reasons that causes accidents.

He clicks his tongue and switch lanes driving slowly. The reckless driver switches lanes to where they are.

Mandla: What is he doing?

He step on the accelerator leaving a gap between them. He stops on the stops sign and wait for the truck driver on the other lane who kept indicating. The drunk driver behind him honks impatiently before stepping on the gas. The car bumps into Mandla's car.

Mandla: (yelling) Msunu wenja wenzani?

The truck driver honks stepping on the breaks but it was too late. The truck crashes into them sending the car straight to the other car in front of it claiming their lives.

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Waking up with a heavy heart is something one has from time to time. The sadness and isolation you want cannot be understood by the others around you. Everything you do just irritates you and the person next to you does the same too this was how Zobuhle was feeling. She doesn't know the sudden switch of her moods came about because she knows she slept in sober mood. She stirs the coffee and bringing it to her to take a sip. Uthando stumbles to the kitchen holding her head.

Uthando: Morning.

Zozo: Morning.

Uthando: What happened last night. I feel like something happened and I'm not aware of it. Did we perhaps get drunk?

Zozo scrunches her nose shaking her head.

Zozo: We didn't why?

Uthando: Are you sure?

Zozo: (frowning) Yea.

Uthando: Why do I feel like I missed something last night. I can't remember a thing.

Zozo: I don't know.

Uthando: When did you arrive?

Zozo: Haibo Uthando!

She exclaimed annoyed.

Zozo: I arrive around 5 yesterday.

Uthando: Did I see you?

Zozo scoffs and places the mug on top of the sink. Her third degree was getting on her nerves and she didn't want to snap at the girl.

Zozo: Of course you did.

She mumbled rolling her eyes. Whatever game her friend was playing she was not interested at it.

Zozo: I don't think I'm coming to the concert later on. I have a very bad feeling about it.

Uthando scoffed.

Uthando: You're not about to do this to me. You're coming Zobuhle and that's the end of discussion.

She sternly muttered before turning on her heels. Zozo sighed shutting her eyes. Something bad was going to happen in that concert and she could feel it.

Blood and flesh scattered around like someone tossed out rose petals. Blood and ash painted the tarred road dancing with each other. Blood seeping out at each one of the bodies on the floor. Sirens cried out loud on the air as each one of them fights to stay alive. On the left side Khwezi and Gogo's body remain unconscious not showing any sign of life while on the right hand side Mandla gags on the blood seeping out of his mouth. His hand trembles as he tries to reach for his for to call his girl. He wants to hear her

voice for the last time before he shuts his eyes forever. That's angelic voice that soothes his soul that calm aura has him succumbing to anything she wants. She warned him many times to skip her grandmother's check ups if the the are on Fridays because drivers are reckless and under the influence of alcohol on this particular day but it fell on deaf ear. Nobody can predict their day of death same as the day of birth in this world. Her beautiful face flashes in his mind as he fights to stay alive. It's been hours they have been here and he was sure that the two people he was in the car with have died even if they could be saved. His eyelids become heavier. He curls his lips into a smile before shutting his eyes. She will forever be in his heart even in the afterlife. Those where his words last words he chanted in his head.

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With her forehead tucked on the windscreen she watches the sky fog. The sunlight barely visibly to the sky

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fading when the car racing up the road birthing night time. Her phone has never been this quiet before and at some point she switched it off because she's angry at Mandla for not replying her good morning text. On the corner of her eye she watches her friend giggling to what Mercy said. She leans on the

window and shut her eyes pushing that nagging feeling at the back of her head. This is the weekend she let's loose and enjoys herself without being worried about her next meal. Her grandmother and brother are being taken care by her boyfriend. The man who sees her as a human being while the others only see someone poor.

Uthando: Did you bring your ID?

Her voice snaps her out out of her daze. Her eyes flutter towards her and she nods.

Uthando: Great!

Zozo: Why do I have to bring my ID again?

Uthando snorts.

Uthando: It's a mystery how you passed with 7 distinctions but stupid when it comes to life in general.

She mumbled under her breath. Mercy giggled on the driver's seat.

Zozo: I'm sorry I didn't catch that.

Uthando rolls her eyes. She was starting to see the side Mercy was always talking about in their friendship. It was dull lacking something and too boring for her. Zobuhle was boring her and that question in her mind keeps popping up. How did she become friends with her? It's a mystery she needed to solve. She groaned turning on her seat to face the stupid girl in the backseat.

Uthando: Because Zobuhle they might need our ID at the gate to check for our age. No under 18's are allowed there.

Zozo nodded leaning back on her seat. Makes sense especially at how their age group love their music. She chewed on her bottom lip bored of her mind. The car ride seemed to be longer than she anticipated it to be. She slipped her hand in her pocket taking out her phone. Switch on the device to look at the time. Dozens of notification comes through. Her eyes twinkled when she see's Mandla's missed call. Served him right for not answering her text. She smiles in victory and dial his number. She frowns when the number takes her to voice mail. She tries again but the phone doesn't go through. Clicking her tongue she aggressively shove her phone back in her pocket.

Zozo: Two can play that game.

She whispers unadvisedly leaning her head on the window.

Uthando: Trouble in paradise?

She ignores her as her phone chimes in her pocket. The smile grew back on her face as she fishes it out. She pauses pressing her lips into a thin line before answering the call.

Zozo: Hello.

Mpumi: Zobuhle sis how are you?

Zozo: Ngiyaphila wena ma? (I'm fine and you?)

Mpumi: (sighing) I'm afraid I called bearing bad news.

Zozo: (panicking) Is there something wrong with uGogo? Is she with you right now?

Silence...

Zozo: Ma yini inkinga? (Ma what's the matter?)

Mpumi heavily sighed.

Mpumi: There was a car accident.

Her breath hitches while her hands trembles. Uthando gawks at her.

Zozo: Ma uphi ugogo?

Uthando: Zozo what's going on?

Mpumi: I'm sorry my baby but they didn't survive.

A lump stuck on her throat while her lips quiver. Her eyes get moist with unshed tears.

Zozo: Ma you didn't answer my question where is my grandmother?

Mpumi: I'm sorry sis.

Zozo shook her head tears streaming down her cheeks. The woman has to try something else because she last spoke to her grandmother yesterday before she went her check up. If it's a joke it's a very bad one because she's not amused. Seeing the tears seeping out of her's friend eyes Uthando unstrap the seatbelt and snatch the phone on Zobuhle's hands. She places on loudspeaker.

Mpumi: Zozo?

Uthando: Ma yimi Uthando. (Ma its me Uthando.)

Mpumi: Thank God you're with her.

Uthando: (frowning) What's going on Ma?

Mpumi: There was a car accident.

Uthando sucks on her breath shifting her gaze at Zobuhle meanwhile Mercy parks at the side of the road.

Uthando: Who were in the car ma?

Mpumi: Gogo.

A tear dropped at Zobuhle's eyes.

Mpumi: Khwezi.

Another followed while her heart dropped to the pit of her stomach. She raised her hands and stuck her hands on her ears already knowing exactly what's she's about to say.

Mpumi: And Mandla.

Uthando watches helpless as her friend cries on the back seat. Her cries piercing Mpumi's heart on the end of the line. Zozo shook her head tears streaming down her cheeks. They wouldn't all live her to be alone in this world. Mpumi has to be lying because she spoke to these people just yesterday.

Mpumi: I'm sorry.

She disconnects the call after that. The car grows silent the only thing audible is Zobuhle's piercing cries. Her mind slipped to her grandmother's last words. The praises the woman showered her with it's like she knew it was the last words she would ever say to her. Her mind shuts down everything around her as she tries to grasp what she's been told. Mercy smirked on the driver's seat bringing her back to those evil thoughts. Had she perhaps fell asleep while still on the road because what she just heard has to be a dream. At the back of her mind she knew she was not and her phone on Uthando's hands and the pity look she has on her face confirmed she was not dreaming.

Mercy: Guys it's already 18:00pm and we have to be there before 19:30pm.

Uthando: (softly) I'm sorry Zozo.

Zozo wiped the tears with the back of her head.

Zozo: We have to go back.

Mercy snorted.

Mercy: Go back to where?

Zozo: Back to the flat so I can pack my things and ...

Mercy interjects.

Mercy: We are not about to turn back now. We are half way through our destination and it will take us hours to go back and come back again.

Zozo: (snapping) My family just died and the only thing you care about is the stupid concert?

Mercy: (rolling eyes) Why should I care? You said it yourself they are your family not mine.

Tears willed up in Zozo's eyes.

Zozo: Please just drive me back I'm begging you.

Mercy: Nope I'm not about to do that unless you will buy the petrol for the back and forth. I didn't borrow my brother's car for your family drama. Uthando you have to choose. It's either we go to the concert that mostly will be hosted years to come from now on like we planned or we leave her on the side of the road to hitchhike her way back to the campus.

Uthando shifts her eyes to Mercy and back at Zobuhle. She's known this girl seeing they were kids and she knows how much those people mean to her but she also loved to see Amaroto live. This was a once life time opportunity she probably won't get in the future. She heavily sighed and stretched out her hand giving Zobuhle her phone back.

Uthando: I'm sorry Zozo about everything that is happening to you right now. I sympathize with you but I can't miss this concert.

It's true when they say when days are dark friends are few. This was what Zobuhle was witnessing. Her heart broke for the fourth time this evening.

Uthando: I hope you understand and hold no grudge against me.

Mercy: Well you heard it.

Zozo nodded and stepped out of the car. The car air hitting her caused her to shiver. She brought her hands around her and walked back with tears streaming down her cheeks. Mercy stepped on the gas leaving the girl in the middle of N12 alone.

Her eyes set on a cross handcrafted stone written Carletonville. She shift her gaze to the board on the side of the road and nods seeing the arrow indicating where she is. She looks at the other arrows on the board and seeing that the road she comes from leads her to Potchesroom and the one ahead of her leads to Johannesburg. She wipes the tears and follow the road knowing it's where they came from. She doesn't know when will she arrive where she's going but one thing for sure was that she was determined to find her way back to campus. She sucks in her breath as the wind blew while the unpredictable weather starts to drizzle. She picks up her pace wrapping her arms around her while wiping the tears with the back of her hand. She gulps her saliva feeling her throat dry while her feet ache. She pauses placing her hands on her waist panting. She was tired and thirsty. Shifting her gaze around the area looking for someone to atleast help her but finds no one. Her lips quiver as the thunder roared in the sky before a heavy rain fell upon her. She cries harder picking up her pace. The rain and tears blinding her makes things difficult for her to see. She trips on a stone that was right in front of her and fell face first. Her cheek and hands throbbled on the impact of being stretched by the tarred road. If her phone was not

damaged by the rain it was now.

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Sighing Uthando looks at the view mirror to see the road behind them. They must be far away from her right now and somehow she felt bad for how she handled the situation. She blinks the tears in her eyes and took a huge breath. Zozo doesn't hold grudge she knows she will understand at some point and forgive her. The rain poured heavily on the roof of the car while the thunder roared. Her heart skipped a beat wonder where was she.

Mercy: Hey.

She shifts her gaze to her and a tear escaped her eye.

Uthando: Am I a bad friend?

A frown settles on Mercy's face. She rolled her eyes and parks at the side of the road.

Mercy: Of course not; where is this coming from?

Uthando: I feel so bad about what we did to her back then. Looking at the rain pouring violently I just wonder where is she?

Tears discarded her eyes. She covers her face bursting into tears. Mercy heavily sighed and removes her hands on her face.

Mercy: Hey look at me.

Uthando raised her moist eyes to her.

Mercy: I'm not going to allow you to guilt trip yourself. Zobuhle is a big girl she can take care of herself.

Uthando: But she does...

Mercy interrupted shaking her head.

Mercy: She will figure things out beside the girl is old enough. Stop worrying about her and allow yourself to enjoy this evening. You've been taking care of this girl since she came here. Is it a crime to choose yourself first before her? When is she going to learn anything if you always come to her rescue? Zobuhle is a big girl and can take care of yourself.

She nodded wiping the tears with the back of her hand. Mercy was right again Zobuhle is old enough to fend for herself.

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Pressing the call button Mthuthuzeli places his phone on his ear and wait for the her to pick up. It rings four times before she picks up.

Mthuthuzeli: Hey.

Uthando: Hi.

Mthuthuzeli: How are you?

Uthando: (coldly) I'm fine.

He sighs running his hand on his face. Wasn't she going to ask how was he since he asked her?

Mthuthuzeli: Ummh... You hardly pick up my calls or respond to my messages this days.

Uthando: That's because I'm busy. I don't have time to be on my phone.

She snaps agitated on the end of the line. He releases a shaky breath.

Mthuthuzeli: I'm sorry I didn't mean to disturb you. I was just calling to check up on you.

Uthando: Well you heard that I'm okay now.

Was it go him or she was just cold towards him?

Mthuthuzeli: Did I really catch you in a bad time?

Uthando: You did.

Mthuthuzeli: Okay then goodnight. I will call you some other time.

He removed the phone ready to hang up but her voice stops dead on his tracks.

Uthando: Wait.

Mthuthuzeli: Is there something else?

Uthando: Actually yes. I'm running out of toiletries and month end is far for me to receive my allowance and the rent money from the tenants.

A smile breaks from his lips. For the first time she was asking for his help and that warmed his heart. He was not about to disappoint her.

Mthuthuzeli: When do you need it?

Uthando: Right now.

Mthuthuzeli: Okay I'll drive to the ATM now. Good night and I love you.

She rolls her eyes at the end of the line.

Uthando: Yea sure.

She disconnects the call while Mthuthuzeli picks up his car keys and stumbles towards the door. He locks it after him and jumps into the car driving to the nearest mall. Meanwhile Uthando leans back on the headrest feeling her mind being foggy.

Uthando: I got us some cash for the stuff.

Mercy smirks on the driver's seat. The girl was slowly learning and she was proud to be her teacher.

Uthando: How many bags do we have before we run out?

Mercy: Two. The one you just used was the one we didn't finish last night.

Uthando nodded shifting her gaze to the cocaine in her lap. She opened the bag and poured it on the screen of her phone. She used her finger to cut it into lines before bringing to her nose to sniff. Mercy dipped her finger in her saliva and stretched out her hand to the screen. She scoops it up and bringing to her teeth and rub it there.

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The rain isn't doing any justice on her body causing her to keep on crying. The road is dead quiet with no one on it and that scares her. She doesn't know what lurks around this bushes and she knows she's far from home. She wipes her face in her palm as her ears picks up the sound of a car approaching. She rises her thumb hitchhiking but the driver speeds off. She screams frustrated. Her screams echoes on the quiet now

Sponsored

AD

Zobuhle is old enough to fend for herself.

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Pressing the call button Mthuthuzeli places his phone on his ear and wait for the her to pick up. It rings

four times before she picks up.

Mthuthuzeli: Hey.

Uthando: Hi.

Mthuthuzeli: How are you?

Uthando: (coldly) I'm fine.

He sighs running his hand on his face. Wasn't she going to ask how was he since he asked her?

Mthuthuzeli: Ummh... You hardly pick up my calls or respond to my messages this days.

Uthando: That's because I'm busy. I don't have time to be on my phone.

She snaps agitated on the end of the line. He releases a shaky breath.

Mthuthuzeli: I'm sorry I didn't mean to disturb you. I was just calling to check up on you.

Uthando: Well you heard that I'm okay now.

Was it go him or she was just cold towards him?

Mthuthuzeli: Did I really catch you in a bad time?

Uthando: You did.

Mthuthuzeli: Okay then goodnight. I will call you some other time.

He removed the phone ready to hang up but her voice stops dead on his tracks.

Uthando: Wait.

Mthuthuzeli: Is there something else?

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Lady: Where are you going?

Zozo: (shivering and crying) To campus. Please I don't have any money with me and my friend just left me on the side of the road. Please I'm begging you don't leave me here. I don't know this side of the town.

The lady's eyes soften seeing the state she was in. Her clothes were soak wet clinging on her body like a second skin her teeth cluttered while she had a bruise on her right cheek. She was probably freezing to death on those clothes.

Lady: Hop in.

Zozo: (crying) Thank you. Thank you so much.

She opened the backseat and stepped in. Tears discarded her eyes as she burst into tears. Everything that happened from the minute she got the call to now crushed on her mind. The lady looked at at her on the view mirror.

Lady: Which campus are you going too?

Zozo: (crying) Witwatersrand university.

The lady gasped shocked and hit the breaks. What was this girl doing here then in the middle of the night?

Lady: What where you going here at night?

Zozo wiped her tears and narrated the whole story for her. The lady bit her lip and blinked rapidly stopping herself from crying. Some people are cruel out there and this friend of her's will never prosper in life due to the amount of tears she cried this evening. She was going on that side of town but she will drop her off closer where she knows she was safe so she can walk back to campus.

19

Rubbing her temples she feels a migraine forming. She doesn't want to think what would have happened to her if this woman didn't pick her up. She blinked her puffy eyes and rubbed the tear that just escaped her eye. Her emotions are all over the place not sure which one to focus more between grief and betrayal. She wipes the tear but they keep coming.

Lady: I'm really sorry about your family.

She faces her lips to smile and the lady smacked her lips shut getting the hint she didn't want to talk about them. She sighed and turned up the heater for her as Zozo's teeth clattering echoed in the car. She

didn't want to imagine what was going through her mind right now. The betrayal of a family member a lover or even a friend cuts too deep. The wound lives you with so many insecurities and unanswered questions. If it was up to her she would drive her to campus and drop her off but her petrol was not enough. She would just have to drive slowly on her way back so it could at least take her half way through home. She passed the first robots and parked the car on the side of the road bringing Zobuhle out of her thoughts. She looked at the unfamiliar place and could feel her heart threatening to leap up her throat. The lady took her bag on the passanger seat and took out her last R50 and turned to her.

Lady: This is where I can drop you. My destination was Soweto but I didn't want to leave you on the side of the road.

Zobuhle nodded blinking rapidly. She would just have to look for the nearest police station and sleep there.

Zozo: (crying) Thank you so much.

The lady bit her quivering lip. She was breaking her heart and it was killing her she couldn't do more than she was already doing. She raised her head and blinked.

Lady: There is a taxi rank just not far from where we are.

She muttered handing her the note. Tears rolled down Zobuhle's face. She cried so much causing the lady to also cry too.

Lady: I will keep you in my prayers tonight. May God keep you safe and again I'm sorry about your family.

Zozo nodded wiping the tears that keep falling.

Zozo: (crying) Thank you! Thank you so much may God bless your kind heart. I'm sorry for wetting your car seat.

The lady nodded wiping her tears with a smile on her face as she steps out of the car. She watched her walking away until she disappeared into the night. She brought her hands in her face and burst into tears. The stupid tank just had to be not enough when she needs it the most.

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'Ngu zuma umsholoji unxamalala indoda enamakhanda amabili ngiphethe u reece u reece
ngiphethe u reece u reece madlisa umshini wam

_sithi sithi sithi haibo awuthi ngizwe lomthakathi uthini ngiyafunga lomthakathi une'sbindi izolo
ngimthole ejaridini ephethe nemithi ehamb'nqunu ngathi uhamba ehlathini ngiyafunga
lomthakathi une'sbindi hawu'bheke ujika nase'zulwini ephethe nemithi.'

Uthando gulped the shot singing word to word of the lyrics. Her face scrunches as the burning sensation hit her throat. Mercy and her friends giggled next to her.

Khaya: I assume it's your first time?

Uthando nodded feeling embarrassed. She felt so out of place and every time she opened her mouth to comment about something she felt like they were judging her. She so wanted to crawl back in her shell and stay there for the rest of the night.

Mercy: (whispering) You're okay?

She nodded faking a smile. Mercy arched her eyebrows seeing right through her. She was not the girl she came with earlier on. She seemed tense and reserved.

Mercy: We will be back.

She grip Uthando's upper arm and dragged her through the crowd until they were at the far from them.

Mercy: I know a thing that will help you relax.

She muttered slipping her hand in her pockets. She fished out the bag of cocaine and her phone. She flipped the phone so the screen was facing up before pouring the cocaine on it. Uthando watched eagerly beside her. Mercy dipped her finger in her saliva before rubbing it on her teeth. Uthando copies the action and licked her teeth.

Mercy: You have nothing to be ashamed about. We all have been there.

She muttered with a smile plastered on her face. Uthando lips curve into a smile at least she was not making her look stupid or anything. Her heart swelled with joy as she looks at her face imprinting it on her mind. It hasn't been a year she knew her but she felt like she had known her for years. She felt a sense of belonging being just among her. Maybe she really didn't need a friend so stuck up and too responsible as Zobuhle after all life is about taking risks and she was willing to do so. The girl came with a baggage and expected everyone to carry it for her. She inwardly rolled her eyes. Leaving her on the side of the road was the best decision she has ever taken in her life.

Uthando: We have enough booze for the night right?

Mercy smirked nodding.

Mercy: Don't worry your pretty brain about something so useless as booze should we encounter that problem we will use the money your brother sent you.

Uthando nodded rubbing her nose. She felt like rubbing the cocaine on her teeth was not reaching places she wanted like it was doing when sniffing it. She wiped her nose blinking rapidly as her mind becomes foggy.

Uthando: Let's head back. I don't want to miss out to anything.

Mercy chuckled following closely behind her. Uthando felt her senses come alive as they make their way back to the concert.

Uthando: This is the best day of my life.

She yelled on top of the music dancing.

Mercy: I know right.

She yelled back dancing next to her.

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Patricia placed a lingering kiss on her husband forehead and switched off the lights. She made her way to the guest bedroom. Damola was getting worse day by day forcing her to turn the main bedroom into a hospital because the man didn't want to die in a place surrounded by machines and doctors. She stripped naked and stumbled to the ensuite. She sighed in content as the eater discarded her body. She doesn't know where does she get the energy to take care of that man each day. His health was draining her. Her family are nagging her about leaving him but she ignores them. She took a vow for better and for worse; in sickness and in health until do them apart and that is what she will do. She steps out of the shower and wrap a towel around her body before skipping to be the bedroom. She screams seeing a figure sitting on her bed. The figure leaps up to his feet and stumbled towards her to cover her mouth.

Voice: Shuu! Its just n I didn't mean to startle you.

The voice whispered on her ear. She shudder clutching the towel tightly around herself before pushing him off.

Patricia: What are you doing in my room?

She bellows in rage. Ade scratched his neck nervously.

Ade: My father said I should take care of you so I thought I should check how you're doing.

Patricia: That doesn't give you the right to sneak in my room like thief in the night.

She clucked her tongue and stumbled to the door. She throws it open .

Patricia: As you can see I'm okay if you will excuse me I've got to get dress and catch up on my sleep.

Ade snorted.

Ade: This tightness role you're portraying will eventually creak and just know I'm few feet away from

you. A woman beautiful as you shouldn't be asexually starved just because her husband can't perform in bed.

Patricia chuckled and clapped her hands in disbelief. He didn't just utter that in her face.

Patricia: I don't know who gave you the wrong impression that I would sleep with you. I love my husband and respect him. Opening my legs to any man especially his son will send him to his early grave.

Ade sneered interjecting. He stumbles towards her. Patricia pushed out the room ready to shut the door but Ade places his foot on the door.

Ade: The man is already on his grave that will just release him from the pain his putting himself through.

Patricia: Even if you're the last man on earth I wouldn't go for you because I'm your mother and you are my son. While I'm still married to your father that makes me your mother despite being the same again. I'm going to say this one and it will be the last time I'm saying this to you. I'm not going to sleep with you boy not now and not ever. Now you will get the fuck out of my room to collect your manners. The next time you see me you better know where I stand in this house and where you stand. I'm the mother and your the child.

She hisses slamming the door on his face. Ade's jaw dropped to the floor. Damn the woman is feisty and scary. Bedding her was something he saw happening since his father was sick but he can see the woman won't budge.

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Her heart thudded in her ribcage as she walks on silent night. With each steps she takes her heart violently pounds in her chest. She shifts her gaze around her surroundings before picking her pace. She wraps her arms around herself to protect the wind from blowing off the jersey she has on.

Voice: Hey sweetness where are you going?

Her blood runs cold as the male voice rang out in the air. The lump in the back of her throat rose while the tears welled in her eyes. She could feel the hair in her back rising making her to pick up her pace. The male behind her also picks up his pace. Tears rolled down her cheeks while her heart pounded in her ribcage. The man was gaining up on her making her to start running. The man's footsteps thudded on the tarred road indicating he was also running after her. She staggered falling on her butt as she bumps into a wall. She rises her glossy eyes and fear creeps on her upon seeing the wall was not a wall but someone

else.

Zozo: (crying) Please don't hurt me. I don't have any money on me.

Man 1: Shut up.

He muttered panting behind her. She shudders tears rolling down her cheeks. The second man bend down to her level. She cringed biting her quivering lip to stop a sob to escape her mouth.

Zozo: (pleading and crying) Please.

Man 2: Hush.

He muttered placing his dirty finger in her lips.

Man 2: You have a pretty face and full delicious lips making me wonder how will my dick feel inside them.

He muttered caressing her cheek. Her eyes widen while her breath becomes shallow.

Zozo: (crying) Nono no! Please don't do this.

They ignore her and roughly pull her up to her feet. She screamed thrashing around. If it meant her dying then she will die fighting for her life. A hand covered her mouth. She gagged at the odour coming from the hand. She opened her mouth and bit the hand and the man hissed removing his hand from her mouth. She pushed him off her attempting to run away but the first man trips her. She falls face first. A scream escaped her lips. The man quickly turned her and slapped her so hard making her to bit her tongue. Her vision blurred for a few minutes as the man throw her on his shoulder like a sack of oranges dragging her to the nearest bush.

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Her screams echoed in the silent night as she fights for her life. The man throws her on the ground clicking his tongue and start kicking her. Her heart violently thudded in her ribcage as realization of what is about to happen to her knocks in.

Man 2: Shut up!

He muttered kicking each part her body. With each kick she cries out helplessly. She could feel blood seeping out of her body but not sure which part is bleeding. The man continues with his assault until the first one pulls him out of her. She winces with tears discarding her eyes as she turns on her side attempting to crawl away from them. Both stop their bickering and march to her.

Man 1: Where do you think you're going?

He muttered picking up where he friend left out kicking her. Her vision blurs at the man kicks her head. She swore she head a little crack on her head while blood flew down her skull like a waterfall.

Zozo: I'm sorry.

She pleads crying not knowing what is she apologizing for. The plea fell on deaf ears as the man ceases his movements to catch his breath. He pants filling in his lungs with much needed breath before shifting his gaze to his partner. Zozo wheezes on the ground; her whole body covered in blood like she walked out of the shower. She couldn't move each time she tries to do so she cries out. The first man looked at her in disgust unzipping her jeans. He tears out her underwear the fabric cutting through her delicate skin. She cries out ignoring the pain in her body holding down the remain piece of what was once her underwear hiding her private part from the preying eyes but the second man kicks her ribs. She drops the fabric crying to clunch where his dirty shoes connected. She rubs the area soothing the pain forgetting the fight she held.

Zozo: (crying) Please don't do this.

The men ignored her and pulled her thighs apart. Her blood runs cold while her heart picked up speed. She desperately thrash around but she's outnumbered. The second man punches her face knocking her out. He clicked his tongue pulling down his pants before widely opening her legs. He positions himself and thrust in. He groans deep down his throat holding his breath. Her walls her closing on him almost

making him calm instantly.

Man 2: Up with her.

He muttered stroking his hard dick. His friend obliged and stood up from the kneeling position he was in and pulled the unconscious Zozo up. He wrapped her legs around his waist and plunged back in meanwhile his friend opened her butt. He ran his shaft up and down her cracks before thrusting in. The pain waking Zozo up from her slumber. She screamed while the both men groaned thrusting in and out of her. Mandla knew her butt was a no go area under any circumstances.

With each thrust Zozo felt her soul slowly leaving her body. Her throat burnt from the screaming she did while her lips and body ached. Tears were uncontrollably falling down her eyes. The first man picked up his pace chasing his happy ending. The the man behind her also picked up his speed. She closed her eyes and silently cried. Her mind shutting out everything around her as it takes her to her happy place. Her grandmother's face Khwezi's and Mandla faces flashed through her mind. They were her happy place and now they were gone. Her grandmother will never get the chance to see her wearing that graduation gown. Khwezi will never get the chance to experience his childhood without being teased by his peers. She will never have the opportunity to take him out on a fancy restaurant and see the smile on his face that always warms her heart. She will never get the chance to build them a house and take them out of that village. Her stomach churned as her mind races back to the man who was with her through thick and thin. The love of her life her smile keeper and her future husband. They had plans about how their life will turn out to be. She made a promise to herself that she will study hard and graduate. Her one way ticket of a better life was through her books. Her body shook as an orgasm ripped out of her body. No matter how the circumstances are the body reacts differently to our mind. The first stilled inside her and grunted emptying all his seed on her. He panted normalizing his breath and slipping out of her. The second man hold her down chasing his orgasm. She screamed convulsive again. The man pulled out clenching his jaws. He stroked his shaft and thrust back in.

The process went on and on with them switching position while flipping Zobuhle over like pancakes. The little thread of sanity she was holding on broke. Her tears have dried up in her face while fresh ones keep falling.

She was still surprise that she hasn't died due to this pains and the bleeding. She wasn't about to question God's way because she knew he couldn't give her a burden she will never be able to handle.

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The following morning Uthando groaned flipping her eyes open. Her head throbbed and felt like it could split into two. She looked beside her and squint her eyes seeing a body laying beside her. She slips out of the bed and cursed as her feet made contact with the floor. She looked around at the room looking for her clothes and spot them at the far corner of the room. She stumbled towards them and slipped them on. She scrunched her nose as a bile rose in her throat. Rushing to the bathroom she throws the seat and empty her stomach. The noise woke Mercy up she jumped off the bed and made her way to the bathroom. She paused seeing Uthando puking her lungs out.

Mercy: (softly) Hey you're okay?

Uthando nodded gagging. Mercy giggled.

Mercy: Damn you look like hell. You went pretty hard on the alcohol last night.

She wiped her mouth and raised her head.

Uthando: It was my first time I had so much fun without being limited. It was the best night of my life.

Mercy flashed her smile.

Mercy: Stick with me doll and I'll show you what you have been missing out.

Uthando: Where are the others?

Mercy: They slept in my room. You should have seen how pissed your mother Yanga was when we came in.

They laughed.

Uthando: She needs a life that one and stop sticking her nose in our business.

Mercy: Let me quickly shower and make breakfast for everyone. You guys will need it.

She walked to the shower to open the tap while Uthando looked at herself in the mirror. Her lips curve into a smile upon seeing her reflection in the mirror. She looked way different than the girl she was months ago. She felt so alive and that was all thanks to her new best friend Mercy. The girl opened her eyes to many things in life she was missing on. She rolled her eyes as she thinks about that fat pig she once called a friend Zobuhle. Now thinking about it the girl was cramping her style and embarrassing her with her weight. She ate anything she comes across spelling out her poverty to everyone to know. She mind the right decision cutting her out of her life and she didn't need her; not now and not ever will she need her. She sighed and walked out the room to the kitchen. She passed Yanga listening to music in the lounge not bothering to greet her. Yanga lowered the volume.

Yanga: I don't appreciate you guys waking me up in the middle of the night because your drunk.

She ignored her opening the fridge. It's too early for her nagging. She pulled the bottle of water and down it. Yanga scrunched her nose in disgust.

Yanga: Can you atleast use a glass or a mug you're not the only one drinking from that bottle.

Uthando groaned resisting the urge to shut her up with a smack.

Uthando: My God Yanga do you ever shut up? If you're not complaining about this you're complaining about that. You're annoying shame.

She placed the bottle on top of the counter and stumbled to her room.

Yanga: Where is Zobuhle? I didn't see her last night.

Uthando: Don't know and I don't care.

She slammed the door behind her.

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Damola sat at the backseat as Vuyo drives him to the hospital.

Vuyo: You're still okay boss?

Damola weakly chuckled.

Damola: I'm strong as an ox Vuyo no need to worry about me.

Vuyo roared in laughter. He's known this man for years and he hated seeing him like this. If it was up to him he would take the pain away from him.

Vuyo: Do you think Ade is the right person to step in your shoes?

Damola: I trust my judgement and my son. He may seem weak right now but I know with a lot of training he will be twice what I am.

Vuyo chewed his lip nodding.

Vuyo: Do you mind if I take a leak? I'm pressed.

Damola: (chickling) You worry to much my friend. If I die now just know it's my day.

Vuyo: Joking about death seems random to you these days.

Damola weakly shrugged his shoulders. He didn't want to depend on anymore especially his wife. He hated waking up in the middle of the night as seeing her curled up like a ball sleeping in a chair next to the bed. He hated seeing the stressful lines in her face and seeing her loosing her weigh just because of him.

Damola: What can I say; I have a one way ticket to my death door. My funeral should be the most expensive one people have seen before.

Vuyo laughed stepping out of the car. He unzipped his pants making his way towards the bushes. He sighed in content releasing the fluids he had earlier on. He zips his pants ready to leave the scene but abprudly stops dead on his tracks.

Voice: Help!

He looked around the area not seeing anyone and shook his head. He was probably hearing things.

Voice: (crying) Please someone help me.

His eyebrows furrowed. He took out his gun from his waist and slowly followed the sound of the voice.

Vuyo: Fuck!

He cursed under his breath and placed his gun back on his waist. He rushed towards her and picked her up. Zozo screamed at the excruciating pain her body feels. Her vagina felt like it could fall from her while her body was numb.

Vuyo: Shit! Okay easy.

He muttered slowly picking her up. Zozo whimpered in pain breathing heavily. Vuyo rushed to the car and opened the backseat.

Damola: Fuck! What happened?

Vuyo: I don't know boss but we have to rush her to the hospital.

He closed the door and run to his side. He stepped in and stepped on the gas speeding off. Damola looked at the girl whimpering beside him and swallowed hard. He wouldn't be hold responsible for his actions should someone do this to his daughter.

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FIVE DAYS LATER

FIVE DAYS LATER

She made her way to the living room as the music plays out loud. She paused looking at the scene in front of her. Beer bottles were scattered everywhere smoking coming out from the hooker pipe filled the entire room making it difficult for her to see and breath. She brought her jersey up in her nostrils to cover them and squint her eyes looking for her roommates. She spotted them exchanging spits in the kitchen. She scrunched her nose in disgust and furiously marched to them.

Yanga: I don't think you guys remember the house rules. No parties in the middle of the week.

She hisses. Uthando broke the kiss and rolled her eyes. The girl was nagging about everything they do. It's like everyday she finds something new to nag them about.

Uthando: Rules are meant to be broken.

Mercy smirked pride seeping into her. Uthando was slowly breaking free from her eggshell. The timid girl that couldn't voice out her opinion has faded and being replaced by this bold fearless girl who didn't care about anyone but herself. Her student was growing wings. She snickered.

Yanga: Yes they are meant to be broken in weekends not in the middle of the week. I'm trying to study I have an exam tomorrow.

Uthando scoffed.

Uthando: So what? We also have an exam tomorrow but you don't see us whining about that. If you don't like the living arrangement you might want to start looking for a place to stay cause we are not turning our music down just to accommodate you.

Yanga's nostrils flared.

Yanga: I'm paying rent just like you guys are and I have right to complain when I'm not happy. The everyday parties have to go.

Mercy looked at Uthando and they bursted in laughter.

Yanga: What's so funny?

Them: You're.

They muttered in unison and walked away from her. She heavily sighed and made her way to her room. She packed her books in her bag and took out her phone out of the charger. She locked the door of her room and navigated her way out of the house to the library. She needed to find herself a new place to stay.

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Her eyebrows furrow as an important note crosses her mind. She knew there was something important she was forgetting but she was not sure what it was. Taking calculated breaths Zobuhle laid at the hospital bed like a statue. She hasn't moved or said a word since she woke up. The rude nurses swear and yell at her for messing up the sheet everyday but that doesn't seem to sink to her what are they saying to her. Her mind had shut down to everything around her. She didn't know who she was and how did she end up laying there but she could feel today was different from any other days. She was trying to grasp what her mind had been reminding her since early morning. She jumps off the bed and whimpers in pain as she removes the IV from her arms. She finally remembered the important note she kept forgetting and she couldn't miss it. Her exams were much more important than sitting there trying to remember how she ended up there. The door opens and a nurse walked in.

Nurse: What are you doing?

Zozo ignored him trying to jump off the bed. Her headface and ribs were wrapped in a bandage. Tears stream down her cheeks. The nurse walked out and came back a few minutes later with a doctor.

Doctor: Miss your body needs to heal before we discharge you.

Zozo shook her head with tears falling down her face. Her heart pounded as she looks at the two males in front of her. She shuts her eyes as the voices in her head rang.

Voice 1: Hey sweetness where are you going?

Voice 2: : You have a pretty face and full delicious lips making me wonder how will my dick feel inside them.

She raised her hands ignoring the pain and stuck her fingers in her ears.

Zozo: No no no please not again.

She muttered in a breaking voice. The nurse and the doctor share a look.

Voice 1: Hush.

Zozo: (crying and pleading) Please make it stop.

She screamed with her eyes still closed. The doctor rushed to her and hold her down.

Doctor: We need to sedate her.

He yelled to the nurse. The nurse hold her arms trying to place her back on the bed. Zozo screaming kicking the nurse on his jaw. He grunted holding her down. Zozo screamed fighting him off. The doctor inserted the IV in her arm and injected it. Her limbs became heavier on her making her stop fighting. She blinked her heavy eyelids looking at them with tears falling down her face.

Doctor: Ask a female nurse to attend her next time.

He muttered to the nurse beside him and stumbled to the door. The nurse frowned following behind him.

Nurse: If I may ask why?

The doctor paused on his steps and turned to him.

Doctor: I picked up that she's scared of us as males. The trauma she suffered is still fresh from her mind making it seemed like every male is the perpetrator. I will refer her to my female colleague so she could be comfortable. Feeding up on her fear will make us the perpetrators in her eyes.

Nurse: (nodding) I didn't think like that.

Doctor: Every rape victim act differently depending her state of mind. Judging from her's we males are all guilty in her eyes.

Nurse: I hear you doc. I will ask some else to do my rounds on her.

The doctor nodded and turned on his heels.

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Vuyo stumbled inside the room and greeted Patricia. Damola gently removed the oxygen mask and flashed his wife a smile.

Damola: My wife

He paused collecting his breath. Patricia engulfed her hand in his and gently squeezed it.

Damola: Can you excuse us for a second.

Patricia: You're not about to discuss business in your condition Damola. Whatever it is it has to wait.

She scolded folding her arms. Damola smiled.

Damola: It's not business baby I promise.

Patricia: Then if it's not there is no need for me to leave.

Damola shut her a glare. She heavily sighed leaping up to her feet.

Patricia: Fine but call me as soon you're done.

She shifted her gaze to Vuyo.

Patricia: If you stress him I'm going to kill you and find you to the neighbours dogs.

She threatened marching to the door. Vuyo nodded holding in his laughter. She slammed the door behind her and both men chuckled. Damola placed the oxygen mask forming his sentence before speaking.

Damola: Is everything in order?

Vuyo nodded fishing out papers in his pocket. He unfold them and handed them to him.

Vuyo: I went back to our contact at the hospital and it seems like the girl has not said a word since she woke up. She said she's slipping in into depression and she won't know what's real and what's not.

A smile lurks on Damola lips as he looks at the papers in front of him. Written in black and white was a marriage certificate of his son Adesola Emeka and Zobuhle Nene. After driving the girl to the hospital Vuyo went back to the scene to check her belongings. He only found her clothes that were scattered around the area. Inside her jean pocket was her ID with no cellphone or money.

Damola: Excellent job Vuyo.

Vuyo: Thank you boss.

Damola folded the papers and hand them back to him.

Damola: My study inside the safe.

Vuyo nodded in understand.

Vuyo: Should I keep tabs on the girl?

Damola shook his head.

Damola: I don't think that's necessary. Like you said the girl won't know what's real and what's not so keeping tabs on her would be waste of our time. Adesola won't be able to handle the truth should he find out how we got him his citizenship he doesn't to know.

Vuyo: What are we going to tell him if he starts asking questions?

Damola: We found the ID laying around on the floor.

Vuyo exhaled loudly and run his hand on his face. They were gambling with someone's life here and could lend them in jail should the girl snap out of her evil thoughts.

Vuyo: Shouldn't we silence her for good boss? That way we won't have loose end.

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Mercy made her way to her room exhausted. She threw herself on top of the bed and shut her eyes meanwhile the party is still continuing full force on the living room. She snuggled on her pillow and sighed in content. Her body has been desperately crying for her to relax but she didn't have time. Everyday was something new she needed to teach Uthando and now she could finally relax because the girl doesn't need her guidance anymore.

On the living room Uthando laughed passing the hooker pipe to the person beside her. She stood up and staggered falling on her butt. Laughter erupted around the room. She also laughed leaping up to her feet. Her eyes looked around for any familiar face she knew but these people were foreign to her. She didn't know who they were but she trusted Mercy with her life because she said they were her friends making them hers too. She urgently needed to pee but making her way to the bathroom will be a mission.

Voice: Hey do you need any help?

She nodded laughing. The deep voice chuckled and help her up to her feet.

Kabelo: You're okay?

She nodded leaning on him.

Uthando: Bathroom.

She muttered. She felt hands wrapped around her waist and being lifted from the floor. She closed her eyes listening his footsteps striding to the bathroom. The sound of the door being shut made her to open her eyes and found him gawking at her.

Kabelo: You're okay on your own?

She nodded raising her dress. She dropped her panties and set on the toilet seat. Kabelo walked out of

the room and shut the door behind him with his dick tenting his pants. He collected his breath and released a heavy breath. If he played his cards right he might get laid. Uthando sighed in content after releasing the fluids and flushed the toilet. She stagger to the sink and ended up falling again.

Uthando: (giggling) What are you doing Uthando?

Kabelo gently knocked on the door.

Kabelo: You're still okay in there?

She giggled using the wall for balance. The door opened and he walked in. He chuckled.

Kabelo: I think you had enough.

Uthando: (giggling) Nope. It's still early why should I sleep?

Kabelo: You're drunk and need to sleep.

Uthando scoffed.

Uthando: You're not the boss of me.

She wiggled her finger in his face laughing. Kabelo chuckled. She looked at his lips and gulped down her saliva. Her body suddenly felt hot and she needed something to cool it down. She stood on her tiptoes and crushed her lips on his. Kabelo pushed her into the wall kissed her back. She moaned grinding on him. Kabelo picked her up and stumbled to the nearest room. steam. He shut the door with his foot and threw her on the bed. Uthando crawled towards him and unbuckled his belt. She didn't need him to make him to toy with her. She dropped his pants and boxers before pulling the straps of her dress down. He unclipped her bra and pinch her erected nipple. She moaned throwing her head back. Kabelo slipped his hand in between her thighs and massage her clit in circles. Uthando moaned biting her lip. She opened her legs wider for him. Kabelo stroked his dick and slide in her. She held his shoulder screaming.

Kabelo: Shit! You're are virgin?

She nodded with tears streaming down her face. Kabelo released his breath ready to pull out but Uthando held his arm.

Uthando: I want to do it.

Kabelo: You're sure?

She sniffed and raised her hand to wipe her face. She wanted to feel the same pleasure she felt the other day. She wanted more but Mercy only showed her a glimpse of what she was missing out. Kabelo slowly slide in and she shut her eyes holding her breath. He looked at her and started to move slowly. She moaned feeling the pain fading replaced by the pleasure. Oh the feeling was beyond what she has ever felt in her life. If this what sex is all about then she wanted to keep doing it everyday. Her exams will have to wait tomorrow because she planned on spending the day with this man doing what his doing to her body. Mthuthuzeli can go to hell for all she cared. This was her body and she would do anything she wanted to do with it.

Uthando: (moaning) Oh God.

She threw her head back and clamped the duvet. She didn't know what to do with herself.

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Later that day a female nurse walked inside the room. She walked towards the bed and violently shook Zozo up from her slumber. She opened her eyes and narrowed them at her.

Nurse: Let's get one thing clear I'm not here to take your shit like they have rest of them have been doing. You're old enough to drag yourself to the bathroom and use it instead of shitting on yourself. I only change children's sheets not old people like you.

Zozo gawked at her as she went on and on listing things she wouldn't do.

Nurse: You're not the first rape victim we had in this hospital and you're definitely not the last so stop acting special and want certain people to attend to you.

She clicked her tongue and made her way out of the room slamming the door behind her. Tears involuntary fell from her eyes. She shifted her eyes around the room looking for any sign of threat and found none. She closed her eyes and let the tears fall.

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Turning the room upside down she could feel tears threatening to fall out of her eyes. She needed her daily fix. She scratched her skin throwing the blanket on the floor. Breathing heavily Uthando could feel tears threatening to roll down her cheeks. She couldn't believe she was out of her coping mechanism as she calls it. She looked around the room and saw nothing valuable to take. She padded to the living and looked at the phone on top of the table. She tiptoed to the passage and saw all doors close. She rushed back and picked up the phone and slipped it in her pocket. She tiptoed to the door and slowly turned the handle so it couldn't take noise. Opening the door ajar Uthando squeezed her body between the door and frame slipping out. She paused listening for any sound of footsteps but the house was dead quiet. She pushed her body and staggered falling on the floor. Quickly leaping up to her feet she ran to the gate

wincing as her bare feet hit the stones on the ground. She widely open the gate and ran not looking back. One thing in her mind she needed to sell that phone in order to feed her craving.

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She looked at the ceiling and heavily sighed. She's been awake for a while but her mind refuses for her to move from the comfort of her bed. Her phone rang on top of the bed side table. She shifted her gaze to it and let it ring. She just wanted one day without being in contact with anyone. Just one day isolated from the world and left to her own thoughts. She nodded satisfaction as the ringtone of her phone stop. Thank God she nearly throw that device out of her window. She sat there enjoying the quietness around her. Just being alone with one's thoughts just brings calmness and peace.

Mercy: Are you fucking kidding me?

She bellowed in rage rolling off the bed as her phone beeps indicating a message.

Mercy: Can't people just get the message that I'm not in the mood to be around them today.

She muttered snatching her phone on the bed side table. She brought the screen to life and read the text.

***Khaya: KB came to the party.**

She frowned pressing her lips in a thin line. She furiously pressed her phone firing a text back to her.

*** Mercy: You're only telling me this now?***

She clicked her tongue and threw the phone on top of the bed. Clutching her hair she paces up and down the room. What kind of friend was Khaya? She was suppose to notify her the minute she saw him or the following day not days after. Did he perhaps looked past everything and decided to accept her for who she was? Her heart skipped a beat while her eye lit up as the possibility of wanting to mend things.

Mercy: Should I call him or wait for his call?

She voiced out the question swimming in her mind.

Mercy: No calling him will seem like I'm desperate for his attention.

She blew out a sigh and threw herself on top of the bed. She took a deep breath closing her eyes.

Mercy: Oh fuck it.

She flipped her eyes leaping to her feet. She took her phone and scrolled down the contact list. Her heart thudded in her ribcage as the phone rings.

Voice: Mercy.

Her eyes popped out of their sockets. She thought it will ring until it goes to voicemail like it usually do.

KB: Are you going to talk or should I hang up?

She took a deep breath normalizing her heart that threatens to leap out of her chest.

Mercy: I heard you came to the party the other day.

KB: Yeah I did.

Mercy heavily sighed sitting on the edge of the bed.

KB: Why are you calling me Mercy? You dumped me remember.

He snapped agitated. Mercy swallowed hard.

Mercy: It's not like I did it because I wanted to. Circumstances forced me to do it.

Kabelo snorted on the end of the line.

KB: That's your everyday song. I'm sick and tired of hearing that shit over and over again. Make up your mind Mercy now you still have time because the minute I get tired of this back and forth of yours I won't look your way.

Voice: Babe?

The voice muttered on the background

Mercy: (alarmed) You already moved on?

KB: Yes because that's what an open relationship is all about. Make up your mind woman and do it fast.

He disconnected the call. Mercy sighed and laid on her back. She was caught up between a rock and hard place. She knows she love Kabelo and has been with him since the last year and at the same time she loved Uthando the same way she loved Kabelo. Being bisexual is something she always knew she was but pushed that thought at the back of her mind. Loving both genders seemed satanic in her family. She shudders as she remembers the slap she got from her mother when she caught her kissing her friend. The woman called up a pastor to pray for her knowing exactly there was nothing wrong with her. She shut her eyes as the memories of the pastor lashing her back to remove the demon on her. The 12 year old her pleading and crying for her mother to help her but the woman only turned her back on her and let the pastor continue where he left off. After that incident her mother sent her to a boarding school and never bothered to check on her. The only thing she knew was to shower her with money and not check on her wellbeing.

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She could feel the curious eyes gawking at her as she navigate her way to campus limping. She raised her

hand to tie the strings of her hood tightly around her face. She pushed everything at the back of her mind and focused on only wanting to write her exam before she board a bus to her village. She was sure Ntombi's mother was panicking not being able to reach her. Her heart sank to the bottom of her stomach as she thinks about the weekend ahead of her. Mandla was being buried on friday and his mother was going to make sure she doesn't pay her final respect. She could her face wet with her tears as they roll down her face. She picked up her pace and made her way to the bathroom. She slammed the door on the cubicle breathing heavily. Could they perhaps see past her clothes what happened to her? Hot tears streaming down her cheeks as the voices rang in her.

Voice 1 : They mean nothing to you just ignore them.

The voice firmly muttered in her head. She shook her head and stuck her fingers in her ears.

Zozo: You're not real.

She muttered to herself shaking her head.

Voice 2: (hissing) Look at how pathetic you are. Just your mere voice is pathetic no wonder those men took advantage of you. You're weak why don't you kill yourself.

Voice 1: Shut up! Don't listen to her Zozo you know better than to end your life. Remember the dream of wearing that graduation gown can still be achieved.

Laughter broke out from the second voice.

Voice 2: Stop fooling the poor girl by selling her false hope. She's never going to recover from that. Nobody would want to associate themselves with damage good. She's already been damage.

Zozo: (crying) You're not real.

Voice 2: (laughing) We are real darling get over it.

Zozo shook her head and bolted out of the bathroom. Her heart pounded in her ribcage as she ran down the corridors away from the voices unaware that they are in her head. Adrenaline rushed to her body making to ignore the pain her body was succumbed to. The voices bickered in her head for her attention.

Voice 1: You love seeking attention

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Voice 1: You love seeking attention can't you tell she's already traumatised?

She muttered annoyed. The second voice snorted.

Voice 2: Excuse me for being blunt but someone needs to remind her of reality. She needs to toughen up in this world if she needs to survive. This pity party she has going needs to end. She's all alone nobody to turn to but herself. Her family died and her best friend betrayed her so excuse me for trying to knock some sense into the girl.

She rudely muttered hissing. Zozo closed her eyes hoping the voices would just disappear in her head. At first she thought she was hallucinating when she he first heard the voices in her head.

The doctor was skeptical about discharging her but she persisted telling her she was fine and didn't need therapy. She thought the voices were just harsh whispers around the hospital walls. The doctor suggested therapy for her but she was tired of sitting in that hospital bed waiting for that rude nurse to taunted her. Each time the shifts changed Zoo felt like dying. The rude nurse was hell back making her life miserable. Her words would peel off her bandages and live her bare for the whole word to see. The woman didn't care how she felt and how did Zozo receive those words. Ain't nurses suppose to be nice and carefully with their words around patients? That was Zozo everyday question when the rude nurse made remarks about her. At some point the aggressive voice in her head suggested they kill the nurse and that is when she had to leave that hospital before she turned into something she couldn't recognise.

She just wanted to close her eyes and never wake up again because of the how cruel the world has been to her. She furiously wiped the tears blurring her vision as the harsh whispers continue around her. Maybe her doctor was right about her being in denial. Maybe she needed to submit the doctors note to the campus dean so she could write her exams when she's in a better state of mind or better yet write them online like her roommate suggested. The girl who made a mission to find her after she went missing. She staggered falling on the ground as she collides with the wall.

Voice: Oh my goodness are you okay?

The feminine voice muttered. Zozo nodded wiping the tears away. She's still not ready for the outside

world.

Voice: Let me help you up.

She cringed as the woman wrapped her arms around her and help her to her feet.

Voice: You're sure you're okay?

Zozo: (raspy voice) Yes thank you.

She muttered raising her head. She gasped. Her heart skipped a beat while her eye popped out of their sockets. The woman in front of her staggered pulling her arms off her like she just got burnt. Her throat become dry while her breath comes in short pants.

Thandeka: (shocked) Zobuhle?

Voice: You know her?

The voice behind her muttered. Thandeka felt her knees buckled while the world around her started to spin. Her whole world was crumbling down just in front of her eyes. She knew the voice belonged to none other than her husband.

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Unedited

Slowly turning on her heels Thandeka fiddled with hem of a her blouse her tongue on the roof of her

mouth. She couldn't possibly say yes she knew her at the same time she couldn't possibly say no. Caught being between a rock and a hard place she forces her lips to stretch into a smile and stumbled towards him.

Thandeka: Did you say something?

She cooed softly maintain the innocent face.

Fezile: I asked if you know her.

Her eyebrows furrow while her heart pounded in her ribcage.

Thandeka: Know who?

Fezile: The girl you just mentioned her name.

She laughs nervously waving her hand dismissively.

Thandeka: Don't be ridiculous babe. I don't know her and never seen her in my life before.

A deep chuckle emerges from behind her. Zozo shakes her head looking at the woman whose the reason she's breathing. The little girl in her wanted to run in her arms and cry out all her troubles so she can sympathize with her but the logical part of her just knew the woman wouldn't bet a single eyelash in her direction judging from the lie she just came up with. Hearing her saying she didn't knew her just crashed her already broken heart.

Fezile: You seem like you know something Miss Nene. The mischievous glint in your eyes say something.

Unaware of herself and change of behaviour Ziyanda dragged her feet to them and stood in front of the couple while Zozo slowly retreated to a shell in the back of her mind. She shifted her gaze to her mother and scrunched her nose in disgust.

Ziyanda: What kind of mother are you?

Thandeka's eyes widens.

Ziyanda: What? Cat got your tongue?

She taunted with her lips curve into a smirk. She chuckled shaking her head.

Ziyanda: Ain't you tired of hurting her?

She muttered forgetting she was referring herself to a third person.

Ziyanda: Did you know the shit she went through or you just don't care in general?

Fezile scowled turning to his wife beside him.

Fezile: I though you said you didn't know her.

Thandeka: I-I-I.

She stuttered not knowing what to say. The girl caught her off guard. If she knew she was in the same varsity as her she would have possible made sure she doesn't cross paths with her. She was out to ruin the most beautiful life she built for herself.

Ziyanda: I-I-I you're what?

She mimicked her in a mocking tone.

Ziyanda: Since you're words have stuck in your throat let me do the honours for you.

She outstretched her hand towards Fezile.

Ziyanda: My name is Ziy-

Nombulelo's high pitched up voice interrupted in her head.

Nombulelo: You're not Ziyanda to her you idiot. She doesn't know us.

Ziyanda slowly nodded her head analysing her words. As much as she annoys her at time she was right. Thandeka didn't know Zobuhle had multiple personalities and to her she was still talking to Zobuhle unaware she took over just to shield her from her rejection. She's been through enough and Ziyanda doesn't want to see her back to that darkness that eats up her soul. That place she can't even differentiate between day or night. The darkness after all was when your fears comes to life. The dark left you with nothing but your mind and your own dark thoughts. It let the fear to eat you up inside as

you peer into the darkness

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seeing nothing but black.

Ziyanda: My name is Zobuhle Nene-

Thandeka: Zozo don't do this please.

She pleaded with tears glistening in her eyes.

Ziyanda clicked her tongue.

Ziyanda: Don't you ever call me that again. You lost that right to call me that years ago.

She snapped agitated.

Thandeka: What do you expect me to do? Just sit back and let you ruin my life?

She snapped back with the same tone Ziyanda used.

Ziyanda: Ruin your life?

She roared in laughter.

Ziyanda: You must be out of your mind lady. You're the one who ruined her life from an early age.
(screaming) You left her and never looked back.

Thandeka: I was young okay.

She shouted gaining the attention of the students around them. Fezile stood rooted on his spot observing the scene in front of him. He knew that there was more to what his wife was telling him. The woman was sweating and yelling to the top of her tongue to someone she claimed she didn't know. He was not stupid he knew that they were related but didn't know yet they relationship.

Ziyanda: People grew up and you're telling me you're still young even know?

Thandeka open her mouth and close it gaping like a fish out of water. Tears involuntary fell from her eyes.

Ziyanda: You're not about to stand there and tell me you were young. You grew up but you didn't give a shit about what happened to us. You knew you left a family behind but you didn't care what happens to them.

Her chest heaved up and down as she spat. All the memories from a young age to the last one of Zobuhle swirled in her mind. Her not having enough food or sometimes sleeping on an empty stomach. Her grandmother suffering from stroke and she had to step out and be an adult at such a young age. Having to skip school sometimes to take her grandmother to her check ups or fetching her medication. Khwezi constantly crying because of his peers made fun of him. Khwezi crying about his torn school uniform. Khwezi not wanting to skip school because his running away from being mocked. Mbali hitting Khwezi because he ate his tomato. Having no money to pay for that tomato. Mandla coming to her rescue.

A tear slipped out of her eye and she quickly furiously wiped it before they can notice. She was not about to cry especially not in front of this woman. A screech broke her chain of thoughts.

Nombulelo: You just love acting tough knowing exactly you're a softie. There nothing wrong about crying.

She inwardly rolled her eyes. Of course she would say such because she's the one who cries most not her.

Ziyanda: Shut up.

She muttered under her breath. Her laughed rang out in her head.

Thandeka: I knew you were okay with mama back at home.

Ziyanda laughed in disbelief clapping her hands. The woman didn't just insinuate that.

Ziyanda: What kind of mother are you Thandeka? You left two kids behind and you never bet an eyelash to check up on them. Not even a mere phone call just to hear how are they still holding up and I'm sure we wouldn't have ruined your precious life like you thought.

She spat yelling. Thandeka cringed at the use of her tone. She has never seen her so angry before infact she doesn't know the girl at all. She doesn't know what pisses her off and what makes her happy. She sucked in deep breath as harsh reality knocks the air out of her lungs. She doesn't know her. They are just mere strangers even though she gave birth to her.

Ziyanda: I know damn well you can speak Thandeka so please before you make me more mad than I am use your mouth.

She firmly muttered. Thandeka sniffed and wiped the tears with the back of her hand. Oh why couldn't the past be left behind and not resurface? The minute she decided to cut ties with them and change her surname she was sure she wouldn't have to deal with them anymore. She was starting her life afresh away from her responsibilities. A sound of someone clearing his throat breaks Thandeka from her thoughts. If her heart was not skipping a beat it was surely doing so right now. She could feel her hands quiver while her tears blur her vision. How could she forget her husband was besides her all this time?

Fezile: I'm also waiting for your answer to her question.

Thandeka shifted her glossy eyes to him silently begging him to not fuel the already burning fire but Fezile shook his head.

Thandeka: Baby please.

Fezile: What are you pleading for?

Thandeka: Don't do this especially not in front of her. Let's go home and talk about this.

She muttered gripping his hand. Fezile yanked her hands of him.

Fezile: No we are doing this right here and right now.

His angry voice boomed causing her body to shake like a leaf in a tree. Ziyanda took a shaky breath. Her heart violently pounded in her chest while her hands trembled.

Nombulelo: Calm down not all men are the same.

Her calm soothing voice echoed in her head. Ziyanda shook her head.

Ziyanda: All men are the same.

She spat back starting to hyperventilating.

Nombulelo: You need to calm down before you pass out. Take a deep breath in and out and you will be fine.

She clutched her chest gasping for air. Thandeka rushed to her.

Thandeka: Breath baby.

She sniffed stroking her hair. Ziyanda took greedy breaths desperate to fill her lungs with air.

Thandeka: Slowly Zobuhle. In and out.

She cooed softly still stroking her hair like she usually did when she was baby. Ziyanda pushed her aside as her vision becomes clear.

Fezile: Who is she to you?

From the bits of pieces he collected from their exchange he already knew the answer to his question but he still wanted to hear it from the horses mouth. He didn't want to believe his wife can be so heartless.

Thandeka: (crying) You wouldn't understand if I explain everything to you.

Fezile: I didn't ask that.

Ziyanda: She's her m...

She hysterically coughed praying and hoping they didn't hear her referring herself to a third person.

Ziyanda: Sorry about that. She's my mother.

Gasps echoed around them from the students who are watching the scene. Harsh whispers follow.

Fezile: I asked if you know her and you lied to me.

He calmly muttered. A shiver ran down Thandeka's spine. She knew the tone of voice could mean that his angry.

Thandeka: I didn't-

Fezile: You fucken lied in my face Thandeka time and time again.

Tears stream down her face causing Ziyanda to roll her eyes.

Ziyanda: Crocodile tears.

She muttered under her breath.

Fezile: Explain to me how is your surname different from hers?

Thandeka: Baby I-

Fezile interrupted her.

Fezile: Don't ever think about lying to me.

Thandeka: (sniffing) I lied about my surname. Paid someone to pretend to be my family when you were paying the lobola.

Fezile: Why Thandeka?

He muttered defeated.

Thandeka: You were so pure and here was I with two kids from my previous relationship. I came with a baggage while you on the other hand came with nothing just baring your soul at me.

She wiped the tears with back of her hand. She was sure her makeup was ruined from the crying she's been doing.

Thandeka: I couldn't let you carry that baggage with me so I decided to cut ties with them and never looked back.

Fezile exhaled loudly. Ziyanda turned on her heels limping her way back to the safety of her dorm. She didn't care what happens to her mother from her onwards. A weight that has been on her shoulder for years has been lifted off her. She felt much lighter after the confrontation.

Thandeka: Wait.

She paused on her steps and slowly turned to face her.

Thandeka: How is mama and Khwezi?

A chuckle escaped her lips.

Ziyanda: Both died in a car accident.

Air gets knocked out of Thandeka's lungs. She blinked rapidly not wanting to believe what just escaped her mouth. She understands that she's trying to hurt her but death is not something to play with.

Thandeka: I get it you're trying to hurt me but please just tell me how are they doing.

She desperately muttered. Ziyanda shook her head scrunching her nose in disgust.

Ziyanda: You think I care about hurting you? I don't give a damn about you Thandeka. Gogo and Khwezi died it's up to you if you choose to believe me or not.

She turned on her heels limping.

Thandeka: (sniffing) When did they die and why are you limping?

Ziyanda resist the urge to groan.

Ziyanda: A week ago and the limping is from the rape I endured.

She yelled not turning to face her. Thandeka shut her eyes and burst into tears. Everything was a mess and she didn't know how she was going to fix it especially with only surviving child who is a rape victim.

[A YEAR LATER]

A YEAR LATER

Ade leaned back on the chair popping his knuckles as the officer in front of him questions him.

Officer: I'm going to ask you for the last time Mr Emeka where were you the night Mr Joshua died?

Ade: I don't know why must I repeat myself over and over in order for you to hear me. I just told you I was home with my wife.

The officer clicked his tongue and rounded the table to his side tossing the pictures in front of him.

Officer: You want me to believe your foe mysteriously died in his sleep two days before your grand opening of your club.

Ade shrugged.

Ade: I don't know what you're looking for Mr officer. People die everyday so I don't understand where do I fit in.

The officer clenched his jaws running his hand on his face frustrated. He knew he killed him but he didn't have any evidence pointing to him.

Officer: You Nigerians think you can do as you please in our country. First it was your father now it's you. Why am I not surprised like father like son.

He twisted his face in disgust as he spat. He was just one step closer putting Emeka behind bars. The man has been terrorizing the city like he owned it and it was just a matter of time before he slipped up. If he couldn't catch the whale why not catch the shark?

Ade chuckled shaking his head.

Ade: Now I see where the vendetta comes from. I'm not my father and I will never be him. You're wasting my time officer. Are you charging me or what?

Officer: No but don't leave town yet.

Ade: If there anything else I'll like to go home and prepare for the relaunch of my club.

He pushed the chair and leap up to his feet. He walked out of the interrogation room power oozing around him. The officer clicked his tongue banging the table.

Officer: I might not catch you now Emeka but next I will.

Ade smirked not bothering to turn to face him.

Ade: I'll like to see you try.

The officer picked the pictures and placed them back in the evidence box. He walked back to his desk.

Voice: How did it go?

He colleague ask him leaning on his desk.

Officer: Not good at all. The bastard thinks his smart but I'm smarter than him.

Colleague: What will you do?

Officer: I'm going to bring the wife to the station. I bet when I start intimidating her she will sing like a canary.

Walking outside the police station he opens the backseat of his car.

Ade: That went well.

He muttered to Vuyo as he brings the engine to life driving out of the police station parking lot.

Vuyo: I told you his just a dog looking for it's bone. His been after your father for years and I'm not surprised his the one handling this case.

Ade: His problem he thinks I adapted the same methods my father uses when he kills his victims.

Vuyo smirked on the driver seat pride swelling in him. His junior boss is learning about the game they were pushing. Ade looked at his wristwatch.

Ade: Is my suit ready?

Vuyo: Yes sir.

Ade nodded closing his eyes. Stepping into his father's shoes has been the most difficult thing his ever done. He had to prove to his associate that his not weak and cannot be messed with. Joshua just happened to be a target who got caught up in the mix.

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Mthuthuzeli whistled washing his car. He paused wiping the sweat on his forehead and bend down to dip the cloth in the bucket.

Voice: Koko.

He frowned raising his head. He drop the cloth in the bucket and walked towards the gate. Dalisile dry lips stretch into a smile. Tears glisten in her eyes. Finally a reunion with his son something she has been longing for. Squinting his eyes to the figure standing outside his gate Mthuthuzeli clicks his tongue.

Dalisile: Oh fano do you know how much I missed you? The house was no longer the same without you.

She shifted her gaze to the house in front of her and beamed widely.

Dalisile: I see you did well for yourself. The house is so beautiful and big.

She turned to the car behind her as the driver steps out to help her with her bags.

Dalisile: Thank you so much. You can leave the bags here my son will pay you.

She turned to Mthuthuzeli smiling.

Dalisile: Call your wife for me so she can pay the driver and come with the bags. We have so much to talk about.

She muttered pushing the gate open and walking in.

Mthu: What do you want?

The smile drops on Dalisile's face.

Dalisile: Haibo Mthu it's me mommy fano.

Mthuthuzeli clicked his tongue and furiously marched outside his gate. He picked up her bags and threw them in the street. Dalisile screamed.

Dalisile: Mthuthuzeli ungenwe yini? Usuyasngana?

He turned marching back to her and held his upper arm. Dalisile screamed holding the gate for balance.

Mthuthuzeli: Get out of my house mthakathi ndini. I never want to see you ever again in my life.

He removed her hand on the gate and pushed her out of his yard. Dalisile staggered and fell on the tarred road screaming. Mthuthuzeli slammed the gate and walked to the house. He threw the drawers open looking for the key to the gate. Making his way outside he opened the lock and wrapped the chain on the gate before locking it. Dalisile watched outside the gate crying while her stomach growled.

Mthu: My mother died the day she decided to make me her puppet.

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Later that day Ade rubbedbed his temples as the conversation with the officer replays in his mind.

Vuyo: You seem deep in your thoughts.

He heavily sighed.

Ade: I'm just replaying the conversation with the officer earlier on.

Vuyo: What about it?

Ade: He asked me where was I that night and my response was that I was home with my wife.

He shifted his gaze to him and narrowed his eyes to him.

Ade: Do you think he might look into that?

Vuyo waved his hand dismissively and picked up his empty glass. Stumbling to the cabinet he pours the whisky and makes his way to him to hand him the glass.

Vuyo: You worry too much my friend. Chile relax and enjoy your night. The girl is probably in the looney staring at the wall right now.

Ade nodded knocking off the contents on his glass. He cringed leaping up to his feet.

Ade: You're right I have nothing to worry about.

Vuyo: It's time.

Ade smirks leaping up to his feet. He closed the buttons of his suit and picked his cigar.

Ade: Let's go.

Vuyo closed the door of his office and locked it after them and they made their way downstairs. Ade's lips curve into a smile as he see the Xaba brothers walking.

Ade: Gentleman! Thank you for gving us with your presensce.

They exchange greetings and he ushers them to the VVIP section.

Ade: I must say I was surprised when you RSVPS to my invitation.

Musa chortle taking the glass and pour himself some whiskey.

Musa: What can I say we need to unwind.

A mischievous glint flicks in his eyes.

Ade: As you can see you came to the right place.

He gesture around the club.

Adesola: So what's your type? Tall

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short slim or thick? Name it I've got everything.

Manelisi smirks

Mane: I haven't spotted mine yet.

He leans back on the couch and places the cigar in between his lips. Ade eyes shifts to Musa.

Adesola: You?

Musa: Same.

He downs the content in his glass in one go.

Mane: So how is the old man?

He heavily sighs.

Ade: It's a touch and go situation. His not promising to hold on and I've long accepted it. The problem is my mother.

His father being on his death bed is taking a toll on him. He might not show it but it's affecting him.

Manelisi: I understand where she's coming from after all that's the love of her life.

Ade: I'm not talking about my mother.

Confusion swim in their faces as they share a look. Ade chuckles taking his glass on the table and gulp it down they seem to be doing a lot of that this evening.

Ade: I'm talking about the second wife sis P.

He muttered bitterly. The woman is a tough nut to crack. Again the brothers share a confused look.

Them: (shocked) What?

He chuckles.

Adesola: Come on you guys didn't obviously think Patricia is my mother.

Mane shrugged his shoulders.

Mane: With a father like yours we might never know

Ade threw his head back laughing.

Ade: My father has two wives. My mother his first wife and Nigerian wife then there's Patricia. She's the second wife and South African wife. He needed citizenship so he married her.

Mane: Wow! They look madly in love you wouldn't say.

Ade: They are.

Musa nod shifting my gaze to the dance floor. His eyes lock with a bored woman on the bar. She looks so bored but her inquisitive eyes keep looking at him like he just picked her interest. He winks at her and shift his eyes to his surroundings as her cheeks heat up.

Musa: So whose going to look after the club when you go back to Nigeria?

Ade: (smirking) Me.

Mane: (frowning) How?

Ade: I'm a citizen gentleman.

Both brother share a look and bursted in laughter. Ade smirked.

Ade: I'm serious. You can go to the DHA and they will confirm it.

They laughter ceases as they see his serious.

Musa: How?

Ade shrugged his shoulders.

Ade: That's quite easy. My father had his boy to pickpocket someone's ID and viola I'm married to the woman.

Musa chokes my spit and cough hysterical.

Mane: (yelling) You seemed unbothered by the fact you married someone you hardly know. That's a crime you committed.

Musa: What if the woman finds out?

Ade: She won't.

Them: How do you know?

They muttered in unison.

Ade: Because it's been months now if she wanted to do something she would have went to the police

station to report her ID missing and from what my father told me the girl is crazy.

He muttered dismissively leaping up to his feet and welcoming two of his guests. The man just committed a crime and he doesn't see anything wrong with that. Musa shudders in his seat if it was him on his shoes he would have longed went to the police station to report myself. One thing about him he fears in this world is prison.

Me: (shocked) Isn't that..

Manelisi nods before he can finish his sentence gulping his drink.

Ade: Gentleman.

Kagiso: Emeka.

Ade chuckles bowing dramatically.

Sandile: You did well for yourself boy.

Ade rolled his eyes smiling.

Ade: Dlamini with his snide remarks. You're just lucky I'm in a good to respond to that.

They laugh shaking hands before he ushers them to their seats.

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Stepping out of the bus her phone vibrated in her pocket. She fished out walking to where her luggage is.

****Thandeka: Happy birthday baby. I know I might not be the best parent you have but I'm trying to make up for lost time. I love you. ****

She rolled her eyes after reading the text and slide her phone back in her pocket. She wishes the woman can stop pretending. After burying her grandmother she's been on her face thinking everything will mysteriously be okay between them. Doesn't she know forced relationships take time or they don't work at all? Her apologize mean nothing to her. At this point her forgiveness is betywen her and God. Ziyanda tied the loose strand of her braid to her bun and inhaled deeply. Taking over Zobuhle has been something she does on her normal daily basis. Depression knocked hard on Zobuhle making her to be scared of her own shadow. Anxiety being another thing she had to deal with it.

Ziyanda: Where it all begin.

She muttered dragging her luggage to the taxi rank.

Mthu: I don't care what you say Malume but I'll never forgive that woman.

He spat over the phone as he stands next the window and peek over it. Dalisile has moved from the street to sit in front of his gate.

Ndaba: She's your mother. You have to forgive her at some point.

Mthu: Then I'll rather die than forgiving that woman.

Ndaba sighed heavily over the phone.

Ndaba: You're still angry about what she did.

Mthu: Angry is understatement. I'm seething.

Ndaba: You have every right to be. That woman has caused you so much pain for years. People trembled with just a mere mention of your name because of her.

He closed the curtain and made his way to the kitchen. He filled the kettle with water and plugged it.

Ndaba: Don't let her turn you into that monster again.

Mthu: I won't.

Ndaba: Alright then mshana let me run.

Mthu: Wait malume there is something I need to discuss with you.

Ndaba: Okay it sound serious.

Mthu: I don't know whether it could be possible but I want to do Umemulo for my wife.

Ndaba: Umemelo? Don't try to embarrass the poor girl knowing exactly you already slept with her.
Umemulo is a h-

Mthuthuzeli interjected.

Mthu: I know what is it malume hence I'm saying I want to do it for. Her parents have left her in my care. They knew I would take care of her and this is just something small just to thank her for overcoming every obstacles that life threw at her. She may not say it but I know it would mean a would to her. Being arranged to a man you're scarred of having to adapt to the changes that were forced on you. Leaving school to tend to your duties as a wife getting abused by your mother in law and finally finding freedom to live your life the best way you can. I could go a day mentioning what she's been through when she was forced to be with me. This ceremony is just to show gratitude from me to her for being the flawless person she is. No sane person would be able to tolerate what she went through in my care.

Ndaba: (sighing) I hear you Mthu. She's been through a lot and you made the right decision by letting her to further her studies. One of you had to be educated in order to help your kids with their homework. It would have been a shame to have both parents uneducated.

Mthu: So what are you saying malume?

Ndaba: I'm saying if your sure about it then we can do it for her. Girls in age have children now more than three. She deserves this.

Mthuthuzeli smiled nodding.

Mthu: I'll pass by your place later on so we could discuss it further.

Ndaba :

I've never heard a husband throwing umemulo for his wife.

Mthu: Then i'm going to be the first one in our history.

Ndaba chortle disconnecting the call. Mthuthuzeli scrolled down the contact list and placed the call. He couldn't wait to share the news with Uthando. The phone rang two times before a male voice boomed on the speaker.

Voice: Hello?

He removed the phone from his ear to check if he dialled the correct number.

Mthu: Where is the owner of the phone?

Voice: I'm the owner of the phone.

His heart pounded on his ribcage.

Mthu: No I mean my wife Uthando.

Voice: Oh you mean my customer? She sold the phone to me for a quick fix.

Mthu chuckled.

Mthu: I'm sure you're mistaken ndoda. My wife would never sell her phone especially for a quick fix or whatever your insinuating.

Voice: Well she did.

The went off after that. Mthuthuzeli dialled the number again and it rang until it went to straight to voicemail.

Mthu: (frowning) What's going on?

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Dalisile's stomach growled as leaned on the gate. She could feel the eyes of bypassers piercing through her. She licked her dy lips and leaped up to her feet.

Dalisile: (screaming) Mthuthuzeli?

She banged the gate to gain their attention.

Dalisile: Uthando?

She screamed still banging the gate with her palm. She swallow the thick saliva in her mouth to moist her dry throat and screamed again. She blinked rapidly as ground beneath her feet start to spin.

Dalisile: (screaming) Please my children

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Dalisile: (screaming) Please my children I'm hungry and I haven't taken my pills yet and it's getting dark outside.

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His eyebrows furrows as he sees the living room full of his uncles. He sucks in breath as he looks at them one by one.

Ade: What's going on?

Uncle 1: Take a seat son your mother has something she needs to address.

He made his way to the coffee table and placed his phone keys on top of it before lowering himself on the couch.

Patricia: Thank you my elders for coming at such notice.

The elders nodded.

Patricia: The reason I called this meeting is because I don't feel safe in my own home.

She shifts her gaze around the room as the elders whispers to each other.

Elder 2: What are you saying?

Patricia: This is suppose to be a place where I feel safe and not sleeping with a knife under my pillow while the door is locked.

The elders gasped.

Elder 1: Is there someone who tried to break in? If so how come someone bypass the security outside?

Patricia shook her head causing them to frown.

Patricia: The perpetrator doesn't need to break in because his living inside the house with me. My elders Ade has been hitting on me since he came here.

Ade's jaw dropped to the floor while his mother gasped.

Mother: Adesola? She's your mother.

Ade: She's lying mother I wouldn't do that.

He narrowed his eyes at her.

Ade: Tell them your lying against me.

Patricia: My elders I wouldn't lie about a huge thing like this. There was one time when I found him in my room after I stepped out of the shower. He said I shouldn't be sexually starved just because of a man on his death bed. I'm young and women in my age are wild in bed. I don't feel safe around him and I would like him to move out in my house.

Ade run his hand on his frustrated. This is not the welcoming he was expecting after a successful launch of his club.

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Her heels clicked on the tiled floor as she made her way to the ward. She pushes the door open and rushed to her side. Uthando turned on the bed as she wraps her arms around her. She winces in pain.

Mercy: I was so scared when I found you like that. I was sure you would die. Didn't know who to call or who to turn too. I was so scared.

She murmured stroking her back. Uthando broke the hug and faked a smile. Her skin was begging to be stretched as the itch intensify.

Uthando: I'm sorry I didn't mean to scare you like that. On the bright side though I'm okay.

Mercy shook her head.

Mercy: You're not okay your shaking. Where is the baby now?

Uthando: The doctors are still busy with it.

Mercy arched her eyebrows

Mercy: It?

Uthando: Yes.

Mercy scoffed.

Mercy: (shouting) Do you understand that an innocent baby's life could be in danger because of your you?

Uthando: Who cares?

She muttered fixing the pillows and turned facing the window giving Mercy her back. Mercy took a sharp breath calming herself down before they could say words they may regret later on.

Mercy: Why didn't you tell me you were pregnant?

Uthando dropped her eyes and fiddled with her fingers. Mercy found her in the brink of almost half dead and half alive in her corner where she lives. Drugs were suddenly the only thing she thinks and cares about. She sold everything valuable so she could feed her addiction. She was hoping the baby could not last the full term. She was praying for he/she to die.

A smile emerged on her lips when the doctor yelled at her for putting her baby at risk and herself after pumping the drugs out of her system.

Uthando: I didn't want people to judge me.

She muttered rubbing her hand on her nose. Mercy scoffed.

Mercy: Judge you? You nearly killed a baby because you were afraid people will judge you? What kind of excuse is that?

Uthando: (yelling) I don't expect you to understand. You haven't walked a day in my shoes.

Mercy: Then make me understand Uthando.

She yelled back.

Uthando: My life is complicated and I didn't want to bring an innocent human being in the equation.

Mercy quickly rounded the bed to face her.

Mercy: You should have thought about that before having unprotected sex. What did you expect to happen?

Uthando snorted.

Uthando: Please don't make yourself feel better about me. You're the one who introduced me to this lifestyle. The drugs parties and feckless behavior it was your doing. I was doing fine before I become your friend.

She shouted.

Mercy: You're not about to shift the blame on me for your choices. I never placed a gun in your head and told you to sniff the cocaine.

Uthando: It may not seem like that but you influenced me.

Mercy chuckled.

Mercy: Your old enough to differentiate between right and wrong you're not about give me that crap.
You suffocated the poor baby by tying a cloth in your stomach knowing exactly what you were doing.

Uthando: I was hoping it would die before it was born.

Mercy popped out of their sockets as she gasped shocked.

Mercy: You don't mean that.

Uthando: I do.

She raised her head and looked at her.

Uthando: Don't you have the stuff with you?

Mercy clicked her tongue.

Mercy: You're unbelievable do you know that?

Uthando: I'm sure you're about to tell me.

She rolled her eyes.

Mercy: You don't have an ounce remorse about what you did.

Uthando: (shouting) Why should I? I didn't ask that thing to be brought in my life.

Mercy: There are people who would give out millions to have that baby you just delivered. Some are sleeping on a wet pillow at night because they struggle to conceive.

Uthando snorted shaking as her body begged her to fill it with cocaine.

Uthando: It's not my fault they are born barren.

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Unedited

A gasps escapes Mercy's mouth as she narrows her eyes at Uthando.

Mercy: You don't mean that.

Uthando: I mean it. Why do I have to suffer for other people's sin? I didn't ask to fall pregnant and I definitely know that little shit of a child will ruin my life.

She hisses. Mercy's jaw dropped to the floor. Just hearing her addressing her baby 'little shit' is eyes eyebrows raising. She wouldn't hurt her baby now would she? Before he could respond the doctor creaks open and the doctor walks in with psychologist behind him who has a notepad in her hands.

Doctor: I see you're awake.

Uthando snorted.

Uthando: As if I was sleeping before.

She rolled her eyes. The second doctor raised her eyebrows before dropping her eyes to her notepad and start scrambling on it.

Doctor: This-

Uthando: I don't care who she is.

She muttered interrupting him. Mercy quickly excused herself and left the room.

Doctor: Miss Dube are do you even know the risk you put yourself and your baby through?

Uthando: I'm sure you're about to tell me.

She snickered bored. Oh she had enough lectures for the day. First from Mercy know this stranger who pretends like he cares about her.

Doctor: Cocaine can immediately change your cardiovascular system by increasing high blood pressure heart rate and blood pressure. This can increase the risk of cardiovascular emergency like stroke or heart attacks.

He paused looking for any sign or reaction but there was none. He couldn't read her facial expression.

Doctor: Some effects could persist for a long time after a woman's baby is born. The extent of these negative consequences depends on the dosage, timing, and duration of a mother's cocaine use, all of which influence how long the baby was exposed to the drugs.

He heavily sighed, running his hand on his face, frustrated. Placing the folder on top of the table, his nostrils flared as he saw her rolling her eyes.

Doctor: Premature birth, meaning the baby is born before thirty-seven weeks, carries a high risk of serious health problems. After birth, they may experience issues with cognition as well as problems with their heart, eyes, and other organs. Later in life, they may have a high risk of intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Loss of body weight (less than 5 lbs. 8 oz.) is another risk associated with cocaine during pregnancy. Some babies with a low birth weight can be healthy, but others can suffer from problems such as eating problems, chronic infections, and difficulty gaining weight - issues that may require medical intervention.

Miscarriage-

Ughando interjects.

Uthando: I know what that is.

She snapped agitated.

The doctor removed his and wiped his eyes shaking his head before placing them back on his face.

Doctor: Since you know that I won't go deep in it but however if a women has a miscarriage due to cocaine the use of other drugs or natural causes it's still possible to have a healthy pregnancy later on.

Placenta Abruption could lead death both the mother and baby. Mild placenta abruption may cause a few symptoms and monitoring in the hospital may be required until the bleeding stops. However a moderate or severe vaginal bleeding stops growth problems in the baby premature birth and stillborn.

Uthando: You already said that.

She mumbled under her breath. The psychology arched her eyebrows before jointing down on his note pad.

Doctor: If the bleeding is uncontrollable the woman may likely need a hysterectomy. Cocaine cause problems for the pregnant mother such as constricted maternal blood vessels increased blood pressure increase heart rate and an increased risk of arrhythmia; all issues that could secondarily cause problems for the development of the baby. E.g the constriction of blood flow to the fetus and high blood pressure in the mother resulting in impaired oxygen deliver to the baby and intracranial hemorrhage (bleeding) in the skull of the baby.

Baby's circulation

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Baby's circulation potential harming the baby's organs.

Injury to parts of the brain and intestines from compromised blood/oxygen delivery.

Cardiovascular (Heart) disorder.

Neurological (brain and nervous system) and neurodevelopmental issues (brain development).

Cleft palate.

Limbs defects.

Swelling of kidney.

Gastroschisis (a condition in which the baby's intestines protrude from the body at birth).

Obstructive genitourinary defects.

Polydactyl (an abnormal number of toes and fingers).

Trisomy 21 (down syndrome)

Uthando: Ayi doctor I don't care about that. I don't want to be fucken here and I demand to be discharged immediately. Life is passing me by while I'm sitting my butt in this hospital.

Both doctors sucked the breaths.

Doctor: If I were you I would lose that attitude immediately. You risked the health of an innocent soul. Why didn't you just abort when you had the chance?

Uthando: I did try many times but that little shit just held on.

She turned her head towards them as their jaws dropped to the floor.

Uthando: Please save me from my misery and tell me the good news. Is it dead already?

The doctor bit his tongue and sadly shook his head.

Doctor: Unfortunately for you the baby is much alive and he has a special needs. He has what we call Trisomy 21.

Uthando: (frowning) What the hell is that?

Psychologist: Down syndrome.

She chirps in gawking at her. She smiled and outstretched her hand to Uthando.

Psychology: Hi Miss Dube I'm doctor Brown your psychologist please to meet you.

A chuckle escaped Uthando's lips.

Uthando: Psychologist? Do I look like I need one?

Doctor: In this case you do. It's not only for you but your baby as well. His innocent in all of this and needs his mother. Children who have special needs as such as disability often need their mothers. His speech may not develop like a normal child. He will be slow in everything because their nature is so afraid of changes. He won't be able to adapt to changes like a normal child and you will be often in and out of hospital because of physiotherapy.

Dr Brown: You as a mother need to be emotional and physical be there for him every step of the way what motives them is the support system surrounding them.

Uthando: Listen here miss psychologist psychiatrist therapist or rehabalist I don't know whether you guys are deaf or what. I made myself clear when I said I don't want that thing and I obviously do not care what happens to it. Whether she's a sideleft right up or down syndrome I don't give a fuck what happens to it.

She hisses clicking her tongue and turned to her side before shutting her eyes.

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Humming a melody Nombulelo smiles as she inspect the room with her eyes. Her clothes were neatly folded on top of the bed ready to be placed in the wardrobe while her books were placed according to their sizes on the bookshelf. She nods and makes her way to the kitchen for a glass of water. She opens the sink and rinse her hands before taking the glass out of the cabinet. She rinses it thrice before filling it with water. Placing it on the rack she wipes the sink clean and takes her calculated steps back to her room. She abruptly stops on her tracks when a knock makes its way to her ears. She walks to the door and wipes the knob and with her top before opening it. A frown makes its way to her face when she sees whose on her door step.

Mercy: Hi

Nombulelo: What do you want?

Mercy: Can I come in?

Nombulelo: Absolutely not.

Mercy: Please Zozo I just need a minute of your time.

She pleaded shifting on her weight. Nombulelo scowled.

Nombulelo: My ears have to be deceiving me.

She chuckled.

Nombulelo: You're asking for my time? What could be so important that the mighty Mercy could leave her important life to ask for my time. You're not my family so why should I care?

She sarcastically muttered rolling her eyes. Mercy shudders as she mimicks the same harsh words she used on her before she left her on the side of the road.

Mercy: Look Zozo I'm sorry about that night. I was wrong living you on the side of the road but on the bright side you arrived in one piece and unharmed so what's the big deal?

She laughed nervously. Nombulelo sucked in a deep breath. She could feel her blood boiling while her eyes twitches. Her mind goes foggy making hard for her to concentrate process information or think clearly. She could physically feel her facial affect changing while emotions flooding her facial expression. Mercy shudders as her eyes change shape becoming darker.

Ziyanda: The fuck did you just say?

Her rapsy voice startles Mercy. She frowns looking at her but Ziyanda avoids eye contact.

Nombulelo: I had this under control.

She screamed frustrated in her head. Ziyanda just rolled her eyes ignoring her.

Nombulelo: Please don't make a mess. It took me almost the whole day to get that room clean. I don't know how do you live in such a filthy room.

Ziyanda: Not all of us have ocd you know.

She mumbled under her breath.

Mercy: Look Zozo I'm really sorry for what I did. I know you might not forgive me now or you might not even forgive me but please I need your help.

Ziyanda: What make you think I will help you? Even if you're the last person on this earth I wouldn't ask help from you or help you.

She holds the door ready to slam it on her face but Mercy quickly blocks it with her foot.

Mercy: Wait! Please Uthando needs you.

A tear escaped Ziyanda's eye.

Zozo: Uthando?

Her shaky voice escapes her lips. The sound of her voice sound so foreign to her. She blinked as she looks around the room suspiciously unaware of her surroundings. Mercy tilts her head to the side observing her. She blinked once twice trying to pin point the changes in her behavior. She could swear she just switched into three different people within these minutes she was standing here.

Zozo: You said Uthando?

Mercy snapped out of her daze nodding.

Mercy: Yes she needs your help.

Zozo's heart pounded on her ribcage. She raised her hand and wipe the tears that keep discarding her eyes. No matter who much Uthando hurt her she's still her best friend and loves her. She would do the same for her if the situation was reversed.

She could feel the rapsy voice in her head hissing at her not to help her but this was her best friend they were talking about. She couldn't sit back without doing anything knowing whatever Mercy wanted from her might help her. She would hate herself for not helping her in time if something might happen to her.

She holds on to the door as she feels dizzy and light headed. Questions swimmmed in her head and one of them is how did she get here?

Zozo: What do you need?

Mercy: I just need her parents numbers.

Zozo: I don't have them. Why don't you call her husband.

Mercy's eyes popped out of their sockets. She gasped shocked.

Mercy: She's married?

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Unedited

27.

Bouncing on the heels of her feet she felt the walls slowly closing on her. She felt like she was losing her mind and there was nothing she could do. It's been a week since Mercy came storming in her ward room in the hospital and threatened to tell Mthuthuzeli everything she has been doing since she came to Jo'burg and she nearly collapsed right on that hospital bed. She didn't want that man to find out or else he was going to kill her without any doubt. She feared the man more than anything in this world. He was

like a nightmare to her. Thrusting her lip in between her teeth Uthando pulled out her hair sinking to the ground. She need to feed her body what was due to it but sadly she couldn't because she was stuck here. She knew she wasn't an addict and didn't need a rehab but Mercy left her with no choice but to be in this place. It didn't feel like a rehab to her instead it felt like a psychiatric ward not a rehabilitation center. She didn't even feel any regret after the social workers took her baby in fact in her mind it was for the best cause she knew she couldn't take care of it.

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Listening to the raindrops on her roof she pulled the blankets further in her body and closed her eyes. Somehow the rain reminded her that faithful day where she had to hitchhike her way back to campus while her best friend drove off to a concert. A tear slipped from her eyes causing her to quickly wipe it before many more could fall. She didn't want to relive that day but it was impossible since she has been having nightmares about it. A knock sounded on her door. Judging by the light knock she knows its her roommate. She wiped her face and peeked over the blankets.

Zozo: Come in.

She shouted and waited for her to step in. Mamello pushed the door and smiled walking in.

Mamello: Hey.

Zozo: Hey.

Mamello: I just came to check on you.

Zozo faked a smile.

Zozo: I'm okay.

Mamello: It's just that we are worried about you. Since you came back home you haven't been your usual self and the other roomies started to notice too. They sent me to you to on their behalf.

She rolled her eyes. A giggle escaped Zozo's lips. It was such a weird noise coming down from her throat. She doesn't know when was the last time she laughed.

Zozo: There hasn't been no change at all. Someday I feel like I'm drowning and suffocating while others I feel like I don't know whether I'm moving backwards or forward. The rain just reminds me of that day.

Mamello's eyes soften as she stuck out her palms to her. Zozo placed her palms in her and Mamello clamped them squeezing lightly.

Mamello: Time babe. They say time heals everything give yourself time and I promise everything will fall in place.

Zozo heavily sighed.

Mamello: Can I give you an advice?

Zozo nodded.

Mamello: Maybe it's time you learn to depend on your mother.

Zozo scoffed and pulled the blankets to her head. Mamello gripped the blankets and peeled them off her.

Mamello: I'm saying be friends with her but babe she's the only family you have. Forgiving her doesn't mean you have to let her in your life or heart whole hearted . Always live a room for disappointment because she is a human too and we are bound to make mistakes. You're doing this for yourself not her. You're harbouring too much hate in you and I get it but you're setting yourself free from the burden she doesn't even know you're carrying. Be the bigger person and reach out first since she's willing to do anything.

Zozo blinked rapidly as her words sank in. She was right about two thing she was carrying a burden from childhood until the recent events of her life. Maybe sharing it with someone might make her feel lighter. The second point was that Thandeka sleeps freely at night while somedays she doesn't even sleep a wink. Maybe it was time she sets herself free from the prison she caged herself on. She knew she needed help especially since she keep hearing voices in her head and sometimes she wakes up like she doesn't know what happened the previous day.

Mamello: I may not know how you feel right now but judging from your recent attitude you need help babe. Rape isn't something you just can push it at the back of your mind. Its a scar that doesn't heal because every time you see someone on the TV speaking about their experience that open old wounds especially in our days we live in a world that is full of vultures that are set on hurting women and children. They kill them like random sport and it's becoming to live in this world as a girl child. You aks yourself everyday if I'm next or not. Be one of the braves one babe and seek for help before it becomes too late.

Tears stream down Zozo as she nodded. Mamello opens her arms for her causing Zozo to pull herself to her embrace.

Mamello: We are here for you. You're not alone.

She cooed sofly caressing her back. Zozo pulled out from the embrace and wipe her face with the back of her hand.

Zozo: Thank you.

For the time in months she feels her lips curve a genuine smile. Fake smiles has been something she has been doing for a very long time now and she somehow felt like they were her real smile. Mamello beams

clapping her hands.

Mamello: You're welcome.

She rose to her feet and walked to the door.

Mamello: Don't worry about classes today. I'm sure Charity will be delighted to take notes for you. In her own mind she's just happy to be helping you.

She muttered rolling her eyes and waved her hand dismissively. Zozo giggled shaking her head. Knowing Charity she will be really be happy. The girl has been trying to be her friend from the previous year but she didn't give her the time of the day. She already had someone she once called a friends and that person was her best friend who betrayed her in the most hurtful way. She lightly chuckle as the word best friend leaves a bitter taste in her mouth. She trusted that girl with her life and would have died for her because she took her as her sister not knowing the feeling was not mutual.

Zozo: Can you please lock the front door. I don't think I will be moving from here any time soon.

Mamello smiled nodding before she shut the door behind her. Zozo exhaled loudly replaying the conversation that took place few minutes ago. She jumped off the bed and pulled off her phone from the charger. Scrolling down the contact list she places a call. It rings three times before she picks up.

Thandeka: Zozo

Judging by the tone of her voice the woman is excited to hear from her.

Zozo: I think I'm ready to take your offer.

She blurts out before she can change her mind. Her anxiety was rising up seconds by seconds. A week ago Thandeka approached her on campus about seeing her therapist. Her and Fezile were doing couples therapy and she asked Zozo to join in on the session because her therapist asked her to be there so they can address certain issues they have. At that time she wasn't ready to forgive the woman because she caused her so much pain but know she was ready to let go.

Thandeka: (shocked) Oh my god you don't know what this means to me baby. I promise you you won't regret it.

Zozo: I hope not.

Thandeka: I'm sorry I took too long to reach out it's just that I also didn't know where to start.

She chuckled.

Thandeka: I had to remind myself you're not the little I left behind who would do anything to gain sweets even if it means stealing them from my purse. I had to remind myself that my little grew up and I was not part of it. I'm proud of the woman you have become

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it shows mama raised you well. You're far better woman I couldn't have been. Your will of fighting and the strength you have to overcome what you went through just shows that you're what many people call imbokodo.

Removing her phone from her ear she bit her lip to suppress a sob to escape her mouth. Was it making Zobuhle cry day today because it seems like everyone she comes in contact with today is determined to make her cry. Before she could reply a knock on the front door make its way to her ears. She ignores it.

Zozo: You will let me know when where and I'll be there.

Thandeka: No I'll pick you up.

She huffs annoyed as the knocker is persistent leaving her with no choice but to attend to it.

Zozo: Okay I've got to go. Someone is at the door.

She disconnects the call and slip her gown and sleeper before padding to the front door. Opening the door she's met by a police officer. Her heart pounded in her ribcage. Dear god please don't let this man violate me again because I know I wouldn't be able to handle it again. She chants in her head.

Officer: Good day ma'am.

Zozo: Good day sir. How can I help you?

Officer: I'm looking for miss Nene.

Zozo: (shaky voice) Speaking?

Officer: Can you come down the station there are few questions we will like to ask you.

Her eyebrows involuntary furrow.

Zozo: Regarding?

Officer: Your husband Adesola Emeka.

Zozo gasped shocked the fear leaving her body.

Zozo: What?

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Mthu: I just arrived now.

He muttered on the phone stepping out of the car.

Phumeza: Okay so is she excited about everything?

She cheerfully muttered causing Mthuthuzeli to chuckle.

Mthu: I don't know sis. Just like I said I just arrived at her flat now and I just stepped out of the car.

Phumeza: Oh come on bhuti hurry up. I can't contain my excitement.

Mthuthuzeli chuckled shaking his head. His sister was like a baby in a candy store when she's excited about something.

Phumeza: I've already bought her ureyisi ibhayi and isicholo.

Mthu: This is not your memulo Phumeza.

Phumeza: I know bhuti but I didn't get a chance to have one because of circumstances. This is my sister in law so she's will be wearing them on behalf of the both of us even though I would have been forced to be bare since I was not married back then.

Mthu: Let me talk to you later for now just hold on to everything

Phumeza: Oh before I forget tell her I will teach her Ukusina.

Mthuthuzeli throw his head back as he roars in laughter.

Mthu: (laughing) You can't dance to save your own skin. How will you teach her ukusina while you can't?

Phumeza scoffed on the end of the line.

Phumeza: I'll just Google everything. Where do you think I got to know what married woman wear in umemulo?

Mthuthuzeli shook his head with a smile lurking on his lips as he pause on the door. His sister was something else.

Mthu: Like I said hold on to everything. Her and I have to speak first before we move to that. My gut feeling tells me there was more to that phone call than meets the eye.

Phumeza: Okay later. Love you.

She hang up as Mthuthuzeli knocks on the door. Footsteps follow and a few minutes later the door gets open.

Mercy: Hi

Mthu: Yellow.

Mercy scrunches her nose.

Mercy: Can I help you?

Mthu: Who are you to ask me that?

Mercy's eyes popped out. Haibo the nerve of this guy. Is he lost or something? She brought her and fold them on her chest.

Mercy: I'm Mercy I live here and you're?

Mthu: Mthuthuzeli Uthando's husband.

Mercy's breath hitches while her palms become moist. What is she going to tell him if he starts asking about her.

Mthu: Are you going let me in or?

She gulped her thick saliva. This man was not someone you can mess with and his aura was dark. No wonder Uthando trembled by the mere mention of his name. She would have trembled too.

Mercy: She's not here sir. She's in rehab because she got addicted to cocaine. I swear sir when I gave her the first time to try it out I didn't think she will become an addict. I used it to cope and I thought she would do the same and not became an addict.

She blurts out everything in one go. She moved from the door and start pacing around as Mthuthuzeli's eyebrows furrow as he tries to grips everything she was saying.

Mercy: The she fell pregnant and still continued using the drugs knowing they could harm the baby.

Mthu: (shocked) What?

Mercy ceases her movements as the sound of his voice brought her our of her thought. She clamps her mouth shocked by her rambling. She blurted everything out of fear.

Mthu: What did you say?

Mercy trembled as the man looked angry. She felt like he could pounce on her any minute now.

Mercy: I swear I didn't force her. She took them willingly.

Mthu: Where is she?

Mercy: R-r-rehab.

She stuttered out shaking in her heels. Her heart felt like it could leap out of her chest to the floor.

Mthu: Take me to her.

Mercy froze in the brink of tears. She was scared on behalf of her friend and she didn't know what the man was capable of.

Mthu: Now.

He roared. Mercy jumped startled nodding. She quickly rushed to the kitchen to pick up her phone keys and rush out of the house locking it behind her. Mthuthuzeli lead them to his van and brought the engine to life after they step in. To say he was pissed would be understatement. He should have made a follow up after her phone was picked up by a random man he doesn't know but he was still giving her the benefit of the doubt that she was okay. Now thinking about it was there any holding job like she claim to be when she didn't return home for the December holidays. Maybe he turned a blind eye to everything she did because of the love he had for her and it was time she start acting like a married woman.

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Unedited

Squirming in her seat Mercy shifts uncomfortable as Mthuthuzeli drives them to rehab where Uthando is. The drive was the longest drive in her life and she could have wanted it to end soon. Her heart pounded violently in her chest as they park at the parking lot. Her palms sweated while her armpits itched. Gulping her saliva she steps out of the car she waits for Mthuthuzeli to lock the car before they walk inside this building. Mercy was scared on behalf of her friend and her fear was plastered on her face.

Uthando paused on her steps seeing the frightened Mercy and walked towards her unaware of the man lurking in the room. Mthuthuzeli shook his head as she passes him without acknowledging him. Good! She didn't see him.

Uthando: What is now?

She muttered through gritted teeth.

Mercy: I..

She gulped trailing off as she shifting her gaze to the man sitting on the far table next to them.

Uthando: I hope you're not here to tell me about that stupid baby. I don't even know why are you here after you threatened to snitch on me.

She hisses stretching her skin. She clutched her hair and pulled it just enough to cause the pain reaction she's accustomed too.

Uthando: I what Mercy? You know what never mind about that.

She shifted her eyes around the room.

Uthando: Tell me at least you brought me that stuff.

She whispered to her. Mercy's throat hitched in her throat as Mthuthuzeli leaps up to his feet.

Mthu: Uthando?

Her eyes widen out of their sockets while a shiver ran down her spine. She knew that voice even in her sleep. She looked at Mercy hoping that her ears were deceiving her but the girl couldn't maintain eye contact. Her eyes were casted on the floor.

Uthando: (shaky voice) No Mercy tell me I didn't hear correctly.

Mthuthuzeli scoffed.

Mthu: Uthando?

Uthando's heart thudded in her ribcage. She slowly turned on her heels and got the shock of her life. The

man was right behind her. She gasped moving backwards but sadly she was trapped in between the table and the man in front of her. She shook her head while her eyes glistened with unshed tears.

Mthu: What is this?

A hot liquid ran down Uthando's thighs. Casting her eyes to the floor she looks at her pee running down her legs to the floor. Mthuthuzeli follows her line of sight and clicked his tongue. She should be scared. Mercy gasped shocked while her eyes widen on her face. She doesn't blame her she would have peed on herself too.

Mthu: Don't you have a mouth to talk?

He firmly muttered. Uthando lips quivered.

Mthu: Khuluma marn.

He roars startling the two girls. Tears stream down Uthando's face.

Uthando: I...

Words stuck on her throat. The fear making hard for her to form a sentence. She clutched her chest desperate to fill her lungs air. Her heart was like a ticking time bomb waiting to explode on her chest. The room suddenly started to spin as she hypoventilate. Her eyes roll at the back of her head before she collapses on the floor.

Mercy: (gapsing) Uthando?

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She calmed her racing heart and took a deep breath. Her mind was still trying to grasp the fact that she ead married. Tons of questions ran down her mind forming a migraine. She rubbed her temples and heavily sighed placing her head on top of her arms that were on top of the desk in the interrogation room. Zozo raised her eyes as the door creaks open and the officer who fetched her walked in. He pulled the chair on the side of the table and lowered himself. Pressing his tape the officer places it on top of the table.

Officer: Tell me Miss Nene where were you the night Mr Joshua died?

Zozo: I was at home.

Officer: Was your husband with you?

She raised her head frowning.

Zozo: Yes

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the officer places it on top of the table.

Officer: Tell me Miss Nene where were you the night Mr Joshua died?

Zozo: I was at home.

Officer: Was your husband with you?

She raised her head frowning.

Zozo: Yes no.

She chewed her bottom lip confused. The conflict happening on her own head was getting out of her hand. The voices chanted a different answer to her making her. The other one was saying yes while the other one said no.

Officer: Which one is it Miss? I want you think properly before issuing your answer. You seem like a nice young nice girl who doesn't need to be caught up in Emeka's shady business. His a criminal who wouldn't think twice on killing you. Help me put him behind bars by telling me what you know. I'm going to ask again where were you the night Mr Joshua died?

Zozo: I was home.

Officer: Was your husband with you?

Zozo: (frowning) No.

The officer chuckled shaking his head. In Ade's statement he said he was home with his wife while the wife was saying something else meaning he was lying through his teeth.

Officer: Where you alone?

Zozo: Yes.

Officer: So you have no alibi?

Zozo: Everyone in my village can testify on my behalf that I was back home that time. I only took a bus coming this side two day later the time this so called murder happened.

The officer nodding.

Officer: Thank you for your time miss but I advice you to not leave town yet as we might want you to ask further more questions.

Zozo nodded leaping up to her feet and dragged her feet to the door. Now that she was out of that suffocating room she let her mind ask the question she's been urging to ask since she left her dorm. When did she get married and why hasn't the husband gave her the heads up about the police if he was into shady dealing. Was this one of the things happened while she was trapped in her own mind? She

doesn't remember from the time she walked out of the hospital to a week ago when mighty Mercy was on her doorstep asking for help.

Zozo: Oh god what if I said something that will incriminate the both of us unaware.

Chills ran down her spine as that thought crossed her mind. She can't go to jail over something she doesn't know.

Zozo: I need to find this so called husband but where will I start?

She muttered under her breath and padded out of the police station.

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Later that day Vuyo cursed under his breath seeing the police officer walking in the club. He made his way to Ade's office and barged in without knocking.

Ade: What happened to knocking?

He peeked his head over the laptop in front of him.

Vuyo: There's no time for that boss. The officer is back again and I'm sure his making his way here.

Ade: Fuck what does he want?

Vuyo shrugged his shoulders. Ade ran his palm on his face frustrated. He was becoming a problem and he needed to be taken care before he discovers more. He rolled his eyes as the officer bangs the door. Vuyo opened the door and the officer smirked stepping in.

Officer: Mr Emeka just the man I'm looking for.

Ade: How can I help you officer.

The officer chuckled.

Officer: Actually on this case it's me who can help you.

Ade frowned gawking at Vuyo who mirrors his own expression.

Officer: I took a road trip this morning and I went to Wits University to look for someone. Do you know who gentleman?

He taunted with a smile lurking on his lips. The room becomes dead quiet.

Officer: Oh come on gentleman work with me here.

Ade clears his throat.

Ade: Just get to the point already.

He snapped agitated.

Officer: I went to look for you wife Miss Nene does it ring a bell.

Both Vuyo and Ade's eyes popped out of their sockets. The officer's lip curve into a sly smirk.

Officer: And guess what she told me.

Ade's breath hitches in his throat. He shifts his eyes to Vuyo throwing daggers at him. Wasn't he the one who said the girl is in the Looney Bin?

Officer: Oh come on Emeka don't tell me you think I would find your wife. I must say she's a very beautiful girl who didn't hesitate to tell me she was in her home town when the time the murder took place. Imagine the shook I had when the poor girl's facial expression told it all. It was written in her face that she was confused about everything.

Ade raised his hand and unbuttoned his blazer as the room becomes extremely hot for him. Sweat run down his face.

Officer: Which concluded to me knowing you were lying. You said in you statement you were home with your wife while the your wife says something else which comes to this point why I'm here.

He raised to his feet and walked around his desk. He pulled Ade to his feet and took out the handcuffs on his waist.

Officer: Mr Emeka you're under arrest for the murder of Joseph Joshua. Anything you say will be used on the court of law.

Ade: (yelling) Do you know who I am? I demand you to uncuff me right now.

Officer: You have a right for an attorney if you can't afford one the state will provide one for you.

He pushes him out of room with Vuyo on their toes.

Ade: Call the lawyer Vuyo.

He hisses squirming as the handcuffs pierce through his skin.

Vuyo: On it boss.

Ade turned to Vuyo and murmured find the girl before they push him out of the club. Vuyo cursed under his breath. He knew it was a bad idea not keeping tabs on the girl and she was a loose end that needs to be taken care off. He shouldn't have listened to his former boss.

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Unedited

She could hear voices from afar. She flips her eyes open and look around her surroundings. She breathed out as she relaxes on the pillow. She was back in her room meaning everything that happened before she fainted was a dream. Mthuthuzeli couldn't be possibly be here. The door open creaks open and Mthuthuzeli walked in. Her chest tightening while a lump formed in her throat. She shook her head shutting her eyes. He couldn't be here.

Mthu: Get up.

She didn't need to be told twice. She quickly leaped up to her feet trembling.

Mthu: Why Uthando?

Uthando fiddled with the hem of her top with her eyes on the floor.

Mthu: Ngikhuluma nawe.

Uthando shrugged her shoulders. Mthuthuzeli clicked his tongue and stumbled outside.

Mthu: Release her or else I'm calling the filing a kidnapping charge against this centre.

He muttered to one of the staff member he bumped into the corridors.

Lady: (frowning) Sir?

Mthu: I said release my wife before I call the police on you.

He roared. The poor lady jumped startled and run to the front desk. A few minutes later she made her

way to him.

Lady: Sir you will have to speak to-

Mthu interrupted her.

Mthu: I don't care who will I have to speak to but one thing I know for sure I'm leaving this place with my wife.

He clicked his tongue and padded back to the room Uthando is in.

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At the police station Ade sat in the interrogation room with the officer across him. The only thing running in his mind was that if the officer gets a whiff of how he got married then that will surely send him

straight to jail.

Officer: Come on Emeka work me with me here. If you confess on how you killed him you might get a lighter sentence.

Ade narrowed his eyes at him smacking his lips shut. He might have not be a criminal in his past life but he was not stupid. He knew that was one of the technique police use to get criminals singing like a canary. The door behind him burst open and Kagiso stumbled in.

Kagiso: Officer I know you're not questioning my client in my absence.

The officer scoffed rolling his eyes.

Officer: Mofokeng why am I not surprised you're the one presenting him after all you're just another criminal in a suit.

Kagiso chuckled.

Officer: Careful officer you might be the a prison cell tonight for defamation of character or better worse you might be paying thousands of rands for just dragging my name and I bet you won't afford me because I don't come cheap.

He smirked. The officer rised to his feet and clicked his tongue walking out of the room. Ade chuckled.

Kagiso: What the fuck is this Emeka?

Ade: Shit happened man. Just tell me you can get me out of here because I can't spend a night in here man.

Kagiso: The prosecutor is already building a strong case against you. Our only shot is that they grant you bail. I definitely know you're ain't stupid to leave evidence behind right?

Ade: What do you take me for man?

Kagiso: Good. Is there something else that can make that fat fool to charge you?

Ade rubbed his temples.

Ade: It's my citizenship.

Kagiso arched his brow.

Kagiso: What about it?

Ade: The ID of the woman whose suppose to be my fight was stollen and she's the one who got me here. Her statement is not the same as mine since I said I was home with her.

Kagiso pinched his bridge nose.

Kagiso: Why didn't you keep tabs on her on the first place. You know how we do things but you chose to relax. Do you think that fat fool is going to relax after finding that out? His been after your father for years and you just gave him gold on a silver platter. What the fuck is wrong with you?

He yelled.

Kagiso: I hate working with amateurs Emeka and your father knew that.

Ade: I'm not my father.

He hisses slamming his hand on the table. He was tired hearing how great his father was. How clever his father was and how wise he was. Didn't they know he cannot be his father and the most thing that infuriates him more was that the man was still holding on refusing to die.

Kagiso: I already know that.

Ade: Then stop compering me to him.

He muttered through gritted teeth.

Ade: I already told my man to look for the girl so she won't be a problem.

Kagiso: For your sake I hope so.

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Driving back to the flat

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Driving back to the flat Mthuthuzeli halted on the robot waiting for them to open. He could feel her eyes throwing dagger at him but he ignored them. After threatening the manager of the centre of kidnapping Uthando they had no choice but to release her. They were now driving back to the flat to pack her belongings so they could drive back home where she will behave like a wife she is meant to be.

Uthando: Don't you see I don't want to be here?

She snapped agitated. His presence was just rubbing her off the wrong way.

Uthando: I don't know whether you're stupid or what. Why don't you read between the lines that I don't want you and I will never want you?.

Mthuthuzeli gulped.

Uthando: You're so stupid I don't know why would you think a girl like me could love a man like you. You're a monster who doesn't deserve to be loved. You deserve to die alone while I live with the man I love. I didn't ask you to marry me and I certain didn't ask you to send me to school. I never asked you for any shit so I don't know what gave you the right to detect my life. You're not my father and you're definitely not my husband since I didn't get to marry you on my free will. You sent your cows to my parents house so that you married them not me.

Her chest heaved up and down as she screamed at him. She clicked her tongue and waited for the robot to turn green before opening the door and launching herself on the tarred road. Mthuthuzeli eyes widen as he steps on the brakes. He opened the door to check on her but found her running the opposite direction they were coming from.

Mthu: (screaming) Uthando.

Uthando ignored him as the excruciating pain in her body jolted alive as she keeps running away from her nightmare. She would be damned if she let that half a man detect her life.

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FIVE MONTHS LATER

Heavily sighing Zozo throw her hands in the air dramatically.

Zozo: I don't know.

Her therapist pressed her lips into a thin line and jointed down on her note pad.

Zozo: At this point I'm all over the place. I feel like maybe if I had listened to my gut feeling that day none of that would have happened to me but at the same time I know the rape would have happened anyway. It didn't matter which form it come about but I know it was written in my destiny to feel that kind of pain.

Therapist: Do you ever regret what happened?

Zozo shifted her gaze back to the window biting her lip. It took time to where she is right now. The first few weeks into her sessions she felt like the doctor was her enemy instead. Her questions triggered every emotion in her causing Ziyanda to come out most of the time to cause havoc.

Zozo: On my lowest days I do but when my thoughts ain't consumed by so much pain sadness and anger I don't. I wouldn't have met the other parts of me that were hidden behind the smile I keep having everyday. They have been with me since childhood and they know the kind of pain I have been suppressed into from the beginning.

Therapist: Given a chance to those who hurt you will you ever forgive them?

Zozo: A friend of mine once said to me setting myself free from the chains of hatred and anger is like lifting off the heavy burden up off my shoulder. I may forgive them but I wouldn't forget what they put me through.

The therapist nodded with a smile lurking on her lips. She couldn't believe this was the same girl who swore at her the first they met. The same girl who she saw no glimpse of hope in her eyes and a lot of sadness in them. They were improving and it took a lot for her to step out of her shell and not let her personalities take over.

Therapist: Tell me about the relationship you have with your mother.

A smile creeps on Zozo face as she turns to face her.

Therapist: Is that a smile I'm spotting on?

She smiled arching her brow. Zozo giggled.

Zozo: I like having her around. We just taking everything one day at a time and I'm very happy she's not pushing things. She just let the flow to lead her same as me. We did a tombstone for my grandmother and my brother last week.

Therapist: I can tell you're glowing from the last time I saw you.

Zozo laughed waving her hand off. Felt so good for to be like her old self again even though it will take time to be that woman again.

Zozo: Ade and I have been spending a lot of time together.

She blurts out lowering herself on the couch. The therapist raised her well drawn eyebrows.

Zozo: I don't think I'm ready to speak about that.

Therapist: Why haven't you reported him for stealing your identity?

Zozo shrugged her shoulders.

Zozo: I really thought about it many times but I don't know why I haven't had the courage to speak up about it. Even though he tried a couple of times sending his goon my way to scare me but I find myself not shaken by his threat. I've seen him a couple of times and there is just something in him.

Therapist: Something like what?

Zozo: I don't yet but spending time with him just leaves me waiting for my next visit. His bail days are becoming over since his trial will be coming up soon and I'm afraid of the outcome of it.

She gawks at her therapist.

Zozo: Is it normal for me to feel that way?

Therapist: (smiling) Do you want my honest opinion on that?

Zozo nodded chewing her inside cheek.

Therapist: I think you're in love with the man and you're not aware of that.

Zozo scrunched her nose gasping before bursting into a fit of laughter.

Zozo: I would have known if I was in love with him and beside I'm too broken for him or any men for that matter.

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30.

UTHANDO

30.

THREE YEARS LATER

Zobuhle grunted as she shifted the bed. She took the broom and started sweeping to keep herself occupied. She didn't want to think about what happened last night. Things shouldn't have escalated to that extent. Why did she let him touch her like that? The only man who had the right to do so sadly is not on this world. She smiled sadly as she reminisced the good old days. Oh Mandla why did you have to leave so soon? She broke out of her thoughts as a knock makes its way to her ears. She dropped the broom and dragged her feet towards it. Throwing the door open she curses under her breath.

Zozo: What do you want?

Ade sighed shifting his weight from his feet.

Ade: We need to talk.

Zozo: There's nothing to talk about.

Ade: Yes there is. We can't just pretend that kiss didn't happen.

Zozo: Yes we can.

She slammed the door on his face and walked back to what she was doing. Why did she opened the door in the first place? Before she could answer that question her bedroom door burst open and a furious Adesola stormed in.

Ade: If you like to pretend that the kiss happen then newsflash honey I can't.

Sarcasm dripping on his tongue like venom. Zozo flinches.

Ade: You don't get to make me feel the way I feel then pretend like nothing happened between us. I love you why can't you see that.

He screamed frustrated. Zozo's jaw dropped to the floor. Did the man just use the L word? Does he know the meaning behind it or his say all of this to get on her pants?

Adele: Don't look so spooked.

Zozo: There can never be anything between us.

Ade: Why the hell not?

Zozo: It's because I'm too broken for you Ade. You don't deserve someone who has so much baggage as me. Close the door behind you.

She murmured stumbling towards her bed. Her chest tightening as those words slip out of her mouth. She made a promise to herself after Mandla that she will never fall in love again but here she is now falling into temptation. Ade was her temptation and she needed to get out of here before she falls deeper. Ade padded to her and grip he arm. He turned her around and crushed his lips on hers. Zozo gasped shocked causing Ade to slip his tongue in her mouth. He cupped her face and pulled her waist. Zozo pushed him and away from her. How dare he kissed her. Does he know that she's been suppressing this feelings she has for him for years now and how dare he wakes them up.

Zozo: You have no right to kiss me.

Ade smirked.

Ade: Don't pretend like you didn't want to. When is this cat and mouse going to end? You're my wife
abd-

Zozo interjected.

Zozo: Don't make it sound like a had a choice. You're the one who made the promise to god on behalf of
my name that death will do us apart illegally.

Ade raised his hand and caressed her cheek. His eyes softening.

Ade: Then let's make it the right way. Let's get married the right way.

Zozo shook her head.

Zozo: We can't.

Ade: (snapping) Why the hell not?

Zozo: You seem to forget you can go to jail any minute from now on. What will happen to me should the magistrate find you guilty tomorrow?

Ade: He won't.

Zozo arched her eyebrows.

Zozo: You're reckon?

Ade: Yeah! Let's just say I have something about him that will make him consider throwing me to jail. I didn't break any law that didn't need to be broken

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beside South African law is too weak and shit.

Zozo shook her head. It was no use trying to convince him he was wrong cause clearly he didn't see anything wrong with what he did. If the law couldn't protect people from such then how were people safe from such criminals like him? It's a mystery that needs to be solved statement from way back.

Ade: So wifey try something else that's going to keep us apart cause jail is a none factor.

Zozo shook her head defeated. Would she be wrong if she takes the leap of a blind fate?

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Grunting Mthuthuzeli pumped in his seed inside her and fell beside her panting. Kwanda brought her legs together and closed them panting. She laid her head on his chest and slipped in her thoughts. Maybe everything was going to be okay. They were going to be okay especially with their baby on the way their relationship will be back to what it once was before. A knock on the front door snapped her out of her daze.

Mthu: Let's ignore whoever it is.

He murmured caressing her cheek. Kwanda nodded snuggling further into his chest. The knock become persistent leaving her no choice but to attend to it. She huffed jumping off the bed and picked his shirt and slipped it on before making her way out of the room to the door. She paused nodding to herself as the knocker seemed to get the message. Mthuthuzeli walked out of the room towards her.

Mthu: See told you to ignore it.

He muttered bringing her close to him. Kwanda laughed wrapping her arms around his neck and brought her lips in his.

Smiling from ear to ear Uthando opened the gate and walked in after closing it. She inhaled the air and padded to the door with her 2 year old son on her heels. She knocked gently on the door hoping he hasn't changed his address.

Mthu: Who is it?

He shouted on the other side of the door making his way to the door. Kwanda pulled the shirt to hide her body from preying eyes as he heads for the door. Uthando's anxiety rose as his footsteps approach the door. Rising his head Mthuthuzeli's smiled dropped while a gasp escaped his mouth.

His eyes popped out of their sockets as he stands frozen on the door. Kwanda walked towards them.

Kwanda: Babe whose at the door?

Uthando's heart pounded in her ribcage as her footsteps draw closer to them. She stood frozen on the door not knowing what to do. Kwanda wrapped her arms on his waist nibbling with his earlobe. A lump stuck on Uthando's throat.

Kwanda: Come back to bed you still have to feed our son here some vitamins.

She mumbled caressing her stomach. Uthando's blood runs cold while teara stream down her cheeks as Mthuthuzeli rest his eyes on her swollen belly. Looking at her she's not the same woman he once knew. This woman infront of him is not his Uthando. The dirty dress she's wearing is too big on her. Her feet are not clothed with any shoe while her lips are dry. The fresh blue eye on her left eye is the first thing he noticed when he opened the door. He moved further down assessing her body. His eyes fell on the little figure behind her clutching on her hand and arched his brow.

Uthando: I'm sorry.

She muttered in a shaky voice.

Mthu: Hayi hayi Uthando.

He roared in anger. Tears welled in her eyes. She casted her eyes to the floor while her lips curve. A lump formed on Mthuthuzeli's throat.

Uthando: I'm sorry.

Mthu: (breaking voice) Why Uthando?

Uthando: Ngiyaxolisa.

Mthu: (yelling) Why can't I be enough for you? I did everything a man can do for his wife but everytime you thank me with a plate full of shit.

Kwanda unwrapped her arms on his waist and stood beside him not caring about the seemen running down her thighs. So this was the woman who broke him beyond repairs. The same woman who she knew was the love of his life. She knew where she stood with him. Even though the relationship seemed like I was improving day by day she knew he always thought about her. He couldn't love her enough like she loved him.

Uthando: (crying) I'm sorry.

She bursted in tears. If she knew the grass wasn't greener on the other side like she assumed none of this would have happened. Her boyfriend who she met after running away from him dropped her like a hot potato. The man drank his liver away and beat her into a pulp when his drunk. He didn't care whether she was pregnant or their son was in the same room as them. She knew she would die in his hands if she doesn't ran away and she took the first chance she got when he passed out yesterday after his drinking session. She only took her son and left everything behind hoping to find Mthuthuzeli on the same address he left with Mercy when he thought she will came back to her senses. He spent months crucifying himself on the choices she made. Was she too hard on her? Or was she not happy with him?

Uthando: I'm sorry. Please I have no where to go and my son and I need a place to stay.

Mthu shifted his eyes to Kwanda who has her arms folded in her chest. He could see rage plastered on her face. She shifted her weight from foot to foot waiting for his response. Mthuthuzeli swallowed hard running his hand on his face. He was caught between a rock and a hard place. He takes time to weigh his options. Kwanda picked him up when and made him who he is today. She was there even though he pushed her away. She was there when he felt like no waking up the next day. She was there when he attempted suicide and nearly died. She was there through it all and made her forget about this woman in front of him. He heavily sighed and averted his eyes at Uthando. Seeing her like this breaks his heart. He had night hopes for this woman. He thought they could create their own happily ever after but it seems like he was not man enough for her.

Mthu: I'm sorry but I don't think the madam of the house would appreciate that. As you can see we are expecting and stress is not good for her.

Uthando knees weakened while she bursted into tears. That could have been her if she held on him. If only she could turn back the hands of time she would have been the one living in this beautiful house. She would have been there one with a bump wearing his shirt right now and walking barefooted with his cum dripping down her thighs. She cried harder as now regrets seeps in her body like second skin. Why didn't she hold on? Why did she let the world corrupt her? Why didn't she love her husband like he did?

Uthando: Ngiyaxolisa Mthuthuzeli.

She screamed as Kwanda slams the door in her face.

Uthando: (screaming and crying) Ngiyaxolisa myeni wami.

[THE END]