

A LOT LIKE FRIENDSHIP by SILINDILE GUMEDE



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Introduction

I know what poverty feels like, not the deep kind of poverty where you go to bed without food because we've never had that but we've come close a few times. My mother is just not bothered with anything apart from where her next quart is going to come from. She drinks so much that sometimes she doesn't know whether its day or night. The men she sleeps with never stick around, she gets what she wants from them then throws them out when she is done. I still remember the first time I walked in on my mother having sex, I was 9 years old and they were doing it in the lounge. At my age I had never seen people having sex before so I thought the man was hurting her. I hit him on his head with a pot which made my mother so angry. She took the man's money, kicked him out and beat me. She called me all sort of names and I apologized over and over again. "If you ever do that again, I'll give you to him so he can fuck the innocence from that big head of yours". I didn't understand what she meant but I never did it again. If I walk in and find her doing the nasty, I'd walk out and sit outside until they are done. Funny enough I lost my innocence to those men. Sometimes she would fall asleep during the sex and the men would have their way with me. I used to cry at first but now I don't. Tears never scared them off anyway. When I got pregnant at 13, my mother beat me to a miscarriage and a small part of me was relieved. What would a 13year old know about raising a baby when she was already raising herself? I got contraceptives after that because I knew the men were not done with me. That has been my life and I've grown tough over the years because of it. If life has thrown you the amount of pain it has thrown my way, you learn to keep it moving. When I got my matric results I was over the moon, I was getting out of this place. I was accepted for a bursary to study BEd. I am leaving this place and never coming back again.

My name is Nkanyezi Enhle Myeni and this is my story

A lot like friendship

Chapter 1

I don't hate my mother, I've tried to but I can never bring myself to do it. You see where I'm from it's not a bad thing that a mother drinks her life away or that kids get raped every day. It has become a way of life and we always fight to save ourselves. Some of us get out of that situation because we are strong enough to fight and others grow up to be like their mothers. They accept the card life has dealt them and resort to drinking their lives away and neglecting their children. It's an on-going cycle that will never be broken. It won't be my story though. As I'm packing for Bloemfontein, I'm grateful more than anything. It wasn't a mistake that I get to study so far from home. It's a choice I don't regret. I've chosen me.

Mama walks in holding a quart. I hear her but I don't bother to turn around. Amy said her parents will pick me up at 6pm. Amy is my best friend who has the perfect life. She has amazing parents, great siblings and a hot boyfriend. Her life is easy compared to mine.

Mama: why ungasho ngikusize? (Why don't you ask me to help you?)

Me: kulungile mama, sengiqedile (its fine mama, I'm done)

She stays quiet for a while. I know she isn't gone because I can feel her heavy presence in the room

Her: ufunde Mntanam. Ungafani nami (you must study my child. Don't be like me)

I don't know what to say so I keep quiet. She still doesn't leave. There are days when she tries to be a mother. They don't come around often. Her words and actions used to hurt me so much, I'd cry myself to sleep every night. Sometimes I'd find myself on my knees shouting at God, asking him why he chose this life for me. Why did he decide that I'm not worthy of a childhood or the love of a parent? Why did my body have to become the dish where drunkards empty their sperms? I'm only 17 but I've seen more penises than most adults. A part of me dies with every man that violates me. They leave with a part of my soul.

My mother eventually leaves when she realizes that I'm not giving her the attention she wants. As much as I don't hate her, I wouldn't rate her amongst my favourite people. I love her because I have to not because I want to.

"Star, I'm here"

She is shouting all the way from the gate. The excitement I'm feeling is indescribable and when she walks in, we scream simultaneously. She looks so cute in her denim shorts and t-shirt. I'm in a blue high waist cropped Jean and a tank top

Amy: are you ready for our freedom?

Me: yaas queen!!

Her: the world is not ready for us

Me: watch us hit the world by storm

We stop for a few seconds then break into laughter. I love this girl. Surviving high school would have been impossible without her. She is basically my human diary and she doesn't judge me. I love her mostly for that.

We drag my suitcase out, I'm carrying my duffle bag on my shoulder and that's all the luggage I have. I packed everything of mine. I mean it when I say I'm never coming back here again. Maybe I'll come back when I have money and I'll take my mother away from this place.

Amy's brother is driving. If he wasn't Amy's brother, I'd totally be crushing on this guy. Blake is the most handsome guy I've ever seen, he has brown eyes, dimples and long lashes. His lashes and his voice are what almost has me crushing on him. Almost.

Blake: hey you

He is looking at me through the rear-view mirror and smiling. I love what he has done with his hair. He has always been blonde but now he has dyed his hair brown and got a fuck boy hair cut

Me: hey B, you good?

Blake: I'm good Star, ready for college?

Amy: college is FET bro, we are going to Uni. Don't downgrade us

Blake: the fact that you think an FET college is a downgrade speaks volume

Me: I don't blame her though. It's how it's portrayed in society

He looks at me again but I quickly look away. Blake makes me nervous and as much as I've known him for years now, he still makes my heart beat some type of way

Blake: do me a favour and be the teacher that changes that

We get to their house and their parents are putting boxes into the trunk of their Fortuner. Looking at this whole situation you'd swear Amy is moving out. I hug Mr and Mrs Matthews then help with the boxes that are still left in the house.

Blake: I have a gift for you

Me: for me?

Him: yeah. Come

Amy is on the phone talking to her sister. She isn't here to see her off, something about work being hectic. I follow Blake into his bedroom. I've been in here a few times with Amy while Blake is away. He is 25 and works in Joburg. He is a graphic designer

Him: here you go

He hands me the sparkly purple gift bag and I open it

Me: B, I can't accept this. It looks expensive

Him: you will need it. Every student needs a laptop

Me: are you sure about this? I mean I appreciate the thought but imali yakho (your money) bruh

Him: it's an investment. Enjoy varsity Star, focus on your studies but also have fun. Kiss a few boys, party until the morning and just have fun

I throw my arms around his neck and hug him tightly. I am partially hiding my tears. No one has ever gotten me anything this big. Gifts are a rare occasion for me. I do get them from Amy for Christmas and my birthday but it has never been something this big

Me: thank you, B.

Him: I also got you a journal. I know how you love to document things so you can document your varsity experience and you can read it to me when you decide to come back

He knows that this is a one way trip for me. I told Amy, she told Blake and next thing their whole family knew. What I appreciated the most was that they never tried to change my mind or lecture me on my decision. Mrs Matthews just said "call if you ever need anything"

The trip to Bloemfontein is long. As much as I try to fight sleep, it gets the better of me. You know a trip is long when you sleep and wake up multiple times and you still haven't arrived. Amy on the other hand is out like a light. By the time we arrive, it is morning. After checking the time on my phone, I realize that it is 05h55. I shake Amy, trying to wake her up but the girl is not having it

Amy: leave me alone

Me: we are here

Her: I don't care. I'm sleeping

Me: nangu uSihle (here comes Sihle)

Her: grow up Star. Sihle is only coming tonight

I laugh as I watch her yawn and sit up. Sihle is her boyfriend. The hot rugby player who cheats as if staying faithful is painful. Amy knows her boyfriend is trash but she acts all Stevie Wonder towards that fact.

We chose a commune over res because it's less people to deal with, less rules and cheaper. There will be 6 of us staying in this house, sharing 2 bathrooms, the lounge and a kitchen. We are the last to arrive so everyone already knows each other.

Mrs M: let's unpack then go buy groceries

NSFAS will only be depositing money into my account at the end of the month. I'm not too worried about that because I do have some money saved up from my holiday job.

We unpack, make the beds, put up the curtains and by the time we are done, it is almost 09h00

Mr M: spar should be open by now

Mrs M: it opens at 8. We'll be the first ones in

We drive to spar, they take two trolleys and fill them up. I know the other one is mine so I don't fight them. Fighting them isn't going to get us anywhere. They pay and take us back to the commune. There are 3 fridges in the kitchen so we just pack our things in the empty one and then load our cupboards.

Mr M: we need to check into a hotel, get some sleep before driving back tonight. You girls must also get some rest. We are taking you out for supper before we leave

Me: thank you for everything Mr and Mrs M. I appreciate all that you do for me

Mrs M is the emotional type. Her arms are already around me before I can even finish what I am saying

Mrs M: you are like a daughter to us Star

They leave. Amy and I throw ourselves on my bed

Amy: finally they are gone. We need to rest because when Sihle gets here later, we are going out

Me: count me out babes. I'm tired. I need rest

Her: rest? No one rests in varsity. You'll rest after you graduate

Me: we won't graduate if we do this yours and Sihle's way

Her: don't be a granny Star. You promised we will have fun

I kick her out of my room and sleep. The sleep on the bed and the sleep in a car cannot be compared. I was am cold. The only thing that wakes me up hours later is my phone ringing, Blake is calling. It is weird because Blake and I are not that close. He is my best friend's brother.

Me: hey B

Blake: did I wake you?

Me: yep. What's up?

Him: nothing much. I was checking on you guys, to see if you arrived safely. No one called me

Me: oh sorry man. We got here early in the morning. Your parents are only leaving tonight though

Him: oh that's great. Get back to sleep. We will talk some other time

Me: Bye B

Trying to get back to sleep is almost impossible after I hang up. The time is just after 3pm and I'm hungry. I get out of bed, gather my toiletries then remove my clothes and wrap my body with a towel. A shower will definitely wake me up. It also seems as if the people of this house are up and about. I'll go introduce myself when I'm done here.

I put on cotton shorts and a tank top then head to the kitchen. There is a guy and a girl in there. One is cooking and the other is washing dishes

Me: hey guys

They turn to look at me and greet back

Me: I'm Nkanyezi

Guy: Avuyile

Girl: Lisakhanya but you can call me Lisa

Me: nice to meet you

Avuyile is dark with big eyes and eyes. He is skinny too. Lisa is short, she has a nice body, a bit of a bum, a not so flat stomach and small boobs. She has short hair and is on the caramel side of the skin tone. I'm a bit taller than Lisa, dark, a bit chubby and I've been fighting acne all my life. My bum does show up when I'm wearing the right kind of jeans. I'm not picture perfect but I love my body. It is a great part of who I am.

Another guy walks in and introduces himself as Zukhanye and I am told that the other girl's name is Luthingo but she is out.

We have small talk here and there, finding out where everyone is from, what they will be studying and all of that. I then make a toasted cheese sandwich with oros then go back to my room. I know Amy will only wake up when her parents call. That girl loves her sleep.

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Chapter 2

"All my outfits look childish"

Me: where exactly are we going?

Amy: to Cubana. It's a night club and I want to look like a varsity student. I want to look mature

Me: why?

We are going to this nightclub with Sihle. The same Sihle we went to high school with, the same Sihle she grew up with. It makes no sense why she would want to impress him all of a sudden

Me: I don't think I even want to go

Her: don't start. I think I'll wear this. This looks mature right?

She is holding up leather shorts and a white camisole.

Me: wear what you are comfortable in. You stress too much about irrelevant things.

Her: you need to look sexy too. Who knows, maybe you'll attract a guy or two

I don't respond to her. She has only ever dated Sihle and I've never dated. What I go through at home has put me off the male species. I don't trust any man. Men have stolen pieces of my soul, they've helped themselves to my body and my screams and tears have had no effect on them. Blake is the only guy that I've allowed in my life, only because he is my best friend's brother and he treats me like his little sister.

When Sihle arrives, he walks into the commune as if he owns the place. He is too confident for his own good but man he can back it up. Sihle has always been that guy in high school, the one everyone wants. He is smart, he looks good and he excelled in sports. He has the perfect family and his mom and Mrs M have been friends since their primary school days. Amy always says her relationship with Sihle is written in the stars

but Sihle cheats. He had a girlfriend in literally all the schools in our town and he was smart about it. Some girls knew him as Sihle, others knew him as Sphiwe since his full name is Sphiwesihle and his second name is Luminathi. He was Lu, Umi, nathi, athi to other girls. But my friend loves him. I used to have a crush on him but when I discovered that the boy has issues with being faithful, I got over him.

Sihle: what's up everybody?

Amy: hey babe

She rushes to him, wraps her arms around him and kisses him. When Sihle walked in, we were chilling with our housemates in the lounge. I notice Lisa and Thingo staring at him. That's Sihle for you, creates hype everywhere he goes

Sihle: hey Star

Me: hey. Greet the other people too hawu

Sihle: I did though. I said hey everybody. Stop being so extra Star. Plus you should be nice to me, I have a surprise for you

I'm not even interested because I know it's one of his friends. His friends are like him just less good looking. When the housemates figure out that we are going clubbing, they want to tag along. Zukhanye drives so they get in his car while we get into Sihle's car. There is a guy in the car and he introduces himself as Kwenzo. He is Sihle's cousin but I don't care and I refuse to entertain him. If he is related to Sihle that means monogamy gives him a rash too.

House music plays at full blast while we drive to Cubana and when we get there, it's packed

Amy: yes! This is the varsity life I want

Sihle: let me get us a table

He navigates his way through the crowd, talks to the host for a few minutes and before we know it we have a table. It doesn't take long for it to be filled with drinks

Kwenzon: so what are you studying?

Me: I don't like small talk and I'm not going to date you or sleep with you or whatever you think this will lead to.

He laughs and I'm annoyed so I grab my bottle of brutal fruit and head for the dance floor. I'm not much of a dancer but I love this song and that guy was annoying me. He isn't bad looking yena but nje I'm not checking for guys. I have bigger problems than some hormonal guy who thinks his cousin is his ticket to getting laid. When the song ends, I go to chill by the bar. I see Zukhanye coming towards me

Khanye: why did you disappear?

Me: the guy over there was annoying me

Him: they are a bit annoying, both of them actually. Your friend's boyfriend likes flashing too much.

Me: the girls are not complaining though and if anyone heard us talking right now they would say we are jealous

We laugh. Khanye is a cool guy, he is down to earth and he seems like a genuine person. He isn't magazine cover sexy but he looks good. Caramel skin, bald head, small eyes and a cute smile. Avuyile is also a humble soul from what I've picked up on the first impression

Him: do you want to get out of here?

I give him that "what the hell look" and he laughs. What is with these guys and trying to score tonight? Can't a girl just drink her brutal in piece?

Him: girl please, you are not my type. Asambe

Me: I'm not even offended by that. Let me tell the others that we are leaving

He looks over at our table and they are all drinking up a storm and having a good time

Him: doesn't look like they will miss us

I finish the bottle I was drinking then we leave. Khanye drives a golf 7 Gti, its white in colour and screams fuck boy. A total opposite of his personality, I'd like to believe.

Him: where do you want to go?

Me: McDonald's and wherever else you have in mind

Him: do you trust me?

Me: are you a man?

Him: you know I am

Me: then no I don't trust you

Him: well tonight you are going to have to

He drives to McDonald's and gets us food, drinks and ice cream then drives off somewhere. I have been in this city for less than 24hrs and I'm already wondering off to places I don't know

Him: don't look so scared

Me: at least tell me where you are taking me

Him: Star, I'm not going to hurt you. I promise you. Just trust me. I'm one of the good ones

I want to trust him but experience has taught me otherwise. Men are all the same, they all aim to use and abuse then toss you aside. As much as I try to relax, I just can't. My heart is beating fast and my palms are sweating. I say a silent prayer as he drives up a hill then the car comes to a stop. It is dark but there are a few cars parked here too

Him: we are here. Come

He takes the paper bags then gets out the car. The one thing that catches my eye as I step out of the car is the view. It looks amazing. I feel as if I'm on top of the world. The

whole city is visible from where we are and what a spectacular view it is. He picks me up and puts me on top of the bonnet then jumps up to sit next to me

Me: this is beautiful

Him: I know, right. You can see the whole city from here

Me: what is this place?

Him: Navel Hill

Me: it's beautiful.

He takes the food out, I use my phone as a torch and we eat in silence just enjoying the atmosphere and the view. I can spend all my days here. Just me and this amazing view

Him: so what's your story?

Me: I don't have one

Him: everyone has a story

Me: ok then what's your story?

Him: my story is that you and I will be great friends. Best friends actually. My mother will love you, my little brother will probably have the biggest crush on you and every girl I date will probably hate you

Me: sounds like something out of a movie

Him: life is a movie though, we are the directors

Khanye talks a lot but I enjoy listening to him. It means I don't have to talk about myself. He tells me about his upbringing, he was raised by his mother mostly and his dad was partially in his life. He has a little brother, Zubenathi from his dad and 2 sisters, Zinathi and Ziyanda from his mom. We spend an hour chilling on the hill then we leave. I haven't checked my phone since we left the club and I'm not missing it

Him: you still don't want to tell me your story?

Me: I need to find a job because I don't intend on going home until I graduate. That's all I'm going to tell you

Him: hmmm we'll figure something out

Me: we?

Him: yeah we. Do you have a problem with that?

He takes his eyes off the road and looks at me. It's dark but I don't miss the smirk on his face. This idiot

Me: no problem sir

Him: good girl. Let's get you to bed.

Me: Let's?

Him: please get your mind out of the gutter. I don't want you. Not like that anyway

Me: hmmm

By the time we get back to the commune, it's just after 3am and the house is quiet. Clearly the people are still out having fun. I don't even have FOMO about that. I'm tired

Him: want me to tuck you in?

I laugh. It's weird that I don't have that fear around him. I just met him and he has created a comfortable space for me in his presence. I'm not saying I trust him but I'm not saying I fear what he might do to me. He is just a safe space for now

Me: goodnight

Him: goodnight. I'm glad you moved in here, Star. It's going to be good to have someone as real as you staying here

Me: I think you are as real as they come.

I walk away and into my room. After changing I find my phone in my side bag and I notice I have a few missed calls from Blake and a text

"I tried calling you but you didn't answer. I hope you are good and text me when you get this just so I know you are ok"

I change into my pyjamas then text him back. I know he is probably sleeping now so he will see this in the morning

"Your sister took me clubbing and I just got back. I'm alive and safe. Thanks for checking on me B, I really appreciate it"

I press send, put my head under the pillow and try to gather my sleep.

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Chapter 3

My cheek burns as I feel his hand on it. This is the third slap he gives me and I cry loudly.

Me: please stop. I'm begging you

Him: open your mouth sfebe. Khamisa mahn

His hand presses hard against my cheeks, almost crushing my jaw as he forces me to open my mouth. I'm on my knees and I can see a glimpse of my mother who is passed out on the couch. She brought this man into our home and now he is my problem. I don't know what arrangement they had but I'm the one that's forced to pay the price. This woman hates me and she is not my mother. A mother is supposed to protect her child not sell her to drunkards. The man is angry because I won't cooperate so he punches me and my nose bleeds.

Me: mama! Mama help me! Mama!

As I'm screaming for my mother to help me, she doesn't even flinch from the couch. I wish she was dead, maybe only then I'll find peace. Maybe then I'll find happiness and live a normal life but I know she is alive and she hears me. The man shoves his manhood into my mouth while I scream for my mother to help me. He holds my braids tightly and he thrusts in and out of my mouth making me gag every time

Him: don't even think about biting me or else I will kill you

The smell of sweat, alcohol and a different stench I don't recognize makes me gag even more. I can't even breathe and he doesn't care. He moans and groans loudly while he steals more of my soul. I vomit the moments his sperms fill my mouth. The taste is horrible

Him: sis man. You really know how to ruin a moment

I don't respond, instead I curl up next to my vomit and weep. How much more of this must I endure before it stops? Who did I hurt in my past life for me to go through this? I can't take it anymore and maybe the only solution I have is death. Maybe only then I will be free from all this pain

I wake up from the nightmare and I'm drenched with sweat. The nightmares don't stop even when I've tried to run away from the situation, they follow me. I check the time and

its 7am. I get out of bed and change my sheets because the nightmares always end with me wetting the bed. After taking the sheets off, I leave the mattress to dry. I make sure to put it up so it gets enough sunlight

Khanye: look who is an early bird

I didn't hear him come in. We are in the laundry room, I'm washing my sheets and when he sees what's going on, he looks at me with a confused look

Him: didn't you arrive yesterday? How come you are washing sheets already

Me: mind your own business

Him: ouch someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed

Me: whatever dude

I walk out leaving him in there. He is right about something though, my mood is off today so he must keep his distance from me. It doesn't look like Amy and the others are back so I call her

Amy: where are you?

Me: I should be asking you that. Where did you sleep?

Her: at Sihle's place. We looked for you, tried calling you but we couldn't find you. Are you safe?

Me: yeah I'm at the commune. I left with Zukhanye

Her: hmmm I want all the details when I get back. I love you

Me: nothing happened and I love you too. Come back already

Zukhanye knocks on my already open door then walks in. I'm sitting on the floor journaling about the nightmare I had last night and my first night club experience. Considering that I will one day read this to Blake, I omit the part about Zukhanye and Naval Hill.

Khanye takes one look at the bed situation but doesn't say anything. I appreciate his silence because this is embarrassing. I'm 17 years old and I still wet my bed.

Khanye: you owe me an apology. You didn't have to be so rude to me earlier. I didn't do anything to you and I didn't deserve that from you

I sigh. He is right. I lashed out at him for no reason. He was just at the wrong place at the wrong time

Me: I'm sorry

Him: are you going to tell me what's going on?

I shake my head

Me: I'm not ready to talk about it
Him: when you are ready just know that I'm here
Me: thank you

He smiles. I'm still trying to figure him out because he seems too good to be true. Which guy just wants to be friends with a girl? Unless he is gay. Maybe Zukhanye is gay but there is nothing feminine about him

Him: have you showered?
Me: no and I haven't eaten either
Him: we will grab something to eat on the way. Take a quick shower
Me: you need to stop trying to kidnap me

He laughs, shakes his head and walks out. I was hoping to spend the day relaxing before classes start tomorrow but I guess now I have plans. After showering I feel as good as new, totally refreshed. It's blazing hot today so I put on denim paper bag shorts and a white tank top. I slide on my sandals, grab my side bag which I stuff with my phone and my purse.

Me: let's go
Khanye: give me a sec, I'm still trying to find my shades
Me: you'll find me outside

The crew from last night walks in as I'm walking out. They all look like hell and I laugh at them

Me: you guys just don't know when to stop
Lisa: you missed out on an amazing house party
Amy: where are you off to?

I shrug my shoulders as Khanye walks out the door. The immature bunch starts making silly noises

Khanye how old are you people?
Avuyile: where there is smoke there is fine
Khanye: do you see smoke?
Thingo: I see Star looking smoking hot
Khanye: go sleep, nidakiwe. Nonke. Let's go Star
Me: bye drunkards

They continue making their silly little noises until we are out of sight. He refuses to tell me where we are going so I stop asking. I connect my phone to the car's Bluetooth and

play Ed Sheeran. We both hum along to the songs and that's the only sound in the car. Whenever I'm with Khanye, I feel at peace. Last night was the start of it and its happening again right now

Me: are you gay?

Him: excuse me?

Me: gay?

Him: why the fuck would you think I'm gay?

Me: well...

He takes his eyes off the road for a second to give me a frowned look then focuses on the road again. The roads are busier today than they were last night which makes sense because its day time now

Him: well what?

Me: you know

Him: I actually don't hey

Me: you opted for best friends as opposed to something else

Him: so just because I didn't make moves to fuck you, you think I'm gay? I'm offended hey

Me: what do you want me to think?

Him: I don't know, maybe that I genuinely want to be friends with you and that has nothing to do with my sexuality. Geez woman

He huffs and puffs while murmuring things to himself. He must get over it, I was just asking. I busy myself with my phone until the car comes to a stop. My eyes lift from my phone and I read the sign, "Yomelela safe and clean"

Me: what is this place?

Him: let's go so we can find out

We find a lady typing behind her laptop. Working on a Sunday is another level of dedication.

Khanya: good morning ma'am, we are looking for Mrs Thomas

"I'm Mrs Thomas"

I can't help but notice her beautiful skin and her gorgeous hair. I can only dream of skin that smooth. My acne drives me crazy especially when it's that time of the month. You'd swear it's showing off.

She is dark in complexion with beautiful big eyes. She is a full figured woman with great style judging by how she is dressed and the decor of these offices

Khanye: I'm Zukhanye Zikhali and this is my friend Nkanyezi Myeni. Avuyile Cele referred us to you

Clueless is what I am right now so I just let him do the talking. I'm still confused as to why I'm here

Mrs Thomas: oh yes, Avuyile did tell me his friends would be coming in. Please take a seat

We sit down and she tells us how she knows Avuyile and how she started her company. She got married and her and her husband moved here. She opened another branch of her company and here we are

Khanye: Mrs Thomas, my friend needs a job. She is fresh out of high school so she doesn't have qualifications or experience

Mrs Thomas: this is the friend?

Khanye: yes ma'am

When did I become the friend that needs a job? Yes, I do need a job but imagine being taken to a surprise job interview. I'm going to kill this guy. He is so dead

Mrs Thomas: alright. Please excuse us while we talk

Khanye looks at me for a few seconds before getting up and walking out. I did say I was going to kill him right? My heart is now pounding. Had I known this is what was going to happen, I would have prepared myself but now I'm a fish out of water

Mrs Thomas: Nkanyezi, right?

I nod. She smiles and tells me to relax. I don't think I know how to but I don't tell her that

Her: tell me about yourself

Me: I'm 18years old and tomorrow I start my first year studying towards a BEd degree. I'm from a small town in Kzn and I was raised by a single mother. I want to be a teacher because I want to help shape the young minds of the future generations. I want encourage every child I come across to strive to beat the odds. I want to contribute to a generation that follows their dreams and knows that their past is not an indication of their future

She smiles. I wasn't even trying to impress her, I just spoke the truth. I want to be the kind of teacher I wish I had. The kind that goes the extra mile and takes it beyond the job

Her: you sound like an intelligent young lady. You must focus on school and forget the boys. They will hold you back

Me: he really is just my friend

It wasn't difficult to figure out that she was talking about Khanye

Her: he cares about you

Me: I don't know why though

Her: maybe he sees in you the person you will become. Friends like that are important to hold on to and to appreciate. They don't come around often

Me: noted

Her: the only job I can offer is the cleaning services. I run an agencies for cleaners and security guards hence the name of the company. You won't always clean the same house or building. There is a rotation. Because of your school schedule, I'll start you off with houses. We will start you off with Monday and Thursday. How does that sound?

Me: it sounds perfect. Thank you Mrs Thomas. I really appreciate the opportunity. I won't let you down, I promise

I wanted to jump up and down while shouting to the heavens. Someone is really looking out for me because wow. A job in just 24hrs of being in this place.

Her: you will have to come in on Tuesday to sign your contract and you can start next week Monday

Me: then you so much

My smile was reaching my ears as I get in the car. I don't think I still want to kill him. Not after he has done something like this for me. If anything, I should kiss him but I think a hug will be just fine

Me: thank you. I don't know what else to say

He smiles as he starts the engine of his car and drives out

Khanye: thank you is enough. Just promise me one thing

Me: anything

Him: don't lose focus on your goals. Don't let this job take away from your time to study

Me: it won't. I promise.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 4

Juggling work and school was no joke but I gave it my all. School was more demanding than work so I was on campus on most days until the library closes then Khanye would pick me up. On the days I'd be working on, I would take a taxi to wherever I'm assigned, send Khanye my location and he would fetch me from work to school. At first I wasn't okay with him being my ride all over the place but the more I complained, the more he reminded me that every cent counts and he wants to help me.

Amy: I never see you these days. I miss you

Me: our classes clash. When I'm on campus, you are at the house and vice versa

Her: well it sucks and I don't like it. We should go out this weekend. You are not working, right?

I shake my head. It's been 2 months since the semester started and we really haven't spent any time together. We are both to blame for that. I work and she polices Sihle. Sihle will always be a man whore and there is nothing Amy can do to change that. She has already caught him cheating

Me: babe when are you breaking up with Sihle?

Her: I don't want to talk about. I'm not talking to him now anyway

Me: but we both know you will go back to him. You need to break up with that guy Amy. Deep down you know that Sihle is trash

Her: I can't break up with him Star, I love him and what would our mothers say if I broke up with him?

Me: don't break up with him ke but tell your mothers that he is cheating. Let's see what they will say about that

I've always kept quiet about their relationship because as much as Amy is my best friend, her relationship has fokol to do with me. She looks at me with tears in her eyes, this is the first time I've seen her cry over Sihle. She always just soldiers on

Me: come here

She cries in my arms until she gets hiccups. I'm trying my best to comfort her and after what feels like forever, she calms down. She uses her sleeve to wipe her tears and her snot

Her: I don't think I know how to date anyone apart from Sihle

Me: you will learn. Just be open to the suggestion, it doesn't have to be now. Take time to heal

She nods. Her face is puffy and red but she smiles through all of that

Her: I love you Star

Me: I love you too. I have to get to campus but this weekend we are painting the town red. I promise

Her: just me and you?

Me: yep. Just us

I decide to walk to campus, Khanye isn't around anyway. I think he had an early class. Easter holidays are in 3 weeks and I can't wait. I need to spend one full day just sleeping because wow, university is not a joke. Kuyanyiwa one way. I have my earphones in my ears as I'm walking, listening to my Rihanna playlist. Someone taps me on my shoulder and I literally scream before turning around

Kwenzon: yho why do you have to scream as if I'm dragging you into the bush or some shit like that?

Me: what the fuck dude?! You scared me, that's why I screamed. Did you think you'd sneak up on me and I'll start singing nursery rhymes and jump rope?

This guy has his way of annoying me. My problem is that he thinks he is Sihle lite version whereas he is just irritating. Suddenly he is walking with me to campus

Him: what's up with you?

Me: I'm trying to get some alone time before class. What's up with you?

Him: I want to get to know you

Me: no. Now bye

Him: we are literally walking towards the same direction so you can't bye Felicia me

Yeses this guy. What choice do I have but to grin and bear him until we get to campus. I switch off the song that was playing and put my earphones in my bag

Him: thank you. So you went to school with my cousin?

Me: yes and I'm best friends with his girlfriend.

Him: which one?

The look on my face is of utter shock and confusion. What does he mean, which one? As far as I know when we got here, Sihle had one girlfriend being Amy

Me: askies?

Him: let me tell you something about my cousin. He is my cousin because his dad and my mom are cousins. He would visit us during the holidays and he had a girlfriend close to our home, he had another one close to his grandparents' house and another one at

the academy he played rugby in during holidays. As far as I know, my cousin doesn't have a serious girlfriend

Me: your cousin is a dick and he will die of aids

He laughs. What is so funny? Kwenzo just snitched on his cousin to his cousin's girlfriend's best friend. If I didn't know any better I'd think this is Sihle's way of getting rid of Amy

Him: enough about Sihle. What time do your classes end?

Me: why?

Him: I'd like us to have ice cream or milkshakes

Me: why?

Him: you seem like a cool chick and I'd like to get to know you

Me: I have a boyfriend

Him: Sihle already told me you don't

Me: I thought we are not talking about that agent of Satan anymore

I look at him and he smiles. He isn't cute, he is just a mediocre looking guy that fails at small talk and lacks game. As much as I have zero experience with flirting and asking out girls, I've watched the movies and this guy is whack

Him: so what time?

Me: I'm not doing this with you Kwenzo

Him: just one ice cream date. I promise if you don't have fun, I'll leave you alone

My phone rings before I can reject this date. I smile when I see Blake's number on the screen

Me: hey B

Blake: hey Star, can you talk?

Me: yes. I'm walking to campus. What's up?

Him: I'm coming that side this weekend. I'm think of taking you guys out so don't make plans

I literally scream out loud. This is going to be amazing. It's been 2 months since we last saw Blake so I'm super excited

Me: are you serious?

He laughs. This better not be a joke or I'll die

Him: I'm dead serious. I miss you guys plus you've deserted us so I have to come to you now

Me: you know my story dude. Oh my gosh I can't wait to see you

Him: get to class. We'll text later

Me: bye

Nothing can ruin my day today. Not even this guy I'm walking with. I can't believe that I'm going to see Blake in 2 days. The excitement is not specifically for Blake but for the mere fact that I'm going to see someone from back home. By the time we get to campus, Kwenzo has accepted that I'm not doing ice cream dates with him ever. It's Friday and Amy and I are having our date night. We both know it will end with us drunk but alcohol is our friend. It loves us. I get dressed in black skinny jeans, a black loose top and a biker jacket and black sneakers. I like to be comfortable when I know I'll be getting drunk plus it's easier to run in sneakers should the need arise. Khanye walks in as I'm tying my hair

Khanye: you look nice. Where are you off to?

He is in sweatpants and a t-shirt with his hands in his pockets. I've started noticing that Khanye actually looks good when he puts in the effort and he looks average on relaxed days.

Me: date night with Amy

Him: that's weird

I look at him on the mirror now that he is sitting on my bed paging my textbooks for no reason

Me: she is going through something so I'm being a good friend. We haven't hung out in a while

Him: where are you going and how are you getting there?

Me: waterfront and we will call a cab

Him: I'll take you

I finish tying my hair, spray my perfume before stuffing my side bag with my phone, a pad, wipes and my purse. As much as I appreciate everything Khanye does for me, I don't want to take advantage of him. He also needs to be able to do his own thing without having to worry about me

Me: thank you but we will be fine. I promise

Him: you know I don't mind, right?

Me: yep and I love you for that but really, we are good.

Him: alright then. Have a good night, enjoy. Love you

Just as he walks out, Amy walks in dressed in a fuck me dress. She looks good, I won't

lie and this dress will definitely be scoring us free drinks

Me: call the cab

Amy: I'm on it. How do I look?

Me: sexy and single. Drinks are on you and that dress tonight

Her: literally?

I laugh

Me: you are disgusting

After a few minutes the cab arrives and we leave. Blake is arriving in the morning and as much as he is cool, he would never let his little sister go out dressed like this.

Amy: are you fucking Khanye?

Me: wow girl. No I'm not fucking anyone. You know how I feel about all that

Her: I'm going to say this because I love you

Me: don't say it

Her: you can't let your past hold you back. Not all men are bad. Not all men what to hurt you and you can't go through life hating all men

Me: I don't hate them. I'll date when the right guy comes around

I'm lying. Dating is the furthest thing from my mind. I want to experience it though. I want to be naive and be stupidly in love. I want to experience what its like to be loved and to give someone your heart to break. It will happen though. When we get to Waterfront, we head to Braza for supper and sundowners

Me: has he called?

Her: I blocked him. I told mom that I'm done with Sihle and as much as she wasn't thrilled about it, she supports me

Me: I support you too. You deserve better

Her: so do you Star. You need to open up

Me: I will

The food at this place is shit expensive but man it's amazing. I'm definitely going to be broke for the rest of the month after this but I don't regret it. I'll make more money at month end. We leave Braza around 9pm and take a cab to 2nd Avenue. I've already experienced Cubana and now we want Capello's. Again, we are living beyond our means but what the heck. It's only for tonight. Now we get drunk. Amy orders tequila shots for us and we go in. I'm letting lose. It's been a draining couple of weeks.

Amy: Sihle just walked in

Me: ignore him. We are not here with him

Her: ok. I don't think he has seen us

Me: it doesn't matter. Ignore him

After the shots, we order G&T and we hit the dance floor. The DJ drops Starring and we go crazy. We both can't dance but we don't care. We love this song. I can feel that I'm tipsy now and somehow my brain wants me to drink more and I do

"I didn't know that you party like this"

I turn around and my eyes land on Kwenzo. He is wearing shades indoors, at night. He looks ridiculous and kinda cute

Me: go away

Him: your friend is over there with her tongue down my cousin's throat

I knew that would happen the moment Sihle asked to speak to her. Not my business. I'm here to have fun not play therapist

Me: okay

I continue drinking my G&T and he is drinking a whiskey I think. It's in a glass and it's brown.

Him: you look nice

Me: stop it

Him: why do you have to be so aggressive?

Me: why do you have to be so pushy?

Him: because I like you but you keep pushing me away as if I've done some fucked up shit

I take his shades off and he rubs his eyes. What happened next confused the shit out of me yet I allowed it. His hand is on my face and I see his face coming closer while mine is magnetically being forced towards his. He kisses me, his tongue invades my mouth and mine dances with his. I can feel his other hand on my waist as he pulls me closer without breaking the kiss. The kiss feels good, I won't lie. His lips are soft and the taste bitter from the brown liquid in his glass. We kiss for a while until I pull back.

Me: wow

Him: wow yourself. That's probably the best kiss I've ever had

Me: liar

Him: true story. I want to kiss you again but not here

Me: where?

Him: let's go

I follow him towards the door, I can't see Amy or Sihle anywhere so when we get outside, I stop and call her. I'm surprised that she answers

Amy: hey babe. Are you safe?

Me: where are you?

Her: I'm in the car talking to Sihle

Me: seriously Amy?

Her: we are just talking

Me: I'm leaving. You'll find me at the commune

Her: please don't be mad

Me: I'm not mad. I'm disappointed but it's your life Amy. I'll see you

I hang up and shove my phone back into my side bag. I'm even over making out with Kwenzon. It was a drunken moment that shall never be repeated again

Me: I need to go

Kwenzon: go? Go where?

Me: to where I live. Amy is clearly leaving with Sihle

Him: oh can I have your number?

I give it to him then I text Khanye. Kwenzon waits with me until Khanye arrives.

Khanye: where is Amy?

Me: take a wild guess

Him: I knew that was going to happen. You should have also seen it coming. She won't leave that guy. She is waiting for him to leave her

I recline the seat and close my eyes. The plan is not to sleep but just rest my eyes

Me: how come you don't have a girlfriend?

Him: no one has caught my attention yet

Me: no one is good enough for you?

Him: I don't look down on people. I'm not looking for a girlfriend yet. When I want one, I'll find one

Me: I made out with that guy?

Him: you made out with the guy we consider annoying?

I nod. Eyes are still closed. I know he is judging me but I don't care. I had fun anyway.

Him: you know he won't leave you alone now

Me: yep. I gave him my number

Him: wow who are you and what have you done with the Star that I know

Me: I'm living my life like its golden. Don't you have that song?

He laughs. I must have fallen asleep because the next time I open my eyes, Khanye is carrying me through the door

Me: I want to sleep with you

Him: Star

Me: please. Just hold me and maybe the nightmares won't come

Him: I'm not going to touch you.

Me: just hold me

I took my clothes off in front of him and wore his boxers and his t-shirt. He gave me painkillers to take then he tucked me in bed and got in next to me. I feel his arm around me as I drift off to sleep. Being with Khanye always gives me peace. There is just a calming aura around him

A lot like friendship

Chapter 5

When I woke up the next day Khanye wasn't next to me and it took a few seconds for me to remember how I ended up on his bed. I quickly checked if I had wet the bed and luckily I was dry. That would have been really embarrassing. As much as he is my friend and probably the only man I trust here, we are just not at the level of me letting him in on my past. I got out of bed and as I was making his bed, he walked in

Khanye: the queen of snoring is up

I laugh as I throw the pillow at him. He catches it and throws it back

Me: shut up, I was drunk

Him: slept well? You were passed out, barely moved. I thought you died

Me: the drama. I slept well. Your bed is quite comfy

Him: wait until I start having sex on it. Kophela amaSprings in one weekend

After making the bed, I took a shower and as I was getting dressed, my phone rang with Blake's name on the screen

Me: are you here yet?

He laughs and I'm already smiling ear to ear. I can't hide my excitement about his visit

Blake: send me your location

Me: ok I'll do that now. I don't think your sister is here yet

Him: she is at the boyfriend's place. She said she will join us later

Me: awesome. Let me send you that location and I'll see you soon

After hanging up, I send him the location via WhatsApp and start searching for an outfit. Autumn is such a shady season, all gloomy and sad. I take out my checked dress with thin straps and pair it with a short sleeved white body suit. I put on my sandals then comb my hair. This hair is a mess and I need to sort it out as in yesterday. Combing and tying a bun every day is draining. When Blake texts that he is outside, I quickly grab my denim jacket, my bag and my phone and rush out. I pass Khanye in the kitchen and he stops me

Khanye: I'm making breakfast, where are you rushing to?

Me: I have to rain check. Amy's brother is here for the weekend and he is taking us out for breakfast

Him: oh ok. I'll see you later than

Me: later

I am honestly just loving Blake's haircut, this time around he even added a line. He is standing next to his car in ink jeans, navy and white striped Henley t-shirt and a black biker jacket matching his black sneakers. I throw my arms around him before he can say anything

Blake: someone missed me

Me: you have no idea. I'm so happy you are here

Him: you look good. Seems like this place is treating you well

Me: it's better than home, that's for sure

We get in the car and I immediately connect my phone to the Bluetooth the grab the can of red bull I spot in the cup holder

Him: don't play you girly music please and the red bull is for you

Me: I won't and thanks

I'm in the mood for cool music so I play Image Dragon. This is his type of music so I know I won't have any complaints.

Him: waterfront or Mimosa?

Me: Mimosa. I want a Euro cafe breakfast

I can't afford Euro cafe on an everyday but today I'm being taken out so watch me live my best life. There is something weird about the people in this area. The looks they are giving us are making me cringe. It's as if they are shocked or disappointed that a white guy is with a black girl. After so many years post-apartheid, there are still people who possess a racist mentality. People will never cease to shock me.

The waitress comes to take our orders, she is also looking all surprised by us

Waitress: good morning, my name is Nthabiseng and I'll be your waitress. May I take your order?

Me: I'll have an espresso

Blake: I'll have a cappuccino

She leaves us with the menus and walks away.

Blake: is it just me or are people staring at us

Me: they are definitely staring. Don't mind them. I've already filtered them out

Him: oh. So how are you? How's school and everything?

Me: school is hectic, so much work and not enough time in a week but I'm grinding. A lot of late nights but I know it will be worth it. I got a job.

The last part doesn't seem to sit well with him but he is privileged so he wouldn't understand my struggles

Him: studying and working? Is that a good idea?

Me: I don't have a choice. I need money

Him: you always have a choice Star and you don't need to be worrying about money now. You need to enjoy university like everyone else

Me: but I'm not like everyone else. Let's not kid ourselves. I don't have parents I can call when I run out of things mid-month. I don't have anyone calling me to wish me luck for tests and asking me how I wrote. I'm alone in this and I have to look out for myself.

The waitress brings our drinks then takes our orders and walks away. My phone vibrates indicating an incoming WhatsApp text. I open it because the person I'm sitting with has suddenly gone mute. It's a picture of the breakfast Khanye was making. I smile to myself and text him back to save me some. It does look yummy. When I put my phone down, Blake is staring at me

Me: what?

Him: you are so beautiful and so stubborn

Me: you call it stubborn, I call it independent

Him: so you are going to ignore that I just said you are beautiful

Me: thank you I guess

He chuckles and I just laugh. What does he want me to say? I know I'm not bad looking but to say I'm beautiful is pushing it too far. I have seen the girls he dates, your America's next top model type of girls and never have I ever seen him with a black girl.

Him: there is something I need to tell you

Me: what's up, B? You are suddenly sounding so serious

Him: that's because I am serious. I like you Star

My laugh has such bad timing because here I am bursting into laughter. Haibo. When did this all start happening? Blake knows me, he knows my past, my situation at home. He knows I've been raped multiple times. He knows about the child I lost when I was still a child myself. He is my best friend's brother. He shouldn't be liking me. It makes no sense

Him: I'm serious Star

Me: you don't like me Blake, not like that. You are just pitying me right now

Him: pitying you? What's so hard to believe about me having actual feelings for you?

Me: maybe because not so long ago, you said you saw me like a little sister. Maybe because I know you don't date black girls and maybe because you know my pain and that I don't date. So which one is it?

My eyes are glued on him as I take a sip of my coffee. The way I see it, Blake and I are fine as friends or whatever this is but for him to be in love with me is too farfetched. I don't buy it

Him: I said I see you as a little sister because I didn't want to complicate things between us

Me: and now you do?

Him: Star, I'm just telling you how I feel. I don't understand why you are fighting me on it

My emotions are never in sync with my brain. There is absolutely no reason for me to be crying right now but tears are streaming down my cheeks. I try to wipe them but it's as if I'm playing games.

Me: excuse me

I get up and rush towards the bathrooms. I need a moment because this is overwhelming for me. It might not seem like a big deal to anyone else but I'm the girl that everyone has always looked passed. I'm the girl that men have taken from, used and abused so I don't know how to receive love and affection. Blake is a great guy but what am I? What would a girl like me have to offer a guy like Blake?

I get into the bathroom stall and call Khanye. I don't know why I call him but it's him I need right now

Khanye: Star

The moment I try to say something, I just cry. I want to stop crying but I can't seem to get Blake's words out of my mind

Khanye: Star, listen to me. Send me your location and I'll come to you

I nod as if he can see me then I text him that I'm in the bathrooms at the mall. There is also a text from Blake asking me if I'm ok. I text him that I'm not coming up and that he should get takeaways. I expect him to be mad at me but he texts back:

"I'm worried about you. I can't just leave you here not knowing how you will get home. I'm sorry for messing up our breakfast. If I knew this was how you'd react then I would have continued to keep my feelings to myself. I really didn't mean to make you cry"

That text on its own makes me cry even more. I'm such a mess right now. I respond telling him that a friend of mine is fetching me and that I just need some time to take it all in. I tell him I'll see him later when Amy is around.

It doesn't take long before I hear commotion in the bathroom then I hear Khanye's voice

Khanye: Star. Star are you in here?

Women are shouting at him to get out and he doesn't seem to be bothered by them

Khanye: Nkanyezi!

I slowly open the door and walk out. He frowns when he sees me then smiles

Him: awusemubi. What happened?

Me: voetsek. Asambe

Him: walk out first. I don't want people thinking we were having sex in here

Me: it's the women's bathroom, get out first. You are the intruder here

After he walks out, I count to 20 then walk out as well. I can't imagine how my face must look right now but it's the least of my worries. When we get in the car, he gives me a small tub of Oreo ice cream and a plastic spoon

Him: don't mess up my car

Me: thank you. Let's go to Naval hill

Him: you know that's my spot not yours, right? Don't hijack my spot

Me: sharing is caring nje

We listen to the radio as we drive there. I'm hungry so I'm devouring this ice cream like crazy. When we get to Naval hill, there are only 2 cars there. We get out and hop on the hood of the car. The view isn't as spectacular as it is at night. Khanye takes the ice cream from me.

Me: hey, that's mine

Him: sharing is caring. So what's going on? Why did you abandon your date and went to cry in the bathroom?

I sigh. He is probably going to think I'm being dramatic because he is a man and they take nothing seriously

Me: he said he has feelings for me

Him: Amy's brother has feelings for you?

I nod. It still makes no sense to me

Him: so why were you crying? I mean you didn't cry when that Kwenzo guy said he likes you

Me: with Blake it's different. Kwenzo knows nothing about me and Blake knows everything about me

Him: you are confusing me. If Blake knows you then that means his feelings for you are genuine

Khanye doesn't understand because he doesn't know the whole story of me and my past. Now that we are here maybe I should tell him. I can't hold him captive in our friendship

Me: I was raped. Multiple times. So many times I've actually lost count. That's why I don't want to go home ever again. Blake knows all of that so why would he have feelings for me when he knows my past

He doesn't say anything for a while. He is just staring into space and I get lost in my own world for the duration of that silence. When I take the ice cream from him, he still remains silent. We sat in silence for close to 10 mins before he spoke

Him: I'm sorry

Me: don't do that. Don't pity me

Him: I'm not pitying. I'm genuinely sorry. I'm sorry that I belong to the gender that has violated you. I'm sorry that as much as I'd love for you to trust me, people who tick the same gender box as I have taken that option away from you.

He stops and looks at me. His eyes are red and teary.

Him: you are a strong woman Star. I don't pity you, I admire you. You deserve to be loved but no one should force anything on you. Maybe Blake has genuine feelings for you and if you are feeling him then you should give him a chance. You can't be closed off to dating for the rest of your life. No man deserves to have that kind of power over you

He moves closer then wraps his arms around me. I needed to hear that. I didn't realise that I had given those men power over me and now I need to take my power back. They don't own me anymore.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 6

Sometimes someone says something to you and you realize that those were the words you needed to set yourself free. That's how I felt after speaking to Khanye. The talk forced me to confront myself about how I feel about Blake. There are so many things to consider though, I have school, my job and he lives in another city. How would that even work? I'm honestly setting myself up for heartbreak here and I can feel it.

When we get to the house, I take a much needed nap. I have a headache probably because I haven't eaten and I've been crying.

Amy: wakey wakey starlight

Me: go away

I still have my eyes closed but I know it's her. She shakes me until I open my eyes.

Me: what do you want?

Her: why are you sleeping during the day? I brought pizza and wine. Blake says we are no longer going out so we will chill here

Me: music to my ears. I'm still recovering from last night

She sits on my bed while I sit up then open the box of pizza. It smells heavenly. I go for my first slice and moan in satisfaction

Her: that good?

Me: amazing

Her: so speaking of last night, what happened between you and Kwenzo?

Me: arg don't remind me. It was all in the name of fun and I don't want to talk about that. What we should be talking about is you and how you went back to Sihle

She sighs. I don't get it and I doubt I ever will. Is this how love at our age is supposed to be? Guys cheat and we keep forgiving them? At what point of a relationship do we lose ourselves to the guy? What about how we feel?

Her: Sihle is my soulmate Star. We are meant to be together

Me: wow. Ok I'm staying out of this. I need to freshen up so we can join the others

I'm already on my fourth slice and when I finish it, I go to take a shower and change into leggings and a long length tshirt. The lounge is packed, there are about 10 of us. I know everyone except this one girl. I think she came with Sihle and them. We spend the night drinking and playing board games. There are pizza boxes everywhere and lots of boxed wine in the fridge. As the night goes on, I learn that the girl's name is Luyanda and she actually did come with aboSihle. Kwenzo is all over her like a bad rash and I'm happy about that. I don't need him coming for me. At least not tonight

Blake: are you okay?

I nod. He is standing so close to me, I can feel his breath on my neck. I'm trying hard to not overthink him being here and what he said earlier because I know I will cry

Him: can we talk?

Me: ok. We can go to my room

He follows me through the passage and when we get to my room, I throw myself on the bed and he sits on the floor. That's just so weird but I don't say anything. I'm now laying on my stomach facing his direction

Him: I'm sorry I made you cry

Me: it was you actually. I just got overwhelmed

Him: ok I promise never to overwhelm you again

I get off the bed and sit next to him. He looks so handsome with his hazel brown eyes and long lashes. His lips are a little plump

Me: I think I like you too

He looks at me with one eyebrow raised and a slight smirk

Him: should I start crying too?

I hit his chest while laughing. How can such an awesome guy like me?

Me: shut up ok. You are not overwhelmed

Him: and how do you know that?

Me: I can see it

Him: come here

He is pointing at the space between his legs. When I try to sit with my back against him, he makes me turn around and my legs go over his. We are so close together, I can literally smell him. He smells like old spice.

Him: I want you to be my girlfriend Star?

Me: and what about the distance?

Him: we'll figure it out.

Me: ok

Him: if I kiss you now, will you start crying again?

He is never going to let go of this crying thing but I know he is just teasing me about. The kiss between us starts off slowly, his lips are soft and cold. He is kissing me as if he is afraid I'm going to break. It feels so good and the butterflies fluttering in my stomach are doing the most. I've pulled myself closer to him, my arms are around his neck and

his one hand is on my cheek and the other is on my waist. This feels unreal and when we eventually pull out of the kiss, he places a long kiss on my forehead.

Him: I've been wanting to kiss you like that for years

Me: really?

He nods while I blush. The moment a title is put in place, something shifts. At this moment I'm not seeing Blake the way I saw him this morning. This is now Blake, my boyfriend not Amy's brother.

Me: I'm scared

Him: I'm not going to rush you into anything. I promise. We'll take this at a slow pace. Just me and you

Me: what if you change your mind about me? What if you realize that I'm not good enough for you? What if...

Him: what if we make each other happy? What if we make this work above all odds? What if you change your mind about me? We can't dwell on the what ifs and can we not doom our relationship when it just started? I'm sure of my feelings for you

I don't respond, I'm still just taking it all in. He is right about one thing, we shouldn't doom our relationship when we just started it.

Me: we should join the others

Him: can I spend the night? I'll sleep on the couch

Me: we can share my bed. We won't do anything though

Him: alright baby

When we get back to the lounge, they are playing 30 secs which is funny because Amy sucks at this game and she is a sore loser

Amy: I don't want to be on Avuyile's team anymore. He doesn't know how to give clues

Avuyile: no you just suck at this game

Amy: no I don't

Me: babe you suck at this game. I've played 30 secs with you for years and it always leads this this

We restart the game, pick different teammates and I end up on the same team as Khanye and Sihle. Blake ends up on Amy's team

Blake: I'm already waving the white flag here as a sign of defeat

Amy: my own brother has no faith in me. It's always your own family that betrays you

We all end up laughing at her drama. They opt to go last so my team goes first. Khanye is describing and Sihle and I are answering. We get everything on the card right. Sihle and I high five

Sihle: now that's what I'm talking about

Amy: let's switch teams Star

Sihle: nah babe you are fine where you are. I love you but 30 seconds isn't your strongest point

We play for hours and around 2am I'm already yawning. I'm tired and drunk

Khanye: you look exhausted buddy

Me: I'm a zombie right now. I think I'll head to bed

Khanye: let's get you to bed

Blake: don't worry mate, I've got it

Khanye is already on his feet when Blake gets on his feet as well. Me, the person who is tired as sleepy is still seated. I'm not understanding what's happening right now but I'm going to let it play out. I'm not jumping to anyone's rescue.

Khanye: I'm not worried about anything, mate. Star is my friend and I'm walking her to her room

Blake: Star is my girlfriend and I'll walk her to her room

Khanye turns to look at me. We haven't had a chance to talk since I agreed to be Blake's girlfriend. The look on his face is that of pure confusion and I'm too drunk for this.

Me: Khanye, we'll talk in the morning. I'm going to sleep

Blake: I'll be there in a moment

Me: shap

A lot like friendship

Chapter 7

If you don't count Amy then Khanye is the closest friend I have here. He has been the one person I've been able to confide in without feeling like shit. I was going to tell him about Blake and me and knowing the kind of guy he is, he would have been happy for me. Blake just had to blurt it out. There was just so much entitlement in what he said and I didn't have the energy to entertain male egos. As drunk as I am right now, I can't seem to fall asleep. I just keep tossing and turning. Usually alcohol knocks me out when it's this nicely in my system but not today. Blake walks in while I'm still fishing for sleep

Blake: I thought you'd be asleep by now

Me: I'm trying too but it's not happening

Him: I'm sure you'll fall asleep when I'm holding you

I sigh. I'm embarrassed about what could happen. The nightmares might come and we might both wake up in soaking wet sheets.

Me: about that. Can you sleep on the couch? I don't think I'm ready to share a bed with you

Him: there are already people sleeping on the couches. The guy and girl that came with Sihle. I promise I'm not going to try anything with you

If only he knew that that's not even my biggest concern right now. When he gets in bed, he pulls me to his chest then kisses my forehead

Him: relax baby. You are too tense

Me: I'm trying to but you make me so nervous

I hear him chuckle softly and smile to myself as I imagine the look on his face right now. It's not a lie though, he does make me nervous. Everything is different now yet still the same

Him: stop overthinking everything. It's just the same old Blake and Star. The only difference is that I get to do this now

He adjusts my position so that my lips are easily accessible to him and he kisses me. The kisses reawakens the butterflies as I feel them fluttering in my tummy. My heart is racing and this kiss just feels so perfect. Silence fills the room after that kiss and soon after I hear him snoring softly. I take this moment to stare at him. His long lashes look even longer now that his eyes are closed, his nose looks just right and his plump lips are slightly parted. How I wish my phone was close by so I could capture this moment right here. I fall asleep a few minutes later.

"Star wake up"

The voice feels as if it's kilometers away. I feel him shaking me but it's as if I'm unable to wake up. The nightmare I'm reliving feels so real. It's the same one everytime and when I eventually snap out of it, it takes me a few seconds to realize that I'm wet. Fuck! This can't be happening. Not tonight. Not with Blake here on this bed with me. I quickly jump out of bed and he does the same.

Blake: are you ok?

No but I nod. Can the ground just open up and swallow me already?!

Him: you were having a nightmare, shaking and screaming in your sleep. Are you sure you are ok?

He walks towards me but I take a couple of steps back. I just wet the bed like a toddler while sleeping with my boyfriend of less than 24hrs. Nothing is more embarrassing than that.

Me: I'm sorry

Him: for what

Me: the bed

Him: I don't care about the bed. I'm worried about you. Can you just let me hold you?

I shake my head. I just need a moment and right now it feels as if he is crowding me. Everything feels as if it's suffocating me. I just need to breath

Me: I'm going to take a shower

It's still a bit dark outside but not pitch dark. I grab my towel and toiletry bag and head out. He does try to stop me but I don't give him a chance. The moment the water touches my skin I start crying. When will the nightmares stop? When will my past stop tormenting me? Why don't I deserve happiness? It's so frustrating and painful to suffer when you've done nothing to anyone. There are people that torture and kill others but they don't suffer like I do. What sin did I commit for me to be punished like this? The suffering I've endured and the pain I've felt over the years just keeps coming back to me even when I've turned my back on the place that brought me pain.

I stay in the shower for what feels like forever. I'm crying, I'm planning and I'm thinking of what excuse I'll give Blake for wetting the bed at this age. Maybe I can just blame the alcohol. When I get back to the room, the sheet has been removed and the mattress is placed upright facing the open window

Him: I was about to go out looking for you

The smile on my face is faint but it's there. I'm still surprised that he did this but let me not overthink it

Him: let me give you space to get dressed

He walks out after a short kiss. More like a peck. I change into sweatpants, a t-shirt and a hoodie. It's raining outside and its s bit cold. I take my sheet and wet pyjamas to the

laundry room to wash and when I walk into the lounge, Kwenzo is getting dressed. Luyanda is still asleep.

Me: oh sorry, I didn't think anyone was awake

Kwenzo: relax. It's not like I'm naked naked.

Me: alright then shap

I walk away but his voice makes me stop and turn around

Him: you still owe me a conversation

Me: what conversation?

Him: you kissed me then ghosted me. I texted you yesterday and you blue ticked me

Me: I have a lot going on Kwenzo and I can do whatever this is with you. Shap bruh

I walk away. Kissing this guy was such a bad idea, he is so annoying at times. He just doesn't know when to stop. I just have to block him and continue with my life. Blake is in my room when I walk back in. He is sitting in the floor with his back against my closet

Blake: you look cute

Me: liar

Him: come sit with me

Me: what is with you and sitting on the floor though?

Him: its comfortable

Me: no it's not. The floor is hard

Him: bring a pillow then

We are both trying to ignore the elephant in the room but the more we try to ignore it, the more awkward it becomes

Him: how often does this happen?

Me: it was the alcohol. I drank too much last night

He sighs and remains quiet for a while. I know he doesn't believe me but that's my story and I'm sticking to it

Him: please don't lie to me Star. I'm not going to judge you. I'm just trying to help

Me: I don't need help, I'm fine. I drank too much and I'm not the first person to wet the bed when drunk and I know I won't be the last

Him: you were crying and screaming in your sleep, is that the alcohol too? Come on Star

Me: Blake I don't know what you want me to tell you. There isn't a problem. I'm not lying to you and can we just stop talking about this now

We sit in silence for what feels like the longest time ever. This is embarrassing and as much as he knows my past, this isn't something I'm comfortable sharing. Not even Amy knows about this. It's my personal battle that I will continue to fight on my own

Him: I'm leaving today. I have to get back to Joburg

Me: oh

Him: yeah so can we not spend today fighting? Let's do something fun. Go on our first date and spend my last few hours here together

I can't help the smile on my face after he says that and his suggestion is exactly what I need right now.

Me: I'd like that. Let me change and we can go to where you are staying so you can shower

Him: alright. You are really special to me Star. My feelings for you are genuine, never doubt that

I nod. It's all just still sinking in for me. To be honest, it all just feels like a beautiful dream that I'll probably wake up from any moment now. He walks out to go check on his

sister while I change. I put on faded blue high waist jeans, a mustard polo neck, denim jacket and white allstars. While I wait for him, I send a text to Khanye

"Are you up?"

He is online seconds later and I see him typing

"Yeah but I'm out. What's up?"

"Nothing much. I was just checking on you. Can we talk later?"

"Sho"

Blake opens the door but doesn't walk in so I walk towards him and we walk out. I've always seen Urban hotel from a distance and I've never dreamt that I'd actually get to walk into this place. It's so classy and elegant, definitely not the kind of place people like me find themselves

Blake: I'm going to take a quick shower then I'm all yours

I'm not yet comfortable with taking my clothes off in front of him but he doesn't seem to have that kind of problem because he is in his briefs before I can grasp what's going on. Curiosity gets the better of me and my eyes wonder to his crouch area. It does look packed in there. When he clears his throat, I quickly look away. He laughs then walks away

Me: what is wrong with you Star? You are going to give him the wrong message

I'm whispering to myself. I take pictures with his phone. You can access the camera without unlocking it. His phone takes better pictures than mine. Well I'm almost positive that every phone in the world takes better pictures than my Mobicel. When he is done showering, he sends me my pictures then we order brunch. The conversation is flowing and it's getting less awkward. I'm really enjoying his company so the thought of him leaving in a few hours hurts

Blake: so what's that guy's story? Did you hook up with him or something?

Me: what guy?

Him: Khanye

I laugh. People are always so quick to assume that something is going on between Khanye and I or that something has happened between us. We are just friends yet it's so hard for other people to get that

Me: Khanye is my best friend

Him: I thought Amy is your best friend

Me: they are both my best friends. You don't have to worry about Khanye. We don't see each other like that

Him: is he seeing someone?

Me: no

He looks at me with his one eyebrow raised so I sit up and look at him.

Me: what?

Him: he is a single man and he just sees you as a friend? Come one Star, you can't be that naive. Khanye wants you. That's why he reacted like that last night

Me: you are wrong. He reacted like that because I hadn't told him about us yet. I was your girlfriend for 5 minutes before you started acting all entitled. Khanye is my friend and that's it. If you don't trust him, that's fine but the least you can do is trust me

A lot like friendship

Chapter 8

Our plans for the day went out the window because we are now fighting. Here I am trying to tell him that there is nothing going on between Khanye and I and he doesn't believe me. It's frustrating because I feel as if I'll have to defend my friendship throughout our relationship.

Blake: tell me this, why isn't he dating? Why does he always come to your rescue, no questions asked? Why is he the first person you call when you are not ok?

Me: because he is my friend. You wouldn't be asking me all of this if Khanye was a female

Him: I'm a guy Star and I'm not saying it's impossible for girls and guys to be friends but I'm not comfortable with my girlfriend having that kind of friendship with a guy

This conversation took me back to that first night at Naval Hill with Khanye when he told me that his girlfriends will probably hate me. Maybe Blake has a point but at the same time I don't want to choose between Khanye and Blake. Blake is my boyfriend and Khanye is my best friend. I need them both in my life

Me: so what do you want me to do?

Him: I can't make that decision for you. All I'm asking is for you to put yourself in my shoes

Me: can't you just get to know him? Maybe then you will realize that we are just friends

Him: babe I will trust you on this because I really like you Star and I hate fighting with you

Me: thank you

I really need to talk to Khanye about this because I'm already seeing flames in this mjolo world. Why can't we all just get along and be happy? Hai the males and their drama.

Blake and I head to Waterfront to have lunch before he leaves. He picks Coco C, another first for me but I'm not complaining. I'm living my best life this weekend. I'm

taking pictures with his phone and uploading them on my insta stories and on my WhatsApp status.

Him: next time I think you should come to Joburg.

Me: that will be my first time in Jozi

Him: I know. Maybe we can spend the Easter long weekend together. I know Amy is going home that weekend

Me: yeah that would be nice. It will be just after I get paid so I'll have enough money to travel

Him: don't worry about that. I'll book your flight. You wanted to work so you can save so let me not derail you from that

As much as I want to fight him on that, I choose not to. There is no way I can afford a plane ticket, I was going to book a Translux bus but I'm sure a flight will be more comfortable. My first time on a plane should be an experience

Me: thank you

Him: I know how much you love your independence and I'm still finding my feet in my industry so I'm not balling as yet but if I can help you out then I will. All you have to do is shout

Me: you know I'm not going to do that. We are dating but I'm not going to let you spend money on me. It's your money and I like making and spending my own money

Him: and I admire that about you.

After lunch we walk around the mall aimlessly. We are holding hands and ignoring all the stares we get. People must just get over themselves. We get ice cream before he drives me back to the commune. It's just after 2pm and he really needs to leave

Him: I'll call when I get to my place

I nod. The tears are already building up in my eyes. It sucks that he has to leave. He cups my face and kisses me. How I wish he could stay longer. Our relationship already feels as if it's off to a rocky start.

Me: drive safely

Him: I will. I'll see you soon, ok

I nod and watch him get into his car. He drives off while I wave sadly. This sucks but it's just 2 weeks before the Easter break so I'll see him soon. In the house I find everyone sitting in the lounge smoking hubbly. Why Sihle and his cousin are still here makes no sense to me. Don't we all have classes tomorrow and it's clear that these people haven't showered

Me: hey guys

Sihle: what's up Star?

Me: have you guys seen Khanye?

Avuyile: he is in his room

Me: alone?

Avuyile: yeah

Me: cool

I walk out the lounge towards Khanye's room. He tells me to come in after I've knocked. There are notes all over his bed and his desk while he is sitting by his desk. He turns his chair around to face me while I make space on his bed

Me: hey

Khanye: hey buddy. You good?

Me: I'm good bud and you?

Him: I have a test tomorrow that I had completely forgotten about so I'm trying to cram in as much info as possible

Me: yho sounds hectic. I wanted us to talk but it can wait

Him: we can talk. I need a break now anyway. What's up?

He moves the chair closer to where I'm sitting then rests his head on his arms on the top of the chair

Me: Blake and I are dating

He chuckles which makes me laugh. I don't know why I'm making this awkward right now

Him: yeah I figured that out last night when he blurted it out. I thought you'd tell me before that though

Me: it had just happened a few minutes before we joined you guys for the 30 seconds game. I had no chance to tell you

Him: it's chilled Star. I'm happy that you are opening yourself up to dating and the idea of love. You deserve to be happy buddy

This is what I meant when I said I know Khanye would be happy for me. It's weird that people would think we are more than friends

Me: He doesn't believe that you and I are just friends

He laughs again. It's as if he knew I'd say that

Him: I was expecting that. I'm not interested in dating you Star. You are genuinely my friend and if our friendship threatens your relationship then I will step back when your guy is around. We have to be honest with each other if we want our relationships to last and if we don't want to lose our friendship. You are in a relationship now and I respect that but I'm still going to look out for you when your guy isn't around. I'll give him his place when he is around

Me: thank you. I'd really appreciate that Khanye. You are a great friend to me, you've helped me out a lot and I wouldn't want to lose our friendship

Him: don't worry Star. I get where Blake is coming from and I expected it. I didn't mean to cross the line last night, I didn't know you guys are in a relationship. I was just doing what we always do when you are wasted, I walk you to your room.

When the air is cleared, I leave him to study and go straight to my room. I'm not in the mood for the hubbly situation happening in the lounge. I take out my journal and start writing. I write about Blake and this past weekend.

The next two weeks fly by so quickly. I wrote a few tests on the week of the Easter weekend so by the time it's Thursday night, I'm dog tired. I've barely slept this week. Blake calls just as I'm getting into bed. It's just after 5pm and I'm ready to call it a night

Me: hey babe

Blake: my star. Are you good?

Me: if exhaustion was a person then I'd be it

He laughs. Just hearing the sound of his voice lifts my spirit just a little bit. It's been 2 weeks since we last saw each other. My flight is booked for 7am tomorrow

Him: you should rest my love. I can't wait to see you tomorrow. I've missed you so much baby

Me: not as much as I miss you

Him: has Amy left?

Me: nah, they are leaving at midnight

Him: ok. Rest babe and we'll talk later

Me: alright baby

We hang up and I shut my eyes with a smile on my face. I just need 3 hours of sleep and I'll be good. I've thought long and hard about it and I'm going to tell Khanye and Amy about my nightmares. I'm not ready to tell Blake yet but considering that I'll be spending the whole long weekend with him, I'll have to tell him. I just hope it won't change how he feels about me. I know it's a lot to deal with and I don't want to be a burden on people. I'll really understand if he doesn't want to be in a relationship with me after that.

My alarm goes off at 8pm and I have to force myself to get up. The house is almost empty. Thingo, Avuyile and Lisa went home in the afternoon. Khanye is leaving

tomorrow. I get up, go to wash my face then rinse my mouth. When I'm feeling fresh, I go knock on Amy's door and she opens a few seconds later

Me: are you alone

Amy: yeah

I walk in and throw myself on the bed. She throws herself next to me and we sigh simultaneously then we laugh

Me: what's eating you?

Her: going home without you doesn't feel right

Me: come on Amy, we spoke about this

Her: I know but it doesn't make it any easier. You are my best friend Star and leaving you here doesn't feel right

Me: don't worry about me babe. I'm going to be with my boyfriend all weekend

She smiles, turns to face me and I smile too. I love calling him my boyfriend

Her: I can't believe you are dating my brother. I can't wait to tell mom and dad.

Me: Blake already told them. Anyway, please do me a favour

Her: anything

Me: please check on my mother. If she is still alive and if she is well

She sighs. No matter how far I run, I can never escape that she is my mother. Nothing will ever change that. I just chose myself over her, the same way she has always chosen herself over me. I just didn't hurt her in the process

Her: I'll do that. I love you Star. You are my sister now

Me: I know and I love you too. There is something I have to tell you

Her: am I going to be an aunt?

Me: fuck no. We are not there yet. Hold your horses please

Her: ok then what's up?

This isn't going to be easy. It's probably one of the most difficult things I've ever had to do. It takes me back to the day when I told her about getting raped. She didn't take it well. She cried so much, she didn't even try to hide the pain she felt. I don't want her feeling like that again because of me.

Me: sometimes I get nightmares about what used to happen to me. They get really bad and I cry and scream in my sleep. Sometimes I even wet the bed. It's been going on for years now and I just don't know how to stop it. It's so embarrassing

She doesn't say anything for a while then I hear sobs. I knew this would happen. Amy wears her heart on her sleeve. She can never hide how she feels

Her: I hate them all Star. I wish they could all just die a slow and painful death. No one deserves what they've done to you.

Me: their time will come. I just want to make it stop. The other day it happened while I was sleeping with Blake. I have never been that embarrassed in my whole life.

Her: maybe you need therapy. You've been through a traumatic experience Star and as much as you are as strong as they come, you need professional help when it comes to this

Me: I'll seek help. I just wanted to tell you and Khanye first. I'll tell Blake when I get to his place tomorrow.

She pulls me in for a tight hug. I can't believe I'm going to spend 5 days without this girl. I really can't imagine my life without her. She might not know this but our friendship gives me strength. I leave her so she can finish packing and walk to Khanye's room. I knock a few times then walk in. He is laying on the bed busy on his phone

Khanye: Star shine

Me: Light up my world

We laugh. The meaning of his name has something to do with light so I came up with that phrase which I throw his way once in a while

Him: what's up bestie?

Me: I'm still tired but I'll live. You good?

Him: I'm awesome. I'm seeing my girlfriend tomorrow so I'm excited about that

Last week I found out that Khanye has a high school sweetheart back home. He is from Grahamstown and his girlfriend goes to Rhodes. Her name is Mihlali and she is gorgeous

Me: she should visit this side some time. I'd love to meet her

Him: she wants to meet you too hey.

Me: you must make things happen. Anyway, I need to talk to you about something

I tell him the same thing I told Amy a few minutes ago and he sighs. He puts the phone down and gets on his feet. I also get on my feet because he is walking towards me. It's when he wraps his arms around me that I release a sigh. I don't want to cry about this. Not today

Him: life is not fair though. You don't deserve this Star

Me: no one does

Him: do you want the help though?

Me: I need it. I'm going to do my research and find a psychologist in a public hospital

Him: permission to help?

Me: let's keep it pending for now. I want to try and do this on my own without your connections. Thank you for offering though

Him: you are welcome. Everything will be ok Star. I promise. Soon all of this will be a thing of the past and you'll be so happy, you'll start shitting rainbows

A lot like friendship

Chapter 9

Excitement is such a weird feeling for me. I hardly get excited about stuff because over the years I've learnt to always leave room for disappointment. Breaking my own heart was something I've always vowed never to do. There is a quote that I love that says "Always guard your heart for everything you do flows from it". I later learnt that that's actually quoted from a bible verse, Proverbs 4:23. Despite loving this quote and living by it most of my life, I've thrown it out the window. There is no guarding my heart in this relationship, I've gone all out because I want the full experience.

Blake is there to pick me up when I land at the airport and I just can't contain my excitement. I hug him tightly and he picks me up and spins me around then kisses me. I've missed his kisses the most

Blake: hey baby

The smile on my face is the brightest I've ever had

Me: hey baby. I missed you

Him: I missed you too. How was your flight?

I tell him about it as we walk towards his car. Flying was quite the experience for me. I tried my best not to freak out and for a first time, I think I did pretty well. I didn't throw up so that counts as pretty well for me. We drive for 45 mins before we get to his place. He lives in a 1 bedroom apartment in Northcliff. The whole place just screams Blake. Every bit of his personality is attached to the way this place is decorated.

Him: welcome to my place

Me: this is cute. This place is so you

Him: I know, right. Let me make you breakfast and you can just chill

He kisses me then I leave him while I go put my luggage in his room. There are pictures of his family on the side tables and his laptop on his bed. I don't know what I'm hoping to spot but it's not here. I trust Blake.

While I chill on the couch, I channel hop until I settle for MTV Base then just scroll through my phone. I go to Blake's Instagram page and I see that he has posted a few of my pictures. I think I've only posted one picture of us together. We don't have that many pictures of us together but I do have quite a few of just him because we send each other pictures a lot. When I go on Khanye's page, there are no pictures of Mhlabi. Not even one. Even the picture he showed me when he told me about her, was from her WhatsApp profile picture. That's just weird. If you've been dating someone for years, surely you'd have at least one picture of them on your phone or your social media pages. I make a mental note to ask him about this when we get back to Bloem

Blake: have you heard from my sister?

Me: yeah she just texted me. She is home safely

Him: that's good. I don't trust that boyfriend of hers

Me: you and me both babe. Sihle is full of nonsense but it's not my place to comment on other people's relationships

Him: plus I know my sister is stubborn. She loves that guy way too much. The food is ready

I join him by the island and I can't help the smile on my face. This is so nice. We are having toast, bacon and eggs and cranberry juice. It's the effort that counts and I really appreciate this

Me: thank you babe

Him: you are welcome, my star

After breakfast we decide to go out so I change into black ripped skinny jeans, a sky blue camisole top and black sandals. Blake changes to black jeans, an olive green tshirt and white all stars

Him: grab a jacket babe. I'm sure it will be cold when we get back

Me: good idea

In the car I let him play his music and we find ourselves listening to G-eazy. I'm not a fan but I let him be. He seems to be in his element with this music so I take his phone and record us. When he sees that I'm recording him, he laughs

Him: you better not post that

Me: why not? You look so hot though

Him: I'm just trying to look a fraction of how good my girlfriend looks

Me: such a smooth talker

We arrive at Cresta shopping centre, he takes my hand into his and we walk towards Ster kinekor.

Him: what movie are we watching?

I looked at my options and none of these movies were catching my eye but I eventually settled for Midnight Sun. I obviously cried and he laughed at me. After the movie we took pictures by the aquarium and then went to the arcade. We played games until we were hungry and had lunch at Mike's kitchen

Him: this is the first date we never got to have while I was in Bloem

Me: and it's turning out to be a great first date baby

Him: really? Even though I beat you at bowling?

Me: oh please, I just let you win

Being with Blake is a different kind of feeling. It's a rush, it's exciting and my heart is always racing when I'm with him. I want to be kissing him all the time or just listen to him talk all day. I always find myself laughing at his jokes no matter how dry they are. Being with him just feels right and he knows me.

By the time we leave, it's already dark outside. We got pizza for supper so that's sorted

Me: I'm playing music this time around

Him: hopefully I'm not going to fall asleep while driving

Me: shut up. My music is amazing. I'm going to introduce you to some new stuff today

I play Ella Mai's boo'd up and we sing along to it. I'm actually surprised that he knows this song.

Him: this should be our song

Me: I agree. It's a cute song

Him: and I'm seriously boo'd up

Me: is it now?

He nods with a smile. When we get to his place, I take a shower and he takes one after me then we chill in the lounge. I need to get this awkward conversation out of the way

Me: I need to tell you something

Him: ok what's going on?

Me: I lied to you

Him: you lied to me about what?

No matter how many times I have to break this to people, it doesn't get easier. I always feel as if I will be judged and pitied and I hate that

Him: Star

Me: I lied about the wet bed. It wasn't because I was drunk. It happens even when I'm sober. I get nightmares, I relive the rapes and sometimes it gets really bad that I wet the bed

Him: I knew it was that judging from your screams and cries but when you lied and said it wasn't, I just let you be.

Me: you knew?

Him: come on babe, I was there. Don't be mad but I got a waterproof mattress protector. I know how you are, you were going to feel bad about my bed and all of that. I'm here for you Star. Whatever you need me to do in order to help you, I'll do it. This doesn't change anything between us. It doesn't change how I feel about you. You are still my Star

He pulls me into a tight hug then kisses me. I feel as if a huge load has been lifted off my shoulders and I can breathe again. To be honest, I appreciate the mattress protector gesture because I was ready to sneak out of bed and sleep on the floor than to wet his bed.

Him: I'm going to grab the pizza so we can eat. You can decide if we are watching a movie or listening to music

Me: music videos will do. It will give us a chance to talk without having to focus on something else

I haven't checked my phone in ages and I don't miss it. I'm happy being in the company of this guy. We have the pizza from the box

Him: so what are your expectations from me and our relationship?

Me: don't lie to me

He looks at me with his eyebrow raised and a smirk on his face. I laugh because I know exactly what that is for

Me: shut up. Me lying to you was for a valid reason

Him: what if I also have a valid reason

Me: asazi. We will cross that bridge when and if we get to it. Don't cheat on me. Communicate your feelings to me, the good and the bad. Don't keep secrets from me, that's as bad as lying

Him: basically I should be faithful and transparent

Me: yep. I don't think it's a lot to ask

I take a slice from the box, bite and look at him.

Him: I have expectations too

Me: of course

Him: I need you to trust me. I know how long distance relationships can get. Trust me and communicate your feelings to me as well. You suck at communicating and I'd appreciate it if you work on that. I need you to fight fair should we ever have fights. No cheating, no secrets and no more lies.

Me: ok

I move myself closer to him and rest my head on his chest while his arm goes around me. I take in his Old Spice scent and close my eyes. This is really happening. I'm dating. Well it's been happening for a while now but this conversation just seals it

Him: also I'm not going to pressure you into having sex and I don't want you to feel pressured because you think I'll be getting it from someone else

Me: I'm open to doing other things though apart from the actual sex

Him: is it now?

I giggle against his chest. I'm curious to know how an orgasm from him would feel like compared to the ones I give myself with my fingers and pillows. He kisses my shoulder then flips me over and he is on top of me before I can even grasp what's happening. I'm in my pyjama shorts and vests. I close my eyes as I feel his lips on my neck, he planting wet kisses from my neck to my collar bone. When he reaches my lips, he gives them a soft peck before kissing me hungrily. I can feel the moisture between my legs, I'm not wearing panties. I can't sleep in panties. When I feel his hand on my boob over my vest, I release a moan. His hands on my body make all my hairs stand. My vest is on the floor in seconds and the kisses move to my boobs. He kisses them, suck on my nipples and kneads them. This feels way better than when I do it myself. The kisses go lower, down my stomach, around my navel and when he gets to the waist of my shorts, he stops

Him: can I take them off?

Me: ya

I have to keep reminding myself that I'm not going to have sex with him. I'm not ready for that but I can feel my body betraying me. My body wants him, all of him. I thought all of this would be triggering for me but my mind is on another planet right now. His thumb is on my coochie and caressing my clit. He is slow and gentle while my moans get louder. I can feel my orgasm slowly building up. When he lowered his head between my legs and replaced his thumb with his tongue, I lose it. My toes curl and I release. I want to keep the feeling going for long. All the hairs on my body are standing and I feel a cold rush as I come down from my high. The orgasms I get from self-service never come close to this

A lot like friendship

Chapter 10

Not many things feel better than waking up wrapped in your man's arms. I feel so secured and warm right now and I'm ignoring his manhood that's drilling a hole on my back. We had so much fun last night exploring each other's bodies but I just couldn't bring myself to going down on him. That part was triggering for me because it brought back flashbacks of the nightmares. He was ok with just a hand job. I'm grateful to wake up to a dry bed. Wetting the bed would have just ruined everything about last night

Blake: good morning baby

He kisses my neck and I squirm trying to get out of his embrace but he won't let me

Me: good morning babe. I need to pee

Him: my good morning kiss please

Me: morning breath

He turns me around to face him and I giggle like a child. He kisses me intensely while his manhood pokes at my stomach now. I pull out of this kiss

Me: is it always that big?

He chuckles then rubs his eyes while trying to sit up

Him: pretty much. I'm just hard right now because I just woke up

Me: it's quite big

Him: relax baby, when the time comes, I'm not going to hurt you. I'll be so gentle, you'll probably beg me to fuck you harder

If my skin was lighter, my cheeks would be red right now, that's how much I'm blushing. I quickly get out of bed and head to the bathroom. After peeing and freshening up, I go back to the bedroom and he is still chilling in the same position with his phone in his hand.

Him: a friend of mine is having a braai this afternoon. I think we should go plus my friends are dying to meet you

Me: your friends? What if they don't like me?

Him: they like you, trust me

We spend the morning to ourselves, talking and making out. Around 4pm we get ready for the braai. I'm in a short yellow and white striped cocktail dress with an open back and animal print gladiator sandals. I'm also carrying my denim jacket. Blake is in faded blue denim shorts and a mustard v neck t-shirt and black Vans. We leave after taking about a million pictures. I obviously update my insta story and WhatsApp status with the famous hashtag #LoveLivesHere. We stop at Tops for wine and Gin. I also grab red bull cans, gum and a packet of blue Doritos. The friend lives in Midrand and when we get there, there are people already drinking.

Blake: hey everyone

He shoulder hugs the guys and hugs the girls. There are 4 guys and 4 girls I'd assume are their girlfriends

Blake: baby these are my friends Liam, Noah, Oliver and Phelo. That's Amelia, she is Oliver's girlfriend. This is Paige, Liam's girlfriend. Anathi over there is Noah's girlfriend and Nonhle is Phelo's girlfriend. Everyone, this is Star, my girlfriend

We all exchanged greetings. These girls have the same sense of style, they all have weaves, long lashes and tons of makeup. They are definitely the working class, you can just tell. Blake leaves me with them after getting me a drink

Nonhle: so you and Blake have been dating for long?

Me: I've known him for years but we've only been dating for 2 weeks

Paige: that's cute. You are cute too

Amelia: for a 12year old. How old are you?

Me: relevance?

Amelia: we don't want the cops bursting in here and locking us up for giving alcohol to a minor

I take a sip of my drink and stare at her. Clearly she doesn't like me and I'm not bothered by that. We are all entitled to our own opinions of people

Nonhle: don't mind her. Her friend is Blake's ex and you are the first girl he has dated after her

Me: how is that any of her business though? Was she also fucking Blake? Imagine hating someone based on such a childish reason. Wow and she calls me the 12year old

They all laugh while Amelia side eyes me. She will be fine. I'm not here for her. The other girls are actually nice and our conversation flows well. Nonhle is a nurse, Anathi is a PR manager and Paige is a fashion designer. When the meat is ready, Paige and I dish up while the others get more drinks

Paige: so how's varsity so far? I hope you are having fun there

I laugh thinking back to what Blake said to me the day we left for Bloem. I'm definitely having fun

Me: I try to. So who is the ex that Amelia is hating me for?

Her: her name is Natalie. She is actually my cousin

Me: oh

Her: they broke up a while ago. We don't know the story. One day they were dating and the next day it was over. They didn't tell even when we asked so we let it go

I don't want to know and I pray that I never meet this Natalie person because I know she will make me feel small. Blake walks in and wraps his arms around me

Blake: are you looking after my girl, Paige?

Paige: Star is a big girl. She has been looking after herself. You can ask Amelia

Paige and I start laughing. I'm liking her the most. She is full of shade and isn't afraid to throw it. Blake pulls out of the hug and looks at me intensely

Blake: let me guess, she told you about Natalie

Me: in not so many words

Blake: I should have given you the heads up. Are you good?

Me: yeah I'm good

Paige: she handled her pretty well

The rest of the night goes well. I get to know Blake's friends and apart from Amelia, they are cool people. We talk about everything, they try to involve me in their conversations and I don't feel like the outsider. Around midnight we get ready to leave

Liam: thank you for coming guys. It was good to finally meet you Star

He hugs me. I'm so tipsy but not drunk. The plan was never to get drunk

Paige: don't be a stranger. I hope this isn't the last time we see you

Blake: it isn't. I'm going to marry her so you will be seeing a lot of her

This one is drunk and being very affectionate right now. It's cute, I'm loving it

I hug everyone, Amelia gives me the coldest hug but I'm over her. The drive back to Blake's place is so slow. I think because he is drunk, he is being extra careful. I'm trying hard to not fall asleep because if I sleep then he will fall asleep as well. Luckily we get back safely and stumble our way into the apartment

Blake: I love you Star. I love you more than anything

He is really drunk because this is the first time he has said those words to me since we started dating. It's always been like and feelings all over the place

Me: ok let's get you to bed lover boy

He laughs while I'm stumbling with him to the bedroom. I'm not drunk enough for this but this one is out of it. I help him out of his clothes and he decides to take his briefs off as well

Me: Blake, put your briefs back on

Him: I want to sleep in my birthday suit. Don't you want to sleep in your birthday suit as well?

Me: no

Him: oh well

He climbs on the bed naked leaving me standing in the middle of the room confused as hell. I change into pyjamas, brush my teeth then get in bed. He rolls over and puts his arm around me. I can't seem to focus on anything except the naked sausage behind me. It's going to be a long night for me. The rest of the days are spent indoors for us. We cook together, play around and just have fun. Today is Monday and I'm leaving. It feels as if this weekend just flew by but I had the best time

Blake: I love you Star.

Me: I love you too

I do love him. He makes me happy and I do believe he is the guy for me. I wet the bed once during my stay here and I guess we handled it well

Him: when am I seeing you again?

Me: we'll make plans. Until then its back to video calls and masturbation

He laughs while I just look at him with my cute puppy face on. I'm going to miss him so much. Long distance relationships are the pits

Him: look at you trying to be cute. Go before you miss your flight. Text me when you get to your place

Me: I will. I love you. Bye

I had texted Khanye before I left joburg about my time of arrival so I'm not surprised when he is there to pick me up. We share a hug then he takes my duffle bag

Khanye: is this the after sex glow?

Me: grow up please and no one had sex

Him: poor guy. A whole weekend of sleeping next to his girlfriend and getting nothing? Yho

Me: he is fine. Let's talk about you. Why don't you have any of Mihlali's pictures on your Instagram or your phone?

Him: it's complicated

He drives to McDonald's first before driving to the commune. I want that complicated story in its full details

Him: you are not going to let this go?

I shake my head

Him: she cheated on me last year. Not just once off cheating. She had a full blown relationship and I had no idea. I was the idiot that had her pictures everywhere, "my girl, my future wife, love of my life" kanti usisi is dating some other guy as well. I found out in the most humiliating way but I forgave her. I love her but now I'm treading carefully.

Let's just say we are still fixing things. That's why I didn't tell you about her when we met. Right now I'm not even sure about her

The thing about Khanye is that he has been a pillar for me since day one so it's weird for me hear him speak like this. Isn't he supposed to be iron man or superman? I reach over and hug him. We are already at the commune but parked outside.

Me: I say choose your peace above everything else. She hurt you and you chose to forgive her, do you trust her? I know I've been in a relationship for 5 seconds but one thing I know for sure is that trust is important

Him: I don't know. All I know is that I love her

Me: you and Amy are 2 peas in a pod

We laugh. It's funny because he always calls her out on her trash boyfriend kanti naye he has a trash girlfriend. I've come to realize that people stay with their trash because it's better the devil they know than an angel they don't. I'm here for the angels, shame. I'm too young to be stuck with devils

Him: I'm nothing like your friend

Me: so you say but niyafana.

Him: whatever. Anyway how was the weekend? All we saw was #LoveLivesHere

Me: it was amazing. Umjolo is so nice buddy. How I wish I could just start it all over again

Him: and leave the guy with blue balls again

Me: voetsek

I missed this idiot friend of mine, especially our conversations and his wise words.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 11

The second term was more straining, the work load increased and there just wasn't enough time for it all. I could only handle two things at a time, my job and my school work and as a result my relationships suffered. Amy couldn't understand why I wasn't available for Friday or Saturday night partying anymore, Blake hated my lack of communication. It's as if everyone forgot that I'm actually a working student. Khanye forced his way into my schedule, he was there to fetch me from work and take me to campus. He was there to fetch me from campus at 10pm. He got it and yet the other people in my life attacked me for it.

Khanye: I slept with Thingo last night

Me: Thingo as in our housemate Thingo?

He nods. He has just fetched me from campus, it's late and all I want is sleep yet he decides to drop this bomb on me. Over the past few weeks I haven't had time to lift my head and look around. People are living their best lives and it's all just passing me by. I do remember him telling me that he is giving up on Mihlali but I clearly missed the vibes between him and Thingo

Me: are you guys a couple now?

Him: no. It was a once off thing. It just happened and I think she is avoiding me now

Me: wow. I never saw this coming but at least you are moving on so that's fine. Heal and keep it moving

Him: exactly. You need to slow down though before you burn out

Me: I'll slow down after exams. I can't believe I'm writing my first varsity exams in a week. Half the year almost gone

We approach a traffic light, its red but he drives right past it. He does that with the next one and the one after that until I decide to question it

Me: are you trying to sleep in jail tonight?

Him: the roads are empty so why not. I'm not trying to get hijacked

Me: I'm not trying to get killed or have to bail you from jail

Him: the drama. Ok fine. I'll stop on the last 3 if they are red

Me: thank you

The way I'm so tired, I just need a shower and my bed. Luckily I don't have morning classes tomorrow and it's Wednesday so I don't have work either. Work has been going well for me. It was rough at first, I'm the quiet and shy type so being around strangers in their own space was challenging but I've gotten used to it now.

Just as we approach the last traffic light which is just by the house we live in, there is a blue i20 parked there. The light is red so we park behind it. Another car parks behind us. When the light turns green, the car in front of us doesn't drive off.

Me: this is so annoying. Just hoot at him

Khanye: something is wrong

He indicates to the car behind us to pass so we can pass as well but that car doesn't move either

Him: Star, I need you to listen to me. Open the door and run. Don't run home, just run out. Put your phone on silent and get out

Me: what? I'm not doing that. What's going on?

Him: we are about to be hijacked. I need you to make a run for it

Me: no. I'm not leaving you here

The doors of both the cars open, 3 guys come out of the i20 and 3 guys come out of the car behind us. At this point my heart is beating in my throat, my whole body is shaking and my hands are sweating. We are going to die and these streets are so quiet, no cars are passing by

Me: Khanye

Him: shhhhh it's going to be okay

They come running, they are pointing guns at us and my first instinct is to lock the doors. They try opening them and when they fail, they smash the window on Khanye's side with the back of the gun and it breaks

Guy1: get out right now

Our hands are in the air but we are still seated in the car. I can see the panic in Khanye's eyes and I'm praying that our story doesn't end like this. I can't die like this when I've fought so hard to live

The guy standing outside Khanye's window places his gun against Khanye's head and Khanye unlocks the doors. They drag both of us out and shove us in the backseat then two of the guys get in. One in the driver's seat and the other on the passenger seat then they drive off

Khanye: please just let us go. Take the car and let us go

Guy1: ey voetsek wena. Who said you can talk? Uyaphapha neh? Shut up

Guy2: whose car is this? It's a ncaa trans. You are a cheese boy neh. Give me your wallet

Khanye doesn't respond until they point a gun at him and he gives them the wallet. Guy 2 starts whistling at opening the wallet

Guy2: ntwanas you have a petrol card. You are a cheese boy for real kanti. There is about 2k in this wallet as well

Guy1: 2k? Bloming net daar? Mos this ntwana must have more money in his account

Khanye: take the car, take the money, just please let us go

I've heard about hijacking stories a million times. I've heard that people lose their lives over material things but we are not even fighting them yet they refuse to let us go. God only knows where they are taking us. When it happens to you, it becomes different. The adrenaline kicks in, you pinch yourself a thousand times hoping this is just another nightmare that you will wake up from only to realize this is reality. It's actually happening and one wrong move could end it all for you. They drive to Small Street and park in front of the ATM. The driver gets out and opens Khanye's door

Guy1: don't try to be a smart guy. You are going to go withdraw all the money in your account and give it to my chommie over there. He is going to go with you. One wrong move and I kill your little sweetheart over here. Understood?

Khanye just walks out. I keep my eyes on them the whole time. They must not hurt him. The guy I'm left with decides to start talking to me

Guy1: such a beautiful woman idlala amaSmall boys

I don't say anything. The tears haven't stopped streaming down my cheeks since this whole night turned upside down. He cups my face and forces me to look at him. He has a scar running between his eyes and down the side of his nose. His eyes are red and his lips are black. His looks are befitting of his actions

Him: it's rude to ignore a man when he talks to you. You know I could treat you better than your boyfriend over there. I'm a real man

I close my eyes as he forces his lips on mine and when I don't respond, he bites my bottom lip and forces his tongue inside my mouth. He tastes like nicotine and beer. He moves his hand to the space between my legs and grabs my coochie over my sweatpants then moans

Him: udla kahle mos umjita wakho. I can't wait to have a taste

He licks the side of my face while I continue to weep. Why me? Why doesn't it always have to be me? I had a hold on my happiness and now it's falling through my fingers.

After what feels like forever, Khanye and the other guy come back and this one gets out of the car, he forces Khanye in and shuts the door

Khanye: are you ok?

I nod. I'm not the closest thing to ok. I just want this nightmare to be over

Guy2: we have 7k. The ntwana only had 5k in his account

Guy1: imali leyo sbali.

They drive off, I don't see where were are going but after a while the car comes to a stop in an open field. They drag us out, tie Khanye's hands and feet then make him sit on the grass while the Guy1 forces me back into the backseat on the car. I try to run away but he drags me by my legs then slaps me

Guy1: don't make this difficult for yourself sweetheart. Cooperate and it will be over soon.

He pulls down his pants then pulls down my sweatpants together with my underwear and throws it on the ground. At this point, I don't even know where my shoes are. He forces his manhood inside me and I scream. The pain is physical and emotional. I try to drift off to a happy place but I can't seem to find one at this point. He moans and groans on top of me and when his done, Guy2 takes over. I give up on screaming, it's not getting me anywhere. It has never gotten me anywhere. When they are done, they throw my half naked body next to Khanye and drive off. My cries are silent and his have gotten louder

Him: I'm so sorry Star

I don't say anything. He keeps apologizing and I remain quiet. I'm numb. I've blocked all the pain out. I've been here a thousand times before, this is just another day in the life of Nkanyezi. It's as if my scent just reeks of rape, rapist always know how to find me. Pain always knows where to find me and no matter how far I run, I can never outrun the fact that I am a rape victim.

A few minutes later I find the strength to get up and look for my clothes and put them on. My shoes are not in sight. I untie Khanye's feet and hands and he wraps his arms around me.

Him: I'm sorry Star. I am so sorry

Me: it's not your fault

That's all I manage to say. I'm not going to let him blame himself for this. It's really not his fault. The first time I was raped I cried, I seek my mother's love and protection and couldn't find it. It was her fault and I blamed her. This time around I'd be wrong to blame anyone. What hurts the most is that I really thought I had put the pain behind me; that I was healing and finding my happiness and yet I was so wrong.

We walk around aimlessly trying to make our way to the road, he holds my hand the whole time and he is still crying. It's his crying that still has been weeping as well.

Him: we have to go to the police station

Me: yeah. To report your car being stolen. I'm not reporting the rape. It won't get me anywhere. I'll just take my Prep pills and move on with my life. Its how I've always done it

Him: Star you have to report them. We can't let them win

Me: they have won though. Can't you see that? Reporting them won't undo what they have done to me. They took the last piece of happiness I had in my life. They've killed my soul, Khanye and I don't have the energy to fight them. I just need to rebuild my life all over again like I always do.

Him: but Star

Me: leave it Khanye. I don't blame you. We were at the wrong place at the wrong time. There is nothing you could have done to avoid this so don't blame yourself

A lot like friendship

Chapter 12

When you say you are used to pain and suffering, people tend to believe that you are hiding how you really feel or you are living in denial. A lot changed that night, things between Khanye and I shifted. We had awkward moments, we cried but the most important thing was that we kept what happened that night to ourselves. The rape part because you can't exactly hide that your car was stolen. He reported the car stolen but he respected my wishes not to report the rape. The whole thing was harder on Khanye than it was on me. It was his first experience, I've been raped for the past 9 years or so. I've learnt to pick myself up quicker and shift my focus on other things. My school work became my main focus, I studied as if I was doing a master's degree. Every spare moment I had, I was sitting in front of my books. I wet the bed and cried myself for a week after the hijacking. I blamed myself for a lot of things but I don't regret how I handled the whole thing. I would hate myself so much more had I ran and left Khanye to deal with that on his own. They could have killed him and I know I wouldn't be able to handle that.

Khanye: hey

He walks into my room. It's been a month since that night. His car was replaced, he was adamant that even if they find his old one, he doesn't want it back. We've also been attending therapy and it's been hectic for me because I have to relive every moment of every hurtful experience I've had

Me: hey. You good?

Him: yeah. You?

Me: I'm good. I'm ready to go if you are

Him: I'm ready too

It's early July, the middle of winter and its kak cold in this place. I put on sweatpants, a hoodie and sneakers. Khanye is also in sweatpants and a hoodie. Everyone has left to go home for the holidays so it's just the two of us here. I don't know if I still have a boyfriend or a bestfriend anymore because they are both mad at me for shutting them

out. Blake thinks I'm going through PTSD because of the hijacking and Amy thinks I've replaced her with Khanye. It's a whole mess but im still fixing myself right now. There is silence in the car, I'm in my own world and Khanye is in his and when we get to the doctor's offices, he parks and releases a sigh

Me: yeah neh

Him: let's go before we are late

Today I'm going in first then he will go in. We used to go in together but now we just schedule our appointments to follow each other. Dr Rose is our psychologist, she is young and probably the sweetest person I've ever met

Dr: good afternoon Star

Me: hey doc

Her: and how are we feeling today?

Me: drained. That's the best word to describe me right now

Her: and why is that?

I sigh as I get comfortable on the couch. My eyes wonder as always and I look at my favourite painting on the wall. It's some monochrome type of art. I'm sure it's meant to be calming, I know it calms me down

Me: my mind is overworked, I don't sleep well and I'm just frustrated

Her: when you say your mind is overworked, what do you mean?

Me: I'm constantly thinking about that night, what I could have done differently, what made them target us and I'm always thinking about Khanye. Does he blame himself, is he ok, is he coping. My mind is always just busy

She makes notes on her notepad then hands me a box of tissues. She knows I don't cry but she always give me the box.

Her: what happened to you was tragic. No one deserves that but it worries me how you are not tapping into your feelings about what happened

Me: because I've felt those feelings so much that they've become a norm for me. I'm angry but I'm not angry at those men. I'm angry at whoever the higher being that is supposed to look after me is. I'm angry at that being because he sees everything yet he still throws the pain in my direction. I am tired of feeling this way. I'm tired of being hurt. I'm tired of wetting the bed. I'm tired of crying. I'm just tired and I want it all to just stop and my memory is erased. That's all I want.

We continue until our hour is over then Khanye goes in. I've always wished to be a fly on the wall during his sessions. Just to hear his feelings and his thoughts because he no longer shares them with me. The only thing he ever says about that night is how sorry he is. That night really did a number on our friendship, it fucked it up but slowly and I mean very slowly we are trying to rebuild it. As I'm waiting for him, my phone rings. It's Blake. I sigh before answering

Me: hey

Blake: hey. How are you?

Me: I'm ok and you

He sighs. We haven't seen each other since the time I was in Joburg. He wanted to come this side after the hijacking but I begged him not to. I knew I wouldn't have been able to handle him being here on top of everything I was dealing with

Him: I miss you, Star. I haven't seen you in close to 3 months

Me: I'm sorry about that

Him: don't apologize, just allow me to see my girlfriend. Please

This time I'm the one that sighs. I know I'm not being fair on him, he doesn't deserve me pushing him away but I don't think I deserve him right now. I'm a mess

Me: B, I can't

Him: do you still even want to be in this relationship?

Me: I do. I'm just going through a lot right now

Him: I want to be there for you. Don't push me away. I'm coming down that side tomorrow. Don't shut me out

Me: ok

Him: I love you Star. I really love you

Me: I love you too

When I tell Khanye that Blake will be coming tomorrow, he tells me he will leave after he arrives. He has gotten a little bit more overprotective of me since that night. He never wants to be alone unless it's a must. He really is a good friend

Me: can we go to Naval Hill?

Khanye: sure. Ice cream?

Me: yeah

We stop at McDonald's for get ice cream then drive to Naval Hill. The sun is setting so the view is absolutely stunning

Me: can we just go back to the way things were between us?

Him: we'll get there. It's just taking us a while. Can I ask you something?

Me: yeah

Him: honestly speaking, hand on the bible type of honesty, do you really not blame me for what happened?

Me: honestly, I don't. Above it all I'm grateful that we made it out alive. It could have turned out really badly

He chuckles and I smile. I've missed the sound of his laugh. I don't think I've heard my own laugh in a long time.

Him: it did turn out badly though

Me: but it could have been worse. Thank you for keeping my secret and respecting my wishes

Him: you are my best friend Star and I love you

Me: I love you too buddy

Sometimes you have to go back to where it all started and find yourselves. Find how you started and why you started. Our friendship began on this Hill. It's where I discovered that he brings peace into my life and that he is my safety net. I will always have him and he will always have me. That's the bond we've built over the past 6 months and even though we've been hit by something so painful. We will rise from it.

The moment my eyes land on Blake as he walks into my room, the tears come flooding. I don't know where they were packed but right now they are flowing like a river. He holds, rubs my back and I weep. Seeing him made me realize how much I've missed him, how much I've needed him and how much I truly appreciate him being here.

Blake: did I overwhelm you again?

He is smiling and I have hiccups. I gently push him but he pulls me closer and kisses me. How I've missed his kisses. I've missed everything about him

Me: thank you for pushing to come here. I didn't realize how much I needed you until you walked in

Him: are you hungry?

Me: nah I'm good. I had cereal earlier

I know he is mad at me but he is trying hard not to show it and I'm not going to push him. I went through a hard time, I lost myself and I just needed a moment to breathe

Him: you need to stop running baby.

Me: I'm not running. I'm dealing

I sit up and look at him. He looks hurt which breaks my heart because it was never my intention to hurt anyone

Me: this part of my healing journey is personal. I'm facing my demons and I'm forced to be selfish

Him: so what do I do in the meantime? I feel like I'm losing you. I stepped back because it's what you wanted and I realized that this isn't about me but what do I do in order to help you because doing nothing is making me feel quite useless

Me: I got raped again. The night we got hijacked. They took turns raping me in front of my bestfriend. I've been dealing with a lot and I've been trying to be there for Khanye. I'm sorry that I pushed you aside but you wouldn't have understood.

In all the years I've known Blake, I've never seen him break down. It hurts to see a man break down because we have this idea in our heads that men don't break. We have been taught that men fix what's broken and they should never break. Watching him covering his face and weeping like a child made my heart clenched. The one thing that I've learnt from my life thus far is that as much as my life has been filled with so much pain, I've also been blessed with people who would move mountains for me. The men in my life love me for different reasons and in different ways but they love me and I'm blessed to have them

A lot like friendship

Chapter 13

5 MONTHS LATER

The first year is the toughest year in university. It's such a big adjustment from high school and if you don't find your feet quickly, you stumble often. I've just wrapped up my first year and what a year it's been. I just want to put it all behind me and start next year on a clean slate. It's now December and my friends and I are going on a trip to Grahamstown for 2 weeks. Khanye's parents went on holiday with his siblings and he has the house to himself. It's Me, Blake, Amy, Sihle, Thingo, Khanye, Lisa and Avuyile. The usual suspects. Khanye's house is gorgeous, you can tell his parents are monied. It's one of those glass houses with an indoor pool. I'm taking pictures like crazy, I have a decent phone now thanks to Khanye. He replaced my stolen phone with a Huawei P10.

Khanye: settle in guys then we have to get more alcohol

Me: and food

Khanye: we are covered with food

Thingo: cooked food babe. No one will have energy to cook

Did I mention that Khanye and Thingo are dating now? They are so adorable together, Thingo is smitten and my friend is kinda whipped. Him dating someone in our circle is easier on our friendship because Thingo knows that Khanye is my best friend.

Me: Lisa and I will cook

Lisa: yeah. Might as well get it out of the way before the drinks start flowing

Thingo connects her phone to the sound bar and plays Beyoncé. Exactly the kind of energy we need right now

Thingo: so Star what is vanilla sex like?

Me: vanilla sex?

Lisa: she means sex with a white guy. I don't think I'm brave enough to date a white guy

Thingo: same here. I once read a tweet about the weird shit they do during sex. One guy once laced his dick with cocaine to create some sort of high from the sex. White guys are too freaky for me

I laugh because even though Blake and I have been together for 8 months, we still haven't had sex. We have done everything but the actual sex and I think I'm ready now but I just don't know how to give him the right hints. Amy walks in, she was upstairs freshening up. We've fixed our relationship, I didn't tell her about getting raped during the highjacking and I told Blake not to tell her. I've moved past it. Therapy does help a lot, I'm not wetting the bed as much as I used to before and the load on my shoulders is slowing lifting off.

Me: we haven't done it yet

Amy: who hasn't done what?

Thingo: Star and your brother haven't had sex yet

Amy: oh that's good. You should only do it when you are ready Star. You already have Blake so you don't have to use sex to get him

She says this while looking at Thingo. I've been sensing some kind of vibe between these two since Thingo started dating Khanye but I thought I was just imagining it. Now I definitely know I'm not imagining it

Thingo: well sometimes a guy needs a little something to push him in the right direction

Lisa: sex has no relevance when you are in varsity. Just do what feels right to you. If you want to wait then wait, if you want to seduce a guy then seduce him. Do what feels right to you and flip a middle finger to whoever judges you

Amy: just because we are in varsity, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't have morals. Yho can we not use varsity as a defence for whoring

She grabs an apple and settles on the bar chair. By the end of this week, these two will pull each other's hair out. The tension between them is so intense. Whatever it is, I will get to the bottom of it because I want to enjoy my alcohol in peace this week. I have no

intention of playing referee. I ask Amy if we can talk and she follows me outside. This place is just beautiful, the garden is green with rose bushes here and there and nicely trimmed hedges. Absolutely gorgeous

Me: what's up with you and Rainbow?

We sometimes call Thingo rainbow because that's what her name means. She hates the English version but we use it anyway

Amy: she slept with Khanye

Me: uhm probably because he is her boyfriend

Her: I slept with Khanye

Me: angzwanga?

I've never been one to judge because I know I'm not perfect, I'm far from it actually but hayi I'm judging right now. I'm judging Khanye for not telling me this. He was quick to tell me about Thingo but not about Amy. I'll judge their bedroom shenanigans later

Her: Sihle and I were going through something

Me: you and Sihle go through something all the time

Her: Star

Me: ok sorry but it's the truth

Her: do you want to hear this or not?

Me: I need to sit down

We sit cross legged next to each other on the grass. I need a drink for this conversation because I never saw this coming. Ever

Her: you were busy caught up with preparing for the first semester exams and one night we all went out. We went to some house party at a commune. You know Avuyile and his friends. Anyway Sihle was there with that Luyanda girl. You could see from a mile away

that those two are fucking and she was trying to rub it in my face. Khanye found me crying in one of the bedrooms and one thing led to the other. That was the first time

Me: first time? Kanti how many times have you guys slept together?

She keeps quiet for a few seconds. I know I'm too sober for this conversation. It needs wine.

Her: we are still doing it. I like him Star. He is nothing like Sihle

Me: uhm he is cheating on his girlfriend with you, he is exactly like Sihle. And you

Her: what about me?

Me: haibo mfazi, are you not in a relationship with Sihle?

Her: we both know Sihle doesn't deserve me. I'm just using this time to get over him so that when I break up with him I'll know that I'm done.

I don't get relationships or rather I don't get the kind of relationships my friends put themselves in. Amy is moving from one toxic situation to another. If Khanye can cheat on Thingo with her, it makes him no better than Sihle. What makes matters worse is that we are all friends and we all live in the same house. Yaz angizingeni. I'm am staying out of this

Me: babe I love you but this will end in tears. There is no other way it could end

Her: tears of joy right?

Me: in your dreams

We laugh, what else could we do in this situation. I've told her how I feel about it but I can't make the decision for her. I'll just be there for her with a box of tissues and ice cream when shit hits the fan because it will

Me: how's my mother?

Her: she is still the same old mama Thandi

Me: still living it up at Beauty's corner?

Her: yeah. Mom and I took groceries to her house the last time I was home.

Me: did she ask about me?

She shakes her head. I know I'm hurting myself by asking this question but I'm curious. I always wonder if she just forgot about me the moment I left or if she misses me but deep down I know my mother. She is not bothered by my presence. Whether I'm there or not, it makes no difference in her life

Me: I don't care anyway

Her: Star

I quickly wipe the tears in my eyes and get up. Amy lifts her hand for me to help her up and I do then she hugs me

Her: your mom sucks. She doesn't know what an awesome person she is missing out on

Me: let's go in. I need to finish cooking before the guys get back. Don't sleep with Khanye while we are here please. I don't need drama

The boys get back later, we dish up, eat and chill outside with our booze. I'm sitting between Blake's legs and he has his arms around my waist. Being around these people just makes everything seem ok for me. When I'm with them I get to be fun Star, Star who drinks wine and twerks even though she sucks at it. I'm reminded that I'm only 19 and fun is what people my age eat and breathe

Blake: are you good?

He kisses my neck and pulls me closer to him

Me: I'm good. I love it when you are so clingy

Him: so it's not a deal breaker for you?

Me: nothing about you is a deal breaker for me. You are it for me

Him: you just put in better words how I feel about you. I love you

Me: I love you more

I turn around and kiss his lips. The wine I'm drinking has gone down to coochie because I'm tingling all over. It doesn't help the situation that I can feel Blake's manhood getting hard against me. I can't believe we are dry humping in public

Sihle: seriously guys? Get a room

I don't know which one of these idiots pours an ice bucket over our heads. You'd swear we are the only couple here judging by how they are abusing us the most

Me: you guys are just jealous

Thingo: you guys are rude

Me: ok fine, we will stay away for each other for the rest of the night

The next day I wake up feeling like shit. I really thought Blake and I would have sex last night but we got so drunk and passed out and now that I'm awake, I never want to see alcohol again.

Blake: take a shower, you'll feel better

Me: ngibuyekile

Him: liar. Good morning my Star

He kisses me and I smile. Our relationship is such a weird yet comfortable space. We move on from stuff and we never go back to it. We deal with it then move on. Blake isn't the kind of guy that dwells on stuff but I'm not sure if I'm the kind of girl that just moves on without being mad for at least 7 working days. After freshing up I realize that I'm hungry but luckily I can smell food coming from the kitchen. I get dressed in denim shorts and an oversized tshirt, I put my flops on then make my way downstairs. This upstairs and downstairs life is the kind of life I deserve. It suits me so well. Khanye is in the kitchen and it looks like he is alone

Khanye: morning buddy

Me: wena skelm

I'm pointing my index finger at him and he is frowning. I'm going to confront him about Amy. Yho hayi I want to know why I was denied the tea about them

Him: why am I being attacked?

Me: what have you been doing with my Amy?

He laughs

Him: why is she your Amy?

Me: because she is my best friend and you've been throwing shade at her since day 1

Him: so she told you?

Me: why didn't you tell me?

Him: I didn't want to put you in an awkward position.

Me: what exactly is your plan?

I try to grab a streak of bacon but he swats my hand

Him: wash your hands sisi, we don't want traces of Blake's DNA all over our food

Me: rude much? Anyway start talking

I wash my hands then take the bacon which tastes amazing. He has gone all out with this breakfast situation. He knows his friends are drunkards so they were not going to wake up and help him.

Him: I like Amy but Thingy is convenient

Me: because she is black?

He frowns again and I just shrug my shoulders

Him: what? No man. She was single when I hooked up with her and besides we all know Amy would never leave Sihle

Me: if she left Sihle, would you leave Rainbow

Him: she hates that name

Me: not the point right now

Him: I don't know. I like them both but the chemistry between Amy and I is intense

Me: yho anifebi anifebi guys. Ningangifaki please. I beg

A lot like friendship

Chapter 14

I didn't think it was possible to get sex wrong until Blake and I had sex. It was a mess, sloppy to say the least. I don't know whether it's because my expectations were too high or I thought our sex would be as mind blowing as the oral he gives me but boy was I wrong. I wasn't wet enough, he was too rough and it was just so uncomfortable. We ended up stopping before either of us could climax. My orgasm was never going to come anyway. The imbalance of the chemistry wasn't going to allow it so we slept. I can't help but think that maybe I'm the problem, maybe he was being extra careful or my body was just not in sync with my mind. The next day I wake up at 6am, I'm not hungover because we didn't drink last night. Everyone else drank so that explains why I'm the only one up. After sneaking out of bed, I change into cycling shorts and a sports bra, I put on my running shoes then take my phone and earphones. I don't run, I actually hate it but today I decide to run. I need to clear my head and at least try to figure out what went wrong last night. The plan is to just run around the block but 100m in and I'm already huffing and puffing like a heavy smoker. My fitness is a joke actually. It's basically non-existent. I sit on the pavement trying to catch my breath. Why the hell did I think this is a good idea?

"Are you ok?"

I lift my head and my eyes land on abs before they move up to look at a face. The moment he sees that it's me, he starts laughing

Sihle: since when do you run?

Me: why are you not wearing a top?

Him: because I'm running, duh? What are you doing here?

Me: same thing you are doing

Him: no. I'm running, you are sitting here like a homeless person

He throws a R5 coin at me and starts laughing

Me: grow up please. You are not funny

Him: many would disagree with you. Woza

He extends his hand to me, I take it and he lifts me. We walk around the block, admiring beautiful houses and expensive cars

Me: I can't believe I left a sexy man in bed for this

Him: I'm sexy too so you didn't sacrifice anything

Me: you are sexy? I've never noticed

This feels all sorts of weird. I don't hang around Sihle without Amy. She can handle his nonsense, I can't

Me: why are you such a dick to my friend though?

Him: I'm not a dick

Me: many would disagree with you

Him: don't use my lines against me

Me: I'm just saying it like it is

Him: I love Amy, she is probably the only girl I've ever said I love you to and actually meant it

Me: yet you cheat on her every chance you get, why?

We stop to sit down on the pavement in front of the house. I'm never doing this to myself, this shit doesn't even work. My mind is not cleared

Him: I'm 19 Star, I'm doing what people my age are doing. Amy is just too serious, she already behaves as if she is my wife

Me: that's because she loves you, you moron

Him: eventually I'll stop cheating and settle down with her. We'll get married and have a bunch of cute babies. We still have lots of time for that. Now I'm just having fun

Me: has it ever occurred to you that she might get fed up and leave you?

He laughs, pulls out a strand of grass from the ground and starts playing with it. Sihle would be such a good looking guy if he wasn't a dick. He has these small Chinese looking eyes that close when he laughs and hairy bow legs.

Him: Amy loves me and even if she does leave me, I know I'll be able to get her back when I want to. That's the kind of bond her and I share

Me: stop hurting her. If you are going to cheat, don't get caught. At least sell her dreams ke but le oyenzayo isn't right

Him: I'm discreet, it's these girls that don't know how to handle themselves. Let's go before your boyfriend sends out a search party. We'll run again tomorrow morning

Me: fuck no. I'd rather drink water with a fork than do this shit nonsense again

The house is buzzing when we walk in, I'm not even sweating. Goes to show how useless this whole thing was

Lisa: and then you two?

Me: I went running, he was stalking me

Khanye: since when do you run?

Me: first and last time today. Wasted my time. I'm going to shower

Blake follows me to the room and I don't say anything. Instead I remove my clothes and walk into the en suite bathroom. He follows me into the shower booth

Blake: hey

Me: hey

He takes the sponge from me and pours shower gel on it and starts washing my back

Him: about last night

Me: don't worry about it. It's not a big deal

I don't want to make him feel bad. Sex is a big deal to guys and I can already tell that his ego is bruised. I'm not exaggerating when I say last night was a mess

Him: I want to redeem myself

Me: you don't have to. We will figure it

He turns me around and starts running the sponge on my chest, taking extra care around my boobs making my nipples hard. When he is done washing my body, he washes his own while I rinse the soap off

Me: stop doing that

Him: stop doing what baby? Taking a shower

Me: you know what I mean

He has his manhood in his hand and stroking it while staring at me. I feel my clit twitch as I watch it harden. He closes his eyes and tucks his bottom lip between his teeth as his strokes increase in pace

Me: Blake!

Him: hmmm

Me: stop it

Him: why?

Me: it's weird

He opens his eyes and there is a smirk on his face. Why am I finding him so sexy right now? At this point I'm beyond being just in heat, my nerves are heightened and I'm extremely turned on. He pulls me towards him, kisses me intensely and my whole body comes alive. His hand separates my legs and his fingers find their way into my coochie. I caress his manhood, it's the first time I've touched it and the moan he releases tells me

I should do this more often. I don't know what I'm doing but I know I'm doing it right. He puts his hand on my hand and I stop

Him: keep doing that and I'll cum all over your hand. Let me take care of you

His kisses move down low, the water crashes on his head and he moves me against the cold wall tiles. I raise my leg and place it on his shoulder as he devours me. He eats me out as if he hasn't eaten in days. It feels so good, I never want him out of my thighs ever again. A girl can only dream, right. He inserts his finger in unfamiliar territory and I tense up

Him: relax baby. It will be sore if you tense up

I try to relax as he slips more of his finger in my anus, it's a different feeling yet it feels so good. I squirt all over his face, I did try to contain it but I needed the release

Me: sorry

Him: you taste so good

My legs go around his waist when he is on his feet and I'm back against the cold tiles. He thrusts in hard and I scream. He slows the pace and makes love to me. It feels a million times better than last night. With each thrust, a moan escapes from my lips. I don't want him to finish, I just want him inside me all day, every day. That's how good it feels. We explore and enjoy each other's bodies. I come twice before he releases inside of me then kisses me again

Him: I'm so in love with you

Me: you have definitely redeemed yourself. I love you too

We quickly get cleaned up again only to have sex on the bed. We have two more rounds then decide to take a nap. I am beat. I don't know what happened last night but today has been amazing. When I wake up I have that after sex glow, even my cheeks are shining. I feel so good. Blake isn't next to me. I get up and get dressed in leggings

and a tank top then head to join the others. Everyone is in the pool and I'm starving. I warm up the food I find in the fridge then chill outside while eating. Thingo gets out the water and sits next to me

Thingo: you should go in. The water is amazing

Me: maybe later

Her: what's your friend's problem?

Me: since when is she not your friend as well?

Her: you know what I mean

Me: I actually don't know what you mean. Last time I checked we are all friends so what's this now?

I did say I don't want anything to do with isthembu sikaZukhanye but look at the shit that's happening right now. I can't even enjoy my after sex glow without someone trying to give me frown lines.

Her: she is acting weird towards me and I don't know why

Me: maybe if you ask her what's up, you'll know. Look Thingo, I wouldn't discuss you behind your back to Amy so I'd appreciate it if you don't put me in a position to discuss Amy behind her back. Whatever issues you have with each other, talk to her about it and fix it.

I finish eating and take my plate to the kitchen. I'm not playing referee, someone else can do it because mina andizi.

I quickly change into my bikini and join the others in the pool. This week is turning out to be exactly what I need. I feel free and lighter as each day passes. I made the decision a long time ago that I'd rather use my damage to benefit me than to act like a victim and feel sorry for myself. I don't define myself as a rape victim but rather as a star. A beautiful, burning ball of fire that can't be stopped

A lot like friendship

Chapter 15

The two weeks we spend in Grahamstown counts as probably the best days of my life. It's the most relaxed and happiest I've ever been and probably the drunkest but man I'm having a great time. I have the craziest friends but I love these idiots so much. They have become my family and I'm glad they chose me.

Blake: I don't like this

Me: you must just accept it because it's how it will always be

He hates the fact that I'll be spending Christmas alone at the commune. I don't know where he wants me to be because he knows all too well that going home is not an option for me. It's not like Christmas has ever been a thing at our house. Growing up I've always been jealous of other kids. They had what I wanted so badly, a childhood and a head full of dreams. During December holiday's kids spoke of Christmas clothes, Christmas gifts and Christmas lunches while we didn't even have a Christmas tree. My mother always said that the price of a Christmas tree is equivalent to 6 quarts.

Him: I can ditch my family and spend time with you

Me: and have them hate me for keeping you away

Him: my family would never hate you. They love you

Me: spend Christmas with your family baby. I'll be fine

He isn't happy with my decision but he accepts it. Today is our last day here and we are having a braai. Khanye has been an amazing host, his family home is absolutely beautiful and majority of our stay here has been drama free

Avuyile: we should make this a tradition. Every December we come here

Khanye: so every December I must keep my family out of their home. You are crazy

Lisa: even if we don't come here but we should go away somewhere at least once a year. This has been so fun

Me: I agree. It has been a much needed break from reality

Blake and I spend the rest of the day having sex. You'd swear this is the last time we are seeing each other but I'm not complaining. He has figured my body out and he always knows where I need to be touched before I even know it. If that even makes any sense.

Blake: I'm sure I've made you pregnant

Me: keep dreaming. I'm on the injection. I've been on it since I was 13

He kisses my shoulder then runs his hand through my braids

Him: Good. We don't need any babies right now

Me: we definitely don't

Him: you are so beautiful

I blush. Blake is random like that and I love him for that. Being in a relationship with him has been such a boost to my self-esteem. He has a way of making me feel beautiful. He always tells me that I am as beautiful as I feel. The next day Blake and Amy leave first, it's around 5am and I'm still sleeping but he wakes me up to say goodbye. After he leaves, I cry myself to sleep. You don't know how lonely your life is until you are alone with your thoughts. It hits me quite hard that I'll be spending Christmas on my own but I'll be fine. It's just another day

Sihle: how are you getting back to Bloem?

Me: I'll go book a bus after showering

Him: or I can drop you off. I'm in no rush to get home anyway

Me: are you sure?

Him: yeah. We can leave at 12

Me: shap

I get out of bed, take a shower and get dressed in cut off denim shorts and a muscle hugger I stole from Blake. I'm always stealing his clothes. I tuck it in at the front then tie my braids in a half bun. Khanye walks in while I'm packing

Khanye: are you good?

Me: yeah I'm good. How are you?

Him: conflicted

Me: about?

Him: Amy and Thingo

Me: Amy has Sihle. You have Thingo. I really don't see where you are conflicted about this whole thing

He sighs then throws himself on the bed. It's just the 4 of us left now; myself, Khanye, Thingo and Sihle. Thingo's bus leaves at midnight. I would never put myself in the position Amy has put herself in. Knowingly sharing a penis with a friend and having to watch a guy I claim to like being all lovey dovey with his girlfriend in front of me. Sounds like a full time job I'm clearly not qualified for

Him: Amy says she will break up with Sihle in the New Year

Me: for you?

He shrugs his shoulders. Why am I even asking because I made it clear from the beginning that this is not any of my business and I don't want to be involved in it

Me: tell her not to break up with him. I'm helping you here. Sihle will always have a hold on Amy. You are an awesome guy but you don't stand a chance against the bond those two share. Stick with Thingo. You like her and she is sweet

Him: you reckon so?

Me: yep. I don't want you to get hurt over a fling that's going nowhere and the drama that will follow is not worth it. Trust me

Him: yeah I guess you are right. Thanks for making things a little clearer for me.

We share a hug. Khanye is a prayer answered. I don't know how God knew I needed him because I clearly didn't know I did until I found him. He is the kind of friend every girl needs

Him: have a safe trip Starlight. Call me anytime you need anything.

Me: thanks buddy. I love you

Him: I love you too bud

The moment we drive off, I just feel like taking a nap. I'm feeling really down but I'm trying hard to hide it. We stop at a garage, Sihle gets us tons of snacks then drives off again

Sihle: you can play your weird music

Me: excuse me, my music is not weird

Him: so you say. Play it. Maybe it can cheer you up a bit. You seem really down

Me: it's the story of my life

Him: want to talk about it?

I shake my head and lean it against the window. He plays naked by Ella Mai and hums along. This is one of my favorite songs, I'm a huge Ella Mai fan. I don't know when I fall asleep but I wake up as he parks at the commune.

Him: how does your man handle all that snoring and farting?

He is smiling at me and I flip him the middle finger and yawn. This house is so scary and quiet when it's empty. I don't know when he had stopped at KFC but he has the paper bag as we are walking in.

Him: will you be ok here?

Me: I don't have a choice but to be ok. Thank you for the lift

Him: call your people and tell them that you are safe so I can leave

Me: alright

There is silence for a few minutes and he doesn't leave. He is just staring at me

Me: what?

Him: are you sure you will be ok here on your own?

Me: yeah I will be fine

Him: I am not at ease with leaving you here alone. Amy would never forgive me if something happens to you

He decides to call Amy and they agree that if he wants to stick around, I can give him the key to her room for him to sleep there

Him: it's settled. I'm sticking around

Me: Sihle don't you have family to be with or something

Him: I do but I've spent holidays with my family my whole life. Missing these holidays won't change anything

Ever get that feeling that a person is running away from something but doesn't want to show it? That's the vibe I'm picking up from Sihle right now. There is no sane person that would rather spend holidays with his girlfriend's best friend instead of his own family. He is running away from something

Me: what are you running away from?

Him: we all have our demons Star, you don't see me asking you about yours.

Me: point taken. If you want to talk

Him: I don't. I'm good, let's not make this something deep when it isn't. Let's just agree that we'll spend these holidays how we've always wanted to spend Christmas holidays

He smiles and his eyes almost close. I don't know this side of Sihle, I've never been exposed to it. He is always arrogant, annoying and a jerk. I like the idea of spending Christmas how I've always wanted to spend it so first thing tomorrow morning I'm going on a hunt for a Christmas tree and Christmas decorations

Me: we are going to spend two weeks together

Him: 4 weeks. Your housemates should be coming back the second week of January. I'll only leave then

Me: ok 4 weeks. We need rules

Him: rules suck

Me: they are needed. Firstly don't even think that I will sleep with you or kiss you or any of that funny business

He laughs. I don't understand what's funny because I'm being serious right now. I've watched the movies, people spend time together and they act inappropriate

Him: don't worry yourself Star, you are not my type

Me: good because you are not my type either. Rule number 2, I'm not going to be picking up after you. It's literally the 2 of us here so each person takes care of themselves

Him: fine by me

Me: rule number 3

Him: hayi Nkanyezi kanti how many rules do you have? Did you prepare a whole constitution?

As much as I try not to laugh, I find myself smiling. It's going to be a long 4 weeks but I'm glad he didn't leave. I'd rather have my boyfriend here but Sihle is still better than being here on my own

A lot like friendship

Chapter 16

It's easy to judge a person when you don't know the reasons behind their actions. Sometimes you think you know a person until you realize that you actually don't. That's how I feel about Sihle right now. I really misjudged him but I can't be blamed for that. Naye he presents himself as a proud manwhore so we've grown to accept him as that. The first week that we stayed together, we decorated the lounge and created that Christmas feeling. We set up the Christmas tree and everything. Its Christmas Eve today, we had sweet chili chicken wraps for supper made by him and now we are chilling in the lounge drinking adult beverages and watching corny Christmas movies

Me: the curiosity is getting the better of me

Sihle: you are nosy Star

Me: let's make a deal. I'll reveal something about my so called demons and you will reveal something about yours. What is said here will stay here

Him: I don't trust you

Me: I don't trust you either but it's a risk I'm willing to take

He looks at me with his line eyebrow raised while I just shrug my shoulders. We all know Sihle has the perfect life, the best parents, the looks and the brains. Haibo uGuy is gifted and I don't mean it in the X-rated way. So what demons could he possibly have?

Him: ok fine. I know you won't stop asking anyway. The reason I don't want to go home is because I discovered that my parents have been lying to us our whole lives

Me: you are adopted?

Him: no but my siblings and I have a sister we don't know about. Dad's child that he had before I was born.

Me: your mom knew?

He nods. I won't judge but I'd be so grateful if I found out I have a sibling. Being an only child is lonely. Sometimes I believe that maybe if I had an older sibling, he or she would have protected me and maybe life would have turned out differently

Him: she knew and yet she played along to my dad's lies. That girl has taken over my family. She moved into our house because now she wants to have a relationship with dad. My parents have side-lined us just to ease their guilt over this girl.

Me: so you hate her?

Him: I don't hate her, I hate the way she does shit. She is entitled, manipulative and probably the most selfish person I've ever met. I don't hate her but I don't like her. These holidays she can have my parents to herself maybe that way they will get to see her for what she really is

I start reminiscing about high school and my mind takes me to sports events. Sihle has always excelled in sports and his parents were at every game. Literally every game. His dad was the kind of dad that was by the side lines or under the gazebo with the couch. His mom was his biggest cheerleader leader, her voice was always the loudest at the stands. That's why I say he has the perfect parents. Mr and Mrs Khumalo showed up for their kids. So in a way I understand why he is feeling this way. He has been side-lined and he has taken it to heart

Me: have you tried talking to your parents?

Him: they don't hear me so I've stopped. I'm giving them what they want, to obsess over their daughter without me being a nag to them.

Me: that sucks man but hopefully you'll be able to build some sort of relationship with your sister and things between your parents go back to at least how they used to be

He downs his beer. You can tell that he isn't focused on the TV but he is staring at it regardless. I leave him to get more chips from the kitchen then sit on the carpet again. There is silence for a while before he turns to look at me

Him: your turn. Why are you running away from home?

Me: it's for my own safety and my sanity

He frowns

Him: explain

Me: my mom doesn't know how to protect me. She sells my vagina for alcohol

His frown is intense for a few seconds then it relaxes and pity takes over. I can't stand the look on his face so I look away. I hate that the first reaction I get from people is them feeling sorry for me. When will someone get up and clap for me? Congratulate me for finally taking charge of my life? Applaud me for having the courage to live life even when some days I feel like I'm in hell. I don't consider myself a rape victim, if we are going to put a label on it, rather call me a rape survivor

Him: I don't know what to say. I wasn't expecting that

Me: you don't have to say anything. I don't think there is anything you can say that will change what my life has been over the years

Him: Star I've known you for years, I knew you before I even started dating Amy. How come I don't know any of this?

Me: we are not friends Sihle. We only started hanging around each other when you started dating Amy and this information isn't public knowledge

He doesn't say anything so I decide to change the topic. Deep and dark conversations are not Christmas Eve material anyway.

Me: do you think you will ever stop cheating?

He shrugs his shoulders. I don't know why I'm asking because his girlfriend is now a cheater too. Ubufebe is sexually transmitted here

Him: I don't know. Maybe I will when I find a reason to

Me: a reason like what?

Him: maybe when I want to settle down. I don't know. Let me give you a tip because you are new to this dating thing. Men are risk takers. Cheating is part of us taking a risk,

rattling your feathers and what not. If you continue to take us back after we've played then we lose respect for you because you've lost respect for yourself. Respect is everything to a man. You'll hear that line often and it's true

I don't have to ask because he has made it obvious. He has lost respect for Amy and Amy is in the process of falling out of love with him. Next year is going to be tense for my circle but I will not get myself involved in things that do not concern me. I have a lane and I'm going to stick to it

The next day I wake up quite early, I want to make the best Christmas lunch ever. Sihle bought tons of groceries, well I picked and he paid. I'm searching the internet for recipes and what kind of food is best for Christmas because I'm going all out for this, not for Sihle but for me. It's a year of firsts and I want everything to be to my satisfaction. Call it the start of making all my dreams and fantasies a reality

Sihle: did a tornado pass through here?

He is standing at the door, sweaty and topless with his earphones hanging around his neck. It still makes no sense to me why he must jog topless but I'm not concerned about it

Me: I'm cooking

Him: are there people coming over?

Me: no

Him: then why are making all this food

Me: its Christmas

I'm getting annoyed by his many questions. He must just shut up and leave me alone

Him: a month's groceries being cooked in one day. You'd swear Jesus asked you to organize his birthday dinner party

Me: voetsek

I can hear him laughing as he walks down the passage. Only 2 more weeks left of me having to deal with this idiot. I'm almost at the point of counting down the days.

Blake calls just as I'm making breakfast

Me: merry Christmas baby

Blake: merry Christmas my Star. I miss you so much

Me: I miss you too. You gave me the best sex of my life then disappeared on me

We laugh. I do miss him and my salt levels are at a high right now. Every night I imagine the things he does to my body and find myself with my fingers in my panties. Now that I've had the real thing with him, my fingers are a joke. They still get me there but instead of taking away the itch, they leave me craving for more

Him: I'll fix that next week. I'm spending New Year's Eve with my girl

Did I not scream? This is the best news I'll hear all week. I appreciate Sihle being here but I'm tired of him now. I need to get my groove back with my man

Me: this is the best news ever. I can't wait for you to get here

Him: just a few more days my love. How's your housemate? I hope he hasn't been trying funny things with you

Me: with who? I told him from day one to not even look at me in that way. He said I'm not his type anyway. He knows I will have Amy on the line the minute the dirty thoughts cross his mind

We continue talking for the longest time, me blushing and laughing every 2 seconds. I miss my boyfriend. After talking to Blake, I call Khanye. That's another soul that I miss

Khanye: usisi weBaecation

Me: you are an idiot

Him: are you good? How's it going there at the land of love lives here?

I'm going to block the idiot because he has no sense whatsoever ever. When I told him that Sihle is staying with me, did he not tell me to take one for the team so Amy can break up with him? He is an idiot

Me: I'm not doing that nonsense for you. I though we came to the conclusion that she is no go area

Him: she is sending me nudes for breakfast, lunch and supper. How am I supposed to resist that? She even sent me a video doing nasty things. I'm going to have a hard on everytime I see her and you want me to stop messing around with her? Come on Star

Me: block her then. Ask Thingo for nudes. I don't know what else you want me to say. Stop the nonsense

Him: I'm trying buddy. She is making it hard for me. Literally

He laughs at his own whack joke. I don't entertain him. When this shit blows up, I will deny even knowing them.

Me: you are so stupid. Merry Christmas and bye

Him: I know you will cook because you are corny like that so add korobela nyana to his food.

Me: idiot

A lot like friendship

Chapter 17

The food I cooked turned out amazing, it didn't have a choice because I was striving for perfection. As I'm transferring the food into serving dishes, I hear Christmas carols playing in the lounge. I wonder what this guy is up to now. When I'm done, he walks into the kitchen

Sihle: are you done?

Me: yeah. I just need to dish up then we can eat in the lounge

Him: good because I'm starving

I roll my eyes and he starts laughing. I'm starting to think he enjoys annoying me. I'm a joke to him actually, ndim uHahaha apha

Him: damn, you always within your feels hey. Come, I want to show you something

Me: what?

Him: woza

He makes me close my eyes then takes my hand and walks with me. I wonder what he is up to, the excitement has started building up and it increases as I hear the Christmas music get louder. Then we come to a stop

Him: you can open your eyes now

I slowly open my eyes then gasp. Our Christmas tree didn't have Christmas lights and now it suddenly does. It looks so festive and colourful. I also notice the table set up. He joined two study tables to make one long table then put a table runner across them. It's plain but it's the effort that just has me smiling

Me: when did you do this?

Him: while you were busy slaving away for iparty kaJesu. What do you think? I tried nami

Me: it's amazing. Thank you Sihle. You really didn't have to do this

Him: I wanted to.

Me: I appreciate it

I take pictures of everything. I love taking pictures so whatever chance I get, I will document it. I even take some pictures of Sihle without him noticing. I can't wait to show Amy all of this. I'm sure it will make her relax about me spending Christmas away from home. She has been texting me every day just to check if I'm ok and not lonely. It's weird because not once has she asked me about her boyfriend but then again maybe she has been texting him too

Him: can we eat now or must we wait for Mr Party?

Me: you are so annoying. Come help with the dishes

We set up everything on our little lunch table then I rush to freshen up. I've been cooking all day so I look and feel like a mess. I shower then wear a red t-shirt dress. It's hot

Him: we should pray first

Me: since when are you religious?

Him: is it not Christmas Nkanyezi? A religious holiday

Me: I'm not going to hold your hand. This is already weird enough

Him: just close your eyes please

He says the shortest prayer in the history of prayers then we eat. I smile to myself when I hear him moan in satisfaction. I did say my food taste amazing. He looks at me and shakes his head before taking another bite

Him: I think I just had a food orgasm. Shit Star, this food is amazing

Me: only the best for iparty kaJesu

We eat, laugh and talk about all sorts of silly things. I'm drinking my brutal fruit and he is drinking his Heineken. I'm really having a great first Christmas. I wouldn't mind having this every year with different company of course but I want the same great feeling I'm having right now. After eating we clear up and he washes the dishes then we chill outside. The heat is not playing games

Him: your friend is acting weird

Me: Amy?

He nods

Me: how so?

Him: she has barely spoken to me since we left Grahamstown. I don't know whether she is mad at me for being here with you or there is something else

Me: I don't think it's that. I've been talking to her every day and she hasn't been off towards us being here. Maybe you are reading too much into it

He shakes his head. At this point I'm trying to find ways to change the subject because I'm not about to throw my best friend under the bus. Never

Him: I know Amy. Something is up. I'll just have to wait until she comes back to confront her

Me: where's Kwenzo?

Him: his at home. You are missing him already?

Me: hell no

Him: I saw you guys kissing that other night then next thing usuyajola. You played my boy and he was hurt

I roll my eyes and drink my alcohol. Kwenzokuhle shall be strong. I did say from day one that he isn't my type. He tries too hard and he is annoying

Me: he will get over it

Him: he already has. He still wants to fuck you though. Just to prove a point

Me: never going to happen. He tries too hard to be you so even if I was single, I wouldn't look at him twice

Him: so if you were single, you wouldn't look at me twice?

Me: that's not the point of this conversation

His eyes are burning a hole through my body so I look away. He laughs. I'm not going to entertain him

Him: I know but I'm curious

Me: I wouldn't look at you twice

Him: even if we were both single?

Me: even if you were the last man on earth. I'd rather masturbate until I die than find you attractive

Him: you are lying but its ok. I will never prove you wrong anyway because you are not my type

Me: good because you are not my type either

The days after Christmas and leading to new years were a drag. I wanted Blake here already and Sihle was out most of the time. He would leave in the morning and come back after I go to bed. The only way I knew he had come back is because he would eat the food I had dished up for him. I spend my days on social media or just chilling in the yard. On the 30th, I decide to go to the mall. I want to get sexy lingerie for tomorrow night. I get exactly what I want at Mr Price then shop for a few outfits. I don't care who says what but Mr Price is the plug for us students. After shopping I have lunch at Spur then head back to the commune. It's empty when I get there, just as it was when I left. I call Amy because I'm bored and my boyfriend is apparently busy

Amy: hey Star. Are you ok?

Me: I'm good just bored. How are you? How's home?

Her: I'm as bored as you are. I want holidays to be over so I can come that side. I miss you and everyone

Me: I hope you've been staying away from Khanye

Her: I don't want to fight so no comment. You are the one that has been saying I should break up with Sihle and when I want to do it, you are against it

Me: I'm not against you breaking up with him. I'm against your reason for wanting to do it. You are being selfish. Thingo is your friend, we all live in the same house. I don't care about Sihle. I care about you, Khanye and Thingo.

Sihle already has other people that he is sleeping with. He knows he can get Amy back whenever he wants should she break up with him. They will be fine while our circle crumbles to pieces. Angithi their relationship is written in the stars so they are destined to be together. They must continue with their destiny

Her: but what about my happiness Star?

Me: at what expense? Amy this behavior isn't you. Since when do you cheat? We've watched Sihle treat you like shit for years and you've taken it but a year into varsity and suddenly you are a cheater? Break up with him if you want but don't go after Khanye

Her: if I didn't know any better I'd think you want Khanye for yourself

Me: wow

I hang up before she says anything else. I don't know what kind of drugs Khanye's dick is laced with but clearly Amy is high on it. Khanye has been my friend since day one and I've always told her that I have no interest in him like that. Clearly I've been talking to a brick wall. I decide to stay up and drink my alcohol. I'm not going to call or text her until she apologizes for that rubbish statement. I turn the music up and decide to have a solo dance party. The thing about alcohol is that it can cloud your judgement, it can turn a molehill into a mountain and it can make you feel all sorts of strange feelings. I call Khanye when I'm nicely drunk. It's around 00h30

Khanye: Starlight

Me: light of my life

Him: you sound nicely drunk

Me: it's what December is for. Your makhwapheni accused me of wanting you

Him: what?

Me: yep. She thinks I want you for myself

Him: she is crazy. I'll talk to her. Uphi uBae?

Me: stop calling him that. You'll give your makhwapheni more things to accuse me off

I hear the door unlocking and a few minutes later, Sihle walks into the lounge. You'd think he would be as drunk as I am but he looks sober as a judge. Our eyes lock for a few seconds then I look away and focus on my phone call

Him: she is just crazy but don't worry. I'll deal with her

Me: I'll also deal with her. I have to go. Bye buddy. I love you

Him: I love you too buddy

I toss my phone on the couch then turn up the volume and continue dancing. Sihle turns it off, annoying me

Me: what the hell?

Sihle: you are making a noise. It's late

Me: there is no late in December. Why are you being a party pooper?

Him: well I want to sleep and I can't sleep with all that noise

Me: where have you been?

Him: how is that any of your business?

Me: rude much? Just say that you were out fucking one of your hoes. I'm not going to snitch on you. I cross my heart

Him: you don't know what the fuck you are talking about so just shut up

Liquor courage is trouble at times. It destroys, it knows no boundaries and it doesn't give a fuck. Consequences for who? For what? Liquor courage knows no consequences

Me: you are not the boss of me so don't tell me what to do.

Him: you are not my wife so stop asking me stupid questions

Me: and who is your wife? Amy?

Him: ngiyeke Nkanyezi. Keep that stupid music switched off and go to sleep. Udakiwe

Me: mxm oho

I turn the music back on and continue dancing. I can feel him looking at me and at this point I couldn't be bothered. He must leave me alone and go sleep. The music switches off again

Me: kanti what is your problem?

Him: you don't listen, neh

Me: make me listen ke teacher. You are such a kill joy. No wonder Amy...

I stop myself before I spill a secret that isn't mine to tell. Damn you alcohol

Him: you think I don't know that Khanye is fucking Amy? I've been in this game for much longer than Amy has been but I don't care because I know how to handle Amy but what about you?

Me: what does any of this have to do with me?

Him: your boyfriend isn't at home sisi. He is in joburg with Nat.

I didn't think it was possible for alcohol to evaporate out of a person's system but I think it just did. My heart is racing even though I know Sihle is lying. He is just trying to hurt me but because I'm drunk, my heart believes him

Me: you are lying. Blake broke up with Natalie before I even came into the picture. Stop making shit up

Him: you can believe what you want to believe Star, I don't give a shit about any of it. I'm just giving you a heads up ngoba ubusy uyaphapha la acting fresher than all of us.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 18

After Sihle dropped that bomb on me, I couldn't sleep. I tried but it was just not happening. I tried calling Blake but he didn't answer maybe because the time was 01h15. I must have passed out around 02h00 because when my eyes open again, its broad daylight. I check my phone and it's almost 10h00 and I have missed calls from Blake. The moment I see his name, my mind flashes back to the conversation I had with Sihle. I'm sober now so I don't have the courage I had last night. I can't confront Blake over the phone when he is coming here today anyway. I'll just have to control my emotions until then. If Sihle was telling the truth, I don't know how I'm going to handle that. Blake and I made our intentions clear from the start, we spoke about deal breakers and expectations so he knows where the line is drawn

Me: morning

Sihle: hey

I've just walked into the kitchen to find him sitting on the counter eating cereal. The tension is evident but I won't be the one to confront it. We both said things, he said the most hurtful things so he is the one that owes me an apology. I know I'm not going to get it. Sihle doesn't apologize. He has cheated on Amy countless times and never have I ever heard that he apologized. Amy always complains that he is too arrogant. I get a bowl from the cupboard and pour coco pops in it then add the milk. All this time he is following me with his eyes and not saying anything. I'm not going to say anything either. As I hop on the counter, a distance away from him, he hops off and goes to rinse his bowl

Him: I'm sorry about last night

I don't say anything. He turns around to look at me. He has this soft look on his face, the arrogant jerk is not present today.

Him: Nkanyezi

Me: hmm

Him: I said I'm sorry

Me: is he really with Nat?

He doesn't respond

Me: Sihle, please just tell me the truth

Him: he is with her but not in that way. Amelia and Oliver got into a car accident yesterday so he had to rush to Joburg. Nat is at the hospital because Amelia is her cousin. They are all at the hospital

Me: and you know this how?

Him: your whore of a friend told when she eventually decided to answer my calls

Me: don't call her that

I'm still trying to wrap my head around Blake not telling me about Amelia and Oliver's accident, not telling me he is in Joburg and clearly not letting me know that we won't be spending New Year's Eve together. I get that it was all an emergency but how much time does it take to just type a message to let me know what's happening. So much for me being the one that sucks at communicating. I put him at the back of my mind and focus on this one who is busy disrespecting Amy

Him: what must I call her then?

Me: call her a woman that is fed up. You've been cheating on her for years and when she finally levels up the playing field, you want to call her names? Grow up Sphiwesihle

Him: why couldn't she fuck a guy I don't know?

Me: so your ego is bruised?

Him: she humiliated me Nkanyezi. You don't understand that

Me: you mean she humiliated you the same way you've been humiliating her for years? She gave you a taste of your own medicine. Deal with it.

I watch him as he storms off. I don't feel sorry for him. Karma is a bitch that serves ice cold revenge. This will teach him that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. After

eating and washing my bowl, I call Blake. He takes forever and a day to answer his phone

Blake: hey baby

Me: hey

Him: are you ok? I've been trying to call you

Me: I'm good. What time will you be here at?

He sighs. I'm not even trying to be sweet and throw pet names around. I'm hurt but I'll disguise it as anger

Him: Amelia and Oliver got into a car accident yesterday morning. I've been in Joburg since yesterday

Me: why didn't you tell me yesterday?

Him: there wasn't any time to call you yesterday

Me: you could have texted

He sighs again. My timing is off but it won't be as effective if I prolong this. I can't be the only one that's made to communicate all the time

Him: Star can we have this conversation later?

Me: why not now? Is it because Natalie is with you?

Him: seriously? So we are going to ignore the fact that my friends are injured and you want to focus on your jealousy? You've been living with a man for over 2 weeks now and you haven't heard me saying anything about it. Don't annoy me

Me: because there is nothing to say. I have been living with your sister's boyfriend. Your sister that is my best friend. I haven't been comforting my ex or being comforted by my ex. You are busy hanging around a woman you used to share a bed with and you want to compare that to me living with Sihle? Wow

There is silence but neither of us hangs up. I'm so angry right now. It's the lack of communication, the failure to be accountable and the disrespect that has me wanting to pull out my hair right now.

Him: you are acting as if I'm on holiday with my ex or that I'm here for her. I'm here for my friends and one of them happens to be her cousin.

Me: you should have told me if you have a problem with Sihle being here instead of encouraging it like you did when it was suggested. You don't get to make me feel like shit then turn around and throw stuff in my face like you just did. You should have told me about the accident, about going to Joburg and about not being able to come here. A simple text wasn't going to take much time away from your schedule.

This is our first big fight and it sucks that we are having it over the phone. It sucks that I'm not going to be spending new year's eve with him but something bigger needs his time and attention right now. I must put on my big girl panties and not think about Blake and Natalie

Him: I'm sorry. You are right. I should have communicated with you

Me: thank you. I'm sorry too for shouting

Him: I miss you

Me: your friends need you

Him: trust me. That's all I'm going to ask from you. I love you and only you

Me: I love you too

We hang up. Things between us haven't exactly been fixed but I know we are not going to go back to this conversation again. It's done and dusted. Amy still hasn't texted or called me to apologize and I'm going to leave that as it is. I find Sihle in the lounge

Sihle: so lover boy isn't coming?

Me: nope

Him: I'm not spending New Year's Eve cooped up in here. A friend of mine is having a party in Langenhoven Park. Are you coming?

Me: do I have a choice?

He smiles then shakes his head. I guess I'm ending the year in Langenhoven Park then.

Him: are we good?

Me: are you going to call my friend a whore again?

Him: I'm not going to talk about your friend again. I'm done with her

Me: what happened to "I can get her back whenever I want her"

Him: I can get her back, I just don't think I ever will want her back after this. In actual fact I know I'm not going to want her back. Amy and I are done

He was trying hard to hide the hurt but his voice gave it away so easily. Impilo ivili, liyajika jika. Loosely translated that means life is a wheel that keeps on turning. As much as Amy and I are not on good terms right now, my loyalties lie with her on this matter. I don't support how she has gone about doing things but I've been present for every heartbreak Sihle has inflicted on her. I stand by her in this

We leave the house around 8pm, the weather is acting shady. I'm in black ripped jeans, a light pink lettuce hem tshirt and black Van's. Sihle is also in black jeans, a grey v neck tshirt and black puma sneakers

Him: you see the weather changing right?

Me: it's not cold though

Him: it will get cold. Take a jacket

Me: I want your black baseball jacket

Him: because you don't have your own clothes?

Me: I like that jacket

Him: I like it too and I know you won't bring it back

Me: I will. I promise. It's going to complete my outfit

He looks for it then gives it to me. It looks good on me, it a bit big but that's the kind of look I am going for

Him: uyahlupha Nkanyezi. Let's go

It's a house party and when we get there, it's already happening. Everyone knows Sihle but he keeps introducing me to all these people that don't know me. He gets me a bottle of Absolut vodka and cranberry juice

Him: they don't have your sugary drinks. Are you going to be good with this?

Me: are you going to drink it with me? I can't finish the whole bottle by myself

Him: I don't drink vodka and you don't have to finish it. We will take it home with us

More people come join where we are sitting. Angithi Sihle is Mr popular. I don't even bother catching the names of these people, I'll never see them again anyway. My phone vibrates from my jacket. It's a text from Amy

"Happy new year Star. I'm sorry about what I said about Khanye last night. I was wrong, I know you guys don't see each other like that. I just like him so much and I guess I wasn't thinking straight. I love you, please forgive me"

That's what I have been waiting for. I knew she was going to realize the error in her ways. I respond then put my phone back in my pocket. It's almost midnight and people are now getting closer to the people they want to kiss when the clock strikes 12. Now I really wish Blake was here

Sihle: stop sulking

Me: leave me alone. Shouldn't you be find a girl to kiss at midnight

Him: I'm good where I am

They start counting down and as we scream happy New Year, Sihle pulls me in for a hug then kisses my forehead

Him: happy New Year Nkanyezi

Me: happy New Year Sihle

A lot like friendship

Chapter 19

I end up spending only 3 weeks with Sihle instead of 4 weeks. On the 4th week, Blake rocked up to the commune. It's a great surprise because I have been missing him like crazy and things have been a bit sideways between us. Sihle left when Blake arrived

Blake: I'm spending the whole week with you. I've been a crappy boyfriend so I have a lot of making up to do

He kisses my shoulder. We are lying in bed side to side. He has his arm around me while my ass is resting comfortably on his manhood

Me: how's Amelia and Oliver?

Him: they are recovering well. They have been discharged

Me: that's great news

His hand moves to my boob and he starts fondling it. We haven't had sex since Grahamstown so I already want him inside me the moment I feel his hard manhood on my ass. We have a few rounds, on the bed and on the floor then take a shower together. I'm glad he is here but my mind keeps drifting off to the days he spent in joburg before coming here. I can't help but wonder if anything happened between him and Natalie

Him: what's on your mind?

Me: the coming year. Nothing much

Him: it's going to be a great year. We will grow stronger and you will excel in your academics.

He kisses me. I love how he has a way of making me feel good about myself when I start doubting my potential. It is as if he knows what I want when I want it. It's funny

because as much as he gets me, he still works on finding ways to figure me out. I, on the other hand don't know what I'm doing with this relationship thing. I'm legit just winging it but it seems to be working for us. I hope it's working

Me: are you happy?

Him: what do you mean?

Me: with us and our relationship. Are you happy?

Him: I am. Obviously I wish you were closer and I'd get to see more of you but apart from that I am happy. Are you having doubts?

I shake my head but I can tell he doesn't believe me.

Me: I'm just checking. I'm not having any doubts

Him: are you happy?

Me: I am and I love you

*

*

SIHLE

Sitting in a house full of people and feeling so lonely. That's me right now and it's weird because these people are meant to be my family. My family is fun and never awkward. All of this is just weird for me but I'd rather be here than be bored in Bloemfontein after having the best 3 weeks of my life. I would never share that with Star though but she really made it all worth it. I've never met a girl that is so brutally honest with herself yet so caring and protective of those in her circle. The one thing I've picked up from her is that she invests so much in others but not enough in herself. That's another thing I won't share with her, she will attack me.

Nande: what's up bro? When did you get here?

Nande is my little brother. Nizenande is his full name and he is 14. He is nothing like me, he is daddy's boy while I've always had my mother's heart. That woman loves me

more than all my siblings but she does a good job to hide it. I was her first baby so I'm spoiled the most by her

Me: I got in this morning. Early hours. I've been sleeping all day

Him: I missed you. You missed out on Christmas and new years

Me: it was there as well where I was so I didn't miss out on anything

Him: you know what I mean. Mom will be so happy to see you

Me: let me freshen up and I'll go greet everyone

After taking a shower, I put on black rugby shorts and a vest then make a call. I need to talk to this person. She answers after the third ring

Amy: Sihle

Me: we need to talk

Her: we've said all there is to say to each other.

Me: no. You spoke and I listened. I need to have my say as well

She sighs. If we are really ending this then we are doing it in person. I'm not ending a 6 year relationship over the phone, it's not practical. I want her to look me in the eyes and tell me all the shit she was telling me over the phone then I'm going to fuck all that new found attitude out of her. I love Amy and she loves me. I haven't been the best boyfriend, I'll admit that and if she wants to walk away from us because of my behaviour then that's understandable not this crap. She agrees to come over later today.

Mom: Sphiwesihle, is that you?

Me: hey mom

I give her a tight hug then kiss her cheek. I've missed her but things are still crappy in this house. My older sister is still here, I don't think she is ever leaving but I'm hoping my parents have checked themselves and adjusted how they've been acting

Her: are you ok?

Me: I'm good mom. Just hungry

Her: let me fix you something to eat

Me: where is dad and the girls?

Her: he took them out for lunch and shopping. Asiphe is turning Litha into a little diva

Asiphe is my older sister and Talitha is my little sister. Litha is the baby and my favorite person in the world. She is 9years old now

Me: so Asiphe is here for good now?

Her: it looks that way. She will be going back to varsity for a final year but she is a part of our family now

Me: I see

She hands me a sandwich and a glass of apple juice

Me: thanks mom. So where does that leave the rest of us?

Her: nothing is going to change.

Me: don't kid yourself mom. Things have changed already. Deep down you know that as well. You need to stand up for us because dad is clearly blinded by guilt

Her: I don't want conflict and friction in this house Sihle. We must just make it work for our own sanity

My parents don't hear us when we speak to them. They think things will just magically sort themselves out and they never do. Instead they get worse. I'm done talking about this. They are adults and they know what they are doing

Her: so how are things with you and Amy?

Me: we broke up

Her: again? Sihle why do you continue to treat that sweet girl like trash?

Me: she is sleeping with one of her housemates. What does that have to do with me?

Her: Amy is cheating on you?

Me: yep and she dumped me. Star says Amy is fed up

I finish eating, wash my plate then chill outside with Nande. My mother will take Amy's side anyway so really what is the point in confiding in her?

Nande and I play soccer outside then dip our feet in the pool

Me: so how's high school going?

Nande: Amazing. All I have to say is that I'm Sihle's brother and the rest comes easy. You are a legend at school bro. You also left huge shoes that I have to fill

Me: you don't have to fill them. You can create your own legacy there so that when Litha gets there, it will be even easier for her. So any girls?

Him: I'm struggling in that department but it will happen when it happens. They scare me

I throw a bit of advice here and there then we talk about other things. We joke around and play in the pool. I've missed my siblings, I won't lie. The two weeks I'm going to spend at home will be dedicated to just them. I know dad and I are going to butt heads a lot but I'm prepared for it.

Amy arrives around 5pm, she walks into my room while I'm lying on the bed and going through all the pictures we took on New Year's Eve

Amy: hey

I sit up and keep my eyes on her as she walks closer to my bed

Me: hey

She sits down but doesn't look at me. I haven't taken my eyes off her, I notice that she is wearing makeup and it looks good on her

Her: I'm here

Me: I can see that

Her: you said you want to talk

I get up from the bed and go lock the door then go back to sit next to her.

Me: I want you to repeat everything you said to me over the phone

Her: why should I? You heard me

Me: I want to hear it again because I want you to be sure of it. There is no going back

She sighs, turns to face me and the moment our eyes meet, she quickly looks away

Me: Amy

Her: I'm breaking up with you

Me: why?

Her: because I don't want to be hurt anymore. You treat me like trash and you cheat on me every chance you get. I'm wasting my time with you

Me: you forgot something

She doesn't respond and her eyes are darting all over my room but they don't land on me. This is why I wanted to have this conversation in person. I wanted to see if she really has the balls to say it to my face that Khanye fucks her better than I do. That's the part that pissed me off the most

Me: Amy

Her: I didn't mean that

Me: what didn't you mean?

Her: what I said about Khanye. I just wanted to hurt you like you've hurt me

Me: so you haven't been sleeping with Zukhanye?

There is silence again. I've been pissed off about this and I dealt with it to a point where I calmed down so right now I have all the patience in the world. I'll wait for her until she starts talking

Me: khuluma phela

Her: I did sleep with him

Me: and he fucks you better than I do?

Her: no

Me: but that's what you said. I don't understand you. You know Zukhanye is dating your friend, right?

Her: I'd rather be Khanye's side chick than be with a guy that fucks everything with a vagina. I'm sure if Star wasn't my best friend, you would have fucked her too. I'm tired of your bullshit Sihle. I'm tired

Me: don't bring Star into this. This is about me and you. I'm sorry that I was a shitty boyfriend to you. You didn't deserve the way I treated you but I do love you Amy.

She gets up and starts shaking her head. I get up as well. I know she is going to want to leave after this

Her: your apology is a little too late Sihle. I'm not coming back to you. I'm choosing to love myself more than I love you

Me: it's never too late to apologize and I'm not saying this as a way to get you back because after all of this, I don't want you back Amy. I'm apologizing because I was wrong. I'm being accountable for my actions. I'm apologizing because our mothers are best friends so our paths are still bound to cross and I'd want us to be civil with each other. I'm apologizing because you deserve an apology.

She unlocks the door and walks out without responding while wiping the tears from her eyes. What hurts me the most is that I never saw this coming but at the same time I'm happy for her that she found the courage to end things between us. The one thing I'm taking from my relationship with Amy and this break up is that I'm a shitty boyfriend and I need to do better. I'd lose my mind if some guy treated Litha the way I've treated Amy.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 20

[3 YEARS LATER]

The ending of something is the start of something else. My stay in Bloem has come to an end after an amazing 4years. So much has changed and yet so much has stayed the same. I know that I've grown over the years, I've been hurt and I've cried. I found friendship and I found love. The late teens and early twenties are about mostly fun and that's what I've had but at the same times I got my degree. I, Nkanyezi Enhle Myeni am a holder of a Bachelor's degree in Education. I'm a whole teacher.

Khanye: I can't believe I'm losing my best friend

Me: losing me to who and why? You are not losing me. I'm just moving to another province

Him: and you are going to forget about me

Me: stop being dramatic because we both know you won't let me forget about you. I know you will be calling everyday plus you are going to be a dad now. I can't wait to meet my niece

Amy: or nephew

Khanye broke up with Thingo a few months into our second year and she moved out. I don't blame her for that, I know I would have done the same. Amy and Khanye got together and it was the last that we saw of Thingo or Sihle. I would still see them on campus but we hardly hung out anymore. Every time we had to go out to a club or a party, it was always just Khanye, myself, Amy, Lisa and Avuyile. Sihle stopped talking to me after him and Amy broke up, it clearly goes to show that the only person that was linking us was Amy. His name always pops up on the list of people who view my statuses or my insta stories but he never says anything.

Amy and Khanye are expecting their first child, they are engaged and have moved in together. Khanye works as a junior microbiologist and Amy isn't working yet. I don't think my girl is even looking for a job. We all had our doubts about them but they ignored us and did their thing, look at them now. Happy and in love.

Amy: is my brother fetching you?

Me: yep. I'm nervous and excited. I don't know how I'm going to handle Joburg

Khanye: you will be amazing in Jozi. The same way you were amazing here. I'm really proud of you Star. You kept your head up, you never lost focus and you got what you came here for.

He hugs me and I cry. It's both tears of joy and sorrow. I feel as if I'm leaving my family. In a way I am which is why it hurts so much. Blake and I are still doing our thing, we have gotten through the past 3 years without wanting to kill each other. We have had our fights, Natalie has tried to come at me a few times but we've been solid for the most part. Moving in together is going to be tricky since we've never lived together before but it's another first that I'm willing to explore open heartedly. I'm only moving in with him until I find my feet. I'm not going to be cohabiting forever. I love my own space and my own company

Amy: I'm proud of you too Star. Your mom is really lucky to have a daughter like you

Me: don't mention that woman today. I only need positive and happy thoughts around me

Her: it's a conversation we need to have but obviously now is not the time.

We are having a braai at Khanye and Amy's house, I'm only leaving tomorrow and I start work on Monday. I'm going to be teaching at a primary school in Soweto. Khanye and Avuyile braai the meat while Lisa and I make salads. We are having this meat with rolls because ain't nobody got time to be making pap

Lisa: I can't imagine how Khanye is going to survive without you

Me: the same Khanye who is engaged and living with his fiancé

Her: we both know that no one can ever take your spot in his life. You guys are super tight

Me: I don't see it like that. Khanye and I will always be friends, I know I will always be able to count on him but priorities change. We are getting older

Her: true that. I'm going to miss you Star. Moving into that house all those yours ago was the best decision I made. I made great friends that I hope I will keep for a lifetime

The thing about life and the situations we find ourselves in as we explore it is that it doesn't matter what you go into a situation with. What matters is what you come out with. When I moved here, the only people I knew were Sihle and Amy and now I have a solid friendship with 3 other people.

When the food is ready, we dish up then chill in the garden

Avuyile: I miss being a student

Me: you miss being broke?

Avuyile: I have always been a hustler, I was never broke

Lisa: because you never bought groceries. You smoked weed all day everyday

Amy: but he knew where all the coolest parties were. Most of our fun days were because of Avuyile and his friends

Khanye: yeah that's true

The trip down memory lane has us laughing until we are in tears. That commune was the best place we could have chosen to live at. Blake arrives when I'm nicely drunk. He looks exhausted and sexy all at once plus he smells good. We kiss before he goes into the house. He comes back a bit later, changed and holding a plate and a dumpy

Blake: I'm so tired

Khanye: you should have made her take a taxi or translux

They fist bump and laugh. And to think that these two never used to get along but now they are ganging up against me.

Me: translux? Me? You really hate me

Khanye: it's good for sightseeing

Me: sightseeing on the N1? Amy fetch your boy please before I knock some sense into his head

Khanye: askies sisi, I'm a fiancé. An entire fiancé so put some respect on my title

Khanye is an idiot. Always has been and always will be but he is amazing. He shows up for the people he cares about, he is about doing what feels right to him, screw abantu bazothini syndrome

Me: I need to go to our spot one last time before I leave

Khanye: we should go now actually. For the view

Blake: where are we going?

Khanye: you are staying to take care of my beautiful fiancé

He kisses Amy and leaves her blushing. They are so cute together. Totally obsessed with each other

Khanye: Star and I are going to Naval Hill

Me: yep. Our spot

I grab the jacket I stole from Sihle and the look I get from Amy tells me that she knows it

Amy: that jacket looks familiar

Me: your ex gave it to me

Her: oh. It looks good on you

Me: thanks

We play music as we drive to McDonald's first for ice cream then to the hill. I'm going to miss this view but I know I'll find something similar in Joburg. It's the company that I know I'll never be able to replace

Khanye: how are you feeling?

Me: nervous but excited. And also a bit scared. I have a feeling Joburg will be lonely

Him: your man will be there so it won't be lonely

I shrug my shoulders. It's not going to be the same. I have to make new friends all over again and that's not something I'm good at. I don't want to be friends with Blake's friends.

Me: I'll see. If it sucks, I'll come back and live on your couch

Him: we would love that actually. You are our best friend and we love you

Me: I love you guys too

Another car pulls up as we are chilling there. It parks next to us but we don't pay attention to it until the driver approaches us. I don't think their paths have crossed in the past 3 years. Khanye looks at him but doesn't flinch. My heart is racing because men are unpredictable, next thing I'll find myself having to break up a fist fight

Sihle: Khanye

Khanye: Sihle

Sihle: ugrand?

Khanye: I'm good. Wena?

Sihle: I'm good

He moves his eyes from Khanye to me, he looks at his jacket then smiles softly

Sihle: ya Nkanyezi

Me: ya Sphiwesihle

Him: can we talk for a second?

I jump off the bonnet of Khanye's car and follow Sihle into his. We sit in the backseat and there is silence for a while. I hear him breathing, it's dark so I can't see him that clearly but I know he is looking at me. I can feel it

Him: I hear you are leaving

Me: where did you hear that?

Him: you post about everything so I saw it on your status

Me: stalker much?

Him: I have your number, you gave it to me and yet I'm a stalker. I should get you a dictionary as a farewell gift

There is laughter in his voice which makes me laugh as well. We haven't spoken in so long, you'd think this would be awkward but nope. Sihle is just being Sihle

Me: mxm whatever

Him: you are also a thief. You stole my favourite jacket

Me: you gave it to me

Him: borrowed not gave

Me: I can always take it off if you want it back

Him: nah, keep it. It looks good on you anyway. I just wanted to see you before you leave.

Can this day get any weirder? It's been years but suddenly when I change provinces, he wants to be part of my send off. Yabona amadoda, they will dribble you even ningajoli

Me: that's weird but ok

Him: take care of yourself Star. I am going to miss you

Me: thanks I guess. I should get going

We get out of the car and he pulls me in for a hug then kisses my forehead

Him: happy New Year Nkanyezi

Me: happy New Year Sihle

A lot like friendship

Chapter 21

My first day at work is nerve wrecking, it's a new environment with new people and a lot of young minds. I take an uber to the school, I'm a bit early. My biggest concern was beating the traffic so I'm not late and it has worked out in my favour because I still need to familiarize myself with this place

"Hey"

I turn around and I'm being greeted by someone I'd assume is one of the teachers as well.

Me: morning

Her: I'm Kamo

Me: Star

Her: beautiful name

Me: thank you

I suck at small talk which is probably why I also suck at making new friends. Luckily for me, Kamo is a talker. She leads us to the staff room while giving me the lowdown on everything about this place. I meet more teachers, some young and some that should have retired years ago. After assembly, we have a staff meeting then receive our class register. When all the admin is sorted, I'm excited to meet my kids. I have 35 kids in my class, they are loud, they are active and they ask all the questions which is something I love about them. I'm already positive that it's going to be an interesting year. When the day is over, I stay for an hour just to do some marking. I'm not comfortable with crowding Blake's apartment with my work. I respect his space and fully understand that it's not mine. There isn't much that I have to mark anyway so an hour will be fine. A knock on the door distracts me and I look up. The principal, Mr Khoza walks in.

Mr Khoza: already pulling in the extra hours

Me: I'm avoiding taking work home sir and I'm not rushing anywhere

Him: good. How was your first day?

Me: it was good sir, the kids are lovely

Him: yes they are. Just be very careful with them, be vigilant and create a safe space for them. This community is tough on children and it threatens their childhood. I always ask of my staff to be vigilant of those things that seem off. Kids find it easier to talk to teachers than their parents

Me: noted sir. I'll keep a look out

He nods, shoves his hands in his pockets and looks around the classroom. He doesn't stay long because after that, he says goodbye and leave. I was led to this school by my guardian angel. I haven't forgotten why I wanted to be a teacher in the first place. The goal is still to make a difference and to shape young minds. When I'm done, I leave the books on a neat pile on my desk then request an uber home.

The thing about living with a man that gets to me is the constant need to take care of him. Here I am, dog tired but I'm slaving over a hot stove, I'm running his laundry too while I'm at it. He was complaining this morning that he doesn't have clean clothes because he had to drive to Bloem and didn't get time to do his laundry. This month better fly by so I can at least find my own place to stay. Even if I sleep on mattress on the floor and warm my food in a pot on a two plate stove, it will be fine. As long as I am in my own space.

When the spaghetti and mince is done cooking, I take a quick shower before throwing the laundry in the dryer. Khanye video calls just as I'm about to relax on the couch

Me: Light of my life

Khanye: hello mistress

Me: gwan

The shade he throws my way after I give him such a nice greeting. Mxm people who are not used to nice things. He throws his head back laughing while I give him the middle finger. He is so annoying

Him: I felt that gwan in the pit of my stomach

Me: you are so childish. I hate you

Him: lies. How was your first day?

Me: it was good. I made a friend

Him: already? How could you?

The drama. The hand on the chest and the loud gasp finishes me. Amy has to deal with this idiot for the rest of their lives. My friend will be an alcoholic

Me: Zukhanye unescefe yaz

Him: and you are a heart breaker. Who is this friend?

Me: her name is Kamo

Him: her? Oh kanti you replaced Amy not me. That's a relief

Me: I didn't replace anyone. You are so territorial

We continue talking about Kamo, Amy and the baby. He already wants to visit but he has a pregnant fiancé so he must stay put and take care of her. I miss them so much, it already feels as if I've been gone for so long. Blake walks in just as I'm wrapping up my video call.

Blake: honey I'm home

Me: I can see that

We kiss then he throws himself on the couch next to me. He removes his shoes and kicks them off right there

Me: are you not going to put those away?

Him: I'm so tired babe, can you put them away?

He has already thrown his head back and closed his eyes. I get up, clearly annoyed but I don't say anything. I take his shoes and head towards the bedroom

Him: please bring my flops and my shorts

Me: why don't you just come change in the bedroom?

Him: it's too far plus I've gotten used to changing here while I catch my breath

I roll my eyes but get the stupid flops and shorts for him. He gives me his pants and shirt after taking them off and he remains in the shorts and vest.

Him: having you here with me will take so much weight off my shoulders

Me: I'm not here to be your maid Blake

Him: I know that babe and that's not how I see you. Having you here means when I get home, I won't have to worry about cooking and all those little things that annoy me. It also means I'll get to wake up next to you every day. Our relationship needs that

So many thoughts are running through my mind at this point but I choose not to say anything. I'm living here rent free so maybe picking up after Blake and cooking for him is the least I can do while I'm staying here. We have supper, I wash the dishes while he showers then head for bed. The one thing that has stayed constant is our amazing sex. Sex with Blake is always great, he knows how to get me there and we communicate well in the bedroom.

The next day I wake up earlier than usual to clean around the apartment so I don't have to worry about it when I come back from work. As I'm fixing the couches, I notice that he left his phone in the lounge last night. I'm not even second guessing if I should go through it or not, I make myself comfortable and unlock it. He gave me the password since I love taking pictures on his phone. It makes it easier for when I have to send the pictures. I notice a conversation between him and Natalie and I open it. I scroll up as far as I can and start reading

Nat: I miss you

Blake: I'm not having this conversation with you

Her: how many times must I apologize in order for you to forgive me? It's been years
Blake

Him: you killed my child Nat. I'm not going to get over that. Ever

Her: it was my child too, my body and my choice

Him: exactly so leave me the fuck alone

That is a conversation from 4 years ago. There aren't a lot of texts after that until June of the year him and I started dating

Nat: hey stranger

Blake: stop texting me Nat

Her: block me

Him: I will

Her: we both know you won't. Amelia tells me that you've moved on. With a black girl

Him: I don't see how that's any of your business

Her: never took you for the type that would go that route

Him: bye Nat

She doesn't respond but he texts her again a few weeks later. Mid July

Blake: can we talk?

Nat: we can go into the house

Him: nah, I'm leaving. You can come to my place

Her: alright. I'll meet you there

This was just after the hijacking. I know those dates very well. I would never forget them. The conversation ended there only for her to text him in September

Nat: I'm pregnant

Blake: get rid of it

Her: I thought you wanted a baby

Him: I wanted a baby back then not now. I'm in a relationship

Her: you slept with me knowing very well that you were in a relationship so don't act as if you just realized that now

Him: it doesn't matter. Get rid of that baby

Her: fuck you Blake

At this point my heart is racing, my palms are sweaty and I can feel the tears building up in my eyes. This can't be happening. While I was recovering from a hijacking that led to me getting raped, my boyfriend was having sex with his ex without a condom. He and I have been having sex without a condom for years now. I always get tested every 3 months but the thought of him doing that with someone else just makes my skin crawl. So he doesn't even consider my health. The next conversation they have is in December of the same year. They talk about Amelia and Oliver's accident. There is no mention of a baby so I guess she did get rid of it

Blake: is that my phone?

I quickly turn around. He looks at me then at his phone and back at me. I quickly exit WhatsApp while not taking my eyes off him

Him: Star

I clear my throat then give him his phone

Me: yeah. The alarm went off and I was just switching it off

Him: really? That's strange because my alarm is only set to go off now

Me: I don't know. It made a noise and I assumed it's the alarm

Him: oh maybe it was the battery

He kisses me and my whole body tenses up. I'm not going to ask him, not after I just lied about the reason I was holding his phone.

Him: good morning my Star

I fake a smile, fighting back the tears and resisting the urge to punch him on the throat

Me: morning. I need to get ready for work

Him: we can shower together

Me: maybe tonight. I need to be quick

I cry the whole way to work, the uber driver looks at me with so much pity but I don't care. I need to release these emotions. When he stops by the school, I take a moment to pull myself together

Driver: are you ok?

I clear my throat

Me: I'm fine. How much do I owe you?

I pay him his money and get out of the car. My first stop is the bathroom, I need to fix my face. I call Khanye but it rings unanswered then I call Amy

Amy: morning babe

Me: morning. Did I wake you?

Her: you didn't. Is everything ok?

Me: your brother cheated on me.

Her: he did what? I'm going to kill him. After making you move to Joburg with him, he cheats on you? What is wrong with men?

Me: he didn't cheat on me now, well I don't know but I'm not talking about now. It was 3 years ago.

I tell her about the conversations I found on his phone.

Her: you pushed us away during that time Star. You drew Nat into his bed.

Me: excuse me? Are you being serious right now?

Her: he thought you were sleeping with Khanye

Me: wow. So it's my fault that my boyfriend cheated on me? You are saying this to me after I stood by you through all the shit Sihle put you through. I have never blamed you for Sihle's cheating. Not even once

Her: but you decided to sleep with him, you even rubbed it in my face.

I don't know what hurt me the most between my boyfriend cheating on me, my best friend blaming it on me or her accusing me of sleeping with her ex, who was her boyfriend at the time.

Me: I would never do that to you and deep down you know I didn't sleep with him

Her: I don't know what you would or wouldn't do. All I'm saying is that you can't put all the blame on Blake for this when you also contributed to it somehow

Me: bye Amy

A lot like friendship

Chapter 22

This moment made me realize that this friendship had become one sided a long time ago. Amy knows me, we've been friends since we started high school. I've shared the deepest parts of my life with her, I've been her shoulder to cry on the same way she has been mine. Amy and Blake are siblings which makes me wonder if Amy thinks I slept with Sihle, Blake probably thinks the same thing. I laugh to myself. Wow. I've been on hell of a naive girl. I've been dribbled, not only emjolweni but also in sisterhood/friendship. When the bell rings, I check my face once again then make my way to my classroom. The first 2 hours we do maths and life skills then its break time. I don't leave my classroom which turns out to be a good idea when Khanye's call comes through. As I'm about to answer it, I decide to let it ring. Khanye is Amy's fiance and knowing how Khanye is, if I tell him about this, it will cause friction between them. I don't want that so I'm going to put on my big girl panties and keep it moving. I've survived worse things than being cheated on and being backstabbed by a friend. Kamo walks in carrying to packs of fries

Kamo: why are you hiding? I had to look all over for you

Me: I needed a moment to myself

Her: oh I'm sorry. Am I overstepping?

Me: it's fine, you can come in

She gives me one pack of the fries. I always laugh at the fact that someone one day decided that a toothpick is the choice of cutlery to eat fries in the township. Makes me laugh every time.

Her: I'm so stressed

Me: what's going on?

Her: my housemate ditched now I have to pay the full rent myself. I've been trying to find a replacement and I haven't had any luck

Me: how much is the rent?

Her: R4000 split two ways so it's R2000 each. Do you know someone that needs a place to stay?

The plan was not to stay with Blake long but moving out right now will sound ridiculous, it hasn't even been a week. A lot has already happened and I don't think I still want to be living with him. I love him, despite him cheating on me. I still do love him. He lied to me, he cheated on me and lord knows what else he has been doing. He didn't cheat on me with a random person, he cheated on me with his ex. That means they still have unfinished business, it means it could still happen again

Me: I need a place to stay

Her: for real? That's awesome. When can you move in?

Me: month end

Her: that's cool. I've already paid this month's rent anyway so that's fine. I'm so excited about this. We will have so much fun

I smile faintly. This is not how I imagined my first week being here. I wanted to find a job back home, change my own community but Blake convinced me that Joburg was a better idea. He sold me dreams of this being the best option for our relationship; that it will bring us closer and that Joburg has better opportunities for me. I just got caught up in the idea of my first love being my only love for the rest of my life

Kamo is more excited about me moving in to even ask about my current place of residence which is something I really appreciate. The rest of the day is focused on my work. When the day is over, I request an uber to take me to the apartment. Today I'm not cooking for anyone, I just need to sleep and regroup. I switch my phone off, put on sweatpants and get in bed. I cry myself to sleep. The day I find my happiness, I swear pigs will fly because it's starting to feel as if it's something that will never happen. I don't know who I pissed off in my previous lifetime but that person is still holding a grudge. That's the only explanation as to why pain has permanent residence in my heart. When I wake up, it's dark outside but it seems as if I'm still alone. I close the blind and put the lights on. It's just after 7pm and I'm hungry. There is no way I'm going to cook right now so I order pizza then switch the TV on. My phone is still off and I'm ok with that. Blake walks in a few seconds before they deliver the pizza

Blake: you didn't cook?

That's his greeting to me. I ignore him and take the whole box into the lounge

Him: so you are just going to ignore me?

Me: I'm waiting for you to greet me.

Him: oh I didn't realize. Hey baby

He tries to kiss me but I give him my cheek and he frowns

Him: what's going on?

Me: we need to talk

Him: I'm tired Star

Me: ok shap

I'm not going to force him to talk to me. I'm not going to impose my feelings on him. I know his sister called him so he knows that I know so he will run away with the hope that I will get over it. I'm not going to get over this. I don't know where he disappears to but he comes back changed and joins me on the couch. I watch him as he attacks my pizza, my eyes follow him as he fetches a beer and they stay on him as he changes the channel. It hits me that I've let him walk over me all in the name of communication.

Him: your silence is too loud

Me: you said you are tired

Him: talk Star

Me: you are no longer tired?

Him: talk

Me: for how long have you been sleeping with your ex?

He looks at me as if he was expecting that question. He seems all prepared for this conversation which pisses me off because he is about to throw lies my way

Him: you went through my phone? I thought we don't do that. I thought we trust each other. I asked you to trust me from day one

Me: and I told you from day one that cheating is a deal breaker for me

Him: after I asked you to learn to communicate with me. You got hijacked and shut everyone out. I tried to be there for you but you pushed me away. You pushed me away for months. You didn't want to talk to me

Me: and that justifies you cheating on me?

Him: I thought you were sleeping with Khanye because he was the only person you were talking to. You even shut out your best friend

Amy and Blake are delusional. They are literally the only two people who can't stomach that Khanye and I are just friends. Everyone else that has been around is accepts that it's just friendship but they just can't seem to accept it. I get up from the floor to throw the pizza box away and he follows me. I'm so angry, I'm even shaking

Me: did it occur to you that it was easier to talk to Khanye because he was with me when it happened?

He doesn't respond. He just sits there being umsunu and acting as if I brought this on myself. I hate him and I hate myself for loving him. Yes, I love and hate him all at once

Me: are you still sleeping with her?

Him: I love you Star. I've always loved you

Me: are you still sleeping with her?

Him: no

Me: when was the last time?

Him: can we not talk about this? It's not going to help us, it's going to drift us apart

Me: and whose fault is that? Will you blame me for it as well? Because clearly everything is my fault. I have never given you a reason to think that I'm sleeping with Khanye. He is engaged to your sister but somehow you still believe that I'm sleeping with him. So what will it take for you to believe that it's just friendship?

He tries to hold me but I roughly push him away

Me: don't touch me. I know you are still sleeping with her

Him: I'm not. I swear to you Star. You are here now, I have no reason to be entertaining anyone but you

Me: I'm done with you and this whole relationship. I'm done

Him: don't say that Star. We can still fix this. I love you

What got to me wasn't so much that he was lying to me but it was the inability to be accountable that threw me off. Not once did Blake apologize for cheating on me. Not once did he apologize for putting my health at risk and not once did he apologize for thinking the worst of me. It hurt me to my soul that the one person I praised for knowing me so well doesn't know me at all. When I pictured our lives here, never in my wildest dreams did I think this is how it would be. He gave Natalie the courage to disrespect me. He gave her access to him and our relationship and made the laughing stalk of his circle. Where do I even begin to forgive that?

Me: I'm done Blake. We are done

Him: you are clearly angry and upset right now. I'll give you space and time to calm down. I'm going to sleep over at Phelo's place

He walks away but stops when I speak

Me: I needed you. I was raped and you were fucking your ex

Him: I didn't know you were raped Star. You hid that from me and everyone. How was I supposed to support and comfort you through something I didn't even know you were going through? I'm not justifying what I did but you need to stop playing the victim in all of this and grow the fuck up. I told you that you need to communicate with me, you can't expect me to chase you all the time. You had it rough in the past and it sucks that you had to go through that but it's done now. You can't expect us to walk on egg shells around you just because you were raped.

I don't know where the courage comes from but I slap him then I slap him again, over and over again until he grabs my hands

Him: stop it

Me: fuck you. I hate you

Him: calm down

Me: fuck you Blake. Leave me the fuck alone

I run to his bedroom and lock the door. My cries are loud at first, there is a piercing sharp pain in my chest and I'm struggling to control my breathing.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 23

It takes me a while to get my breathing stable and in the mist of all of that, I think I heard the front door opening and closing. I don't know if Blake left but I'm praying he did so that I don't have to kill him. His words keep replaying in my head, he actually told me to grow up and get over all the shit I've been through. Wow.

After finding my phone, I switch it on and messages come flooding in. It's mostly texts from Khanye and messages alerting me that he had called while my phone was off. He must deal with his pregnant fiancé over there while I handle my own things. I'm not about to drag my problems into their relationship and give them a topic for pillow talk. It's not going to happen. I look for Kamo's number on my phone and call her

Kamo: hey Star, this is a surprise

Me: hey, I know it's late and short notice. I also know that I had said I'd come at the end of the month but I can't stay here another minute

Her: ok calm down. Send me your location and I will come get you right now. Are you hurt or injured?

Me: no I'm ok. I just need to get out of here. I'll send you the location. Thank you Kamo

Her: you are welcome

It is thanks to my lucky stars that I hadn't unpacked yet so it's just a matter of putting the clothes I had already worn into my suitcase. I pack my toiletries and underwear then wait for Kamo. Blake really left. That asshole. No matter what kind of fight we have, I would never say the hurtful things him and Amy have said to me. I have sheltered these two from people that were quick to bad mouth them, I have put our relationships first over my own sanity and look where that has gotten me? Egg on my face. My phone rings, Khanye's name flashes on the screen. I sigh before answering. I'm just so tired of all these people

Me: hello

Khanye: finally. Where have you been? I've been trying to get hold of you all day

Me: what's up?

Him: what's up? Seriously? Star what's going on?

Me: why don't you ask your fiancé?

Him: because I'm asking you. What's going on?

Me: Blake cheated on me and your fiancé blames me for that. I also apparently slept with Sihle and I want you to myself. Oh and how can I forget, Blake also told me to grow up and get over being raped. Basically in the eyes of your fiancé and her brother, I'm the biggest whore to ever exist

He doesn't respond for a while. All I hear is heavy breathing and at this point I don't care. If he wants to take Amy's side then it's fine. I can mourn a relationship and a friendship all at once. It will save me time and tears

Me: I have to go

Him: I'll see you on Friday

Me: no. Don't come here. You are just going to make everything worse

Him: I wasn't asking for your permission Star. I will see you on Friday

He hangs up leaving me in total confusion. I should probably just changed my number, delete all my social media accounts and disappear. Khanye coming here is going to make things worse and if anything happens to Amy and their baby, she will find a way to blame me for it. Kamo arrives, she helps me with loading the bags into her car. She drives a white VW Polo. When everything is loaded, we get in the car and she drives off. No one says anything, only the sounds of the radio fill the space. I've felt pain before but this kind of pain I'm feeling right now is nothing like what I'm used to. Maybe what makes it hurt more is that it was inflicted by the people who used to be my shoulder to cry on. I have to deal with this pain and anger on my own.

Kamo: we are here. I put out a mattress in the second bedroom. You can use it until you get your furniture

Me: thank you

She shows me around, there isn't much to it but it's mostly furnished. Probably her furniture but there is a built in closet in the room and the mattress

Her: should I organize you something to eat?

Me: nah I'm good. Thank you. I just want to sleep

Her: alright. I'll see you in the morning

Me: thanks again for this Kamo

Her: stop thanking me already. You've thanked me enough

She smiles then walks out. She really does seem like a nice person and I pray that we get along and can make this work. I put on a fitted sheet on the mattress then take my comforter out of the suitcase. I'm still using the same bedding I had in varsity. When I'm done sorting out my sleeping spot, I change into pyjamas then switch the lights off. As I'm scrolling through my phone, a text from Amy comes through.

"How dare you spread such lies about me to Khanye? Khanye is my fiancé, not yours and he had nothing to do with the conversation that we had. Stop making him your knight in shining armour and focus on your own relationship. I can't believe you are doing this to me after everything we've been through together. My family took care of you, my family still takes care of your mother but you are not grateful. Now that you've used us and you are good, you treat us like shit. Wow Star, I never thought I'd live to see the day you forget your humble beginnings"

At this point Amy's behaviour doesn't shock me anymore. I'll just blame her hormones and keep it moving because she is clearly delusional, insecure and insane. That's the only thing that makes sense about her behaviour. Spreading lies about her to Khanye? What nonsense is that? Yho. I don't bother responding to her, I just set my alarm and put my phone next to me.

The days that followed were the hardest on me, I am forced to stay strong and professional during the day only to break down and cry myself to sleep at night. I have to remind myself every hour that time heals all wounds. I blocked Blake and Amy's number, I blocked them from all my social media accounts. I want nothing to do with them. Its Friday today and the day just ended but I have tons of marking to do so I'll stay another hour or two

Kamo: are you planning to sleep here tonight?

Me: nope. I'm marking

Her: take work home like the rest of us and come drink with us. Its Friday

Me: maybe another time. I just need to keep my mind busy right now

Her: oh well, it was worth a try. Anyway that's not what I came here for. There is a devilishly handsome guy in the staff room looking for you

Me: my ex?

She shake her head. The smile on her face is flirty and funny so I find myself laughing at her

Me: does the guy have a name?

Her: he said his name is Zukhanye

Me: what? That idiot actually came here. I might as well pack up because he won't let me work

Kamo is raving about how good looking Khanye is while I'm just rolling my eyes. Ngathi kuzoba nzima la. We find him chilling in the foyer pressing his phone. He looks up at me and smiles like the idiot he is

Khanye: Starlight

I roll my eyes

Me: what are you doing here?

Khanye: stop acting surprised. I told you I'm coming

Me: I didn't think you were serious

Khanye: I was. Introduce me to your friend

He is looking at a blushing Kamo. If only she knew ukuthi this one is totally off limits. I'm not going to say anything though. I'm avoiding accusations

Me: this Kamo, Kamo this is Khanye.

Khanye: nice to meet you

Kamo: nice to meet you too

Me: she is my housemate

Khanye frowns. I didn't tell him that I moved out from Blake's place. Angithi he isn't my knight in shining armour so I'll respect that

Khanye: clearly we have a lot to catch up on. Asambe

Me: where to?

Him: I don't know. A restaurant or something because I'm hungry

Me: I want to change first

He punches in the address on the GPS the drives off. Sam Smith is playing in the car which is funny because these are break up songs

Him: are you ok?

Me: I'm fine. I've been through worse

Him: doesn't mean you are immortal. I'm worried about you Star

Me: please don't do that

Him: you are my best friend. You are practically family so how can I not worry about you?

Me: Khanye I'm fine. Amy is the one you should be worried about. She is carrying your child

There is silence until we get to the house. The house is not that far from the school. If you are dedicated to your fitness, you can even walk there. I'm not dedicated and neither is Kamo so we take her car. Khanye stays in the car while I change. I put on floral paper bag pants, white halter neck camisole and tan sandals. I grab my side bag and a cardigan and go back to the car.

Khanye: why are you dressed like you are still in a relationship?

Me: I don't know what you are talking about but leave me alone

Him: single people show skin

Me: Zukhanye sizoxabana

Not that I would ever admit it but I'm glad he is here. I've missed his nonsense but I have not missed him annoying me. He drives us to Maboneng and we have lunch at Pata Pata. I've always wanted to come to this place, mainly just to take pictures under that hanging sign

Him: do you ever not take pictures?

Me: nope. Let's take a selfie

He adjusts his sitting position and we take selfies. Our food arrives, it looks so good. I can't wait to dig in

Him: when did you move out?

Me: that same night I was talking to you. Ngikhathele ilabelungu bruh. I know I sound racist as fuck right now but yeses I'm exhausted. They are so entitled. Blake didn't even apologize and your fiancé amasimba

Him: forget those people Star. They are not worth it. Just do you and focus on your goals

Me: that's the plan. It just hurts because they were a part of my life for so long

Him: which is probably why they think they made you.

Me: bayanya

I've always said that Khanye brings peace into my life, he is a safety net and a comfortable space for me. As much as I was against him coming here, I'm glad he is here. I really do need a friend right now. After lunch, we take pictures under the sign. I make him pose a few times but he soon gets over it

Him: call your friend. I want to experience the Joburg night life

Me: Kamo?

Him: yeah. She probably knows where the great spots are. You are a newbie, I don't trust you

Me: I will ditch you yaz wena. You don't appreciate me

I dial Kamo's number and she takes forever to answer. She is in a noisy place so she is shouting

Me: where are you?

Kamo: Taboo. Please come

Me: alright. I'll call you when we are outside

Her: shap

We drive to Sandton. I don't even think I'm dressed appropriately for Sandton but it is what it is. We find Kamo already waiting for us and we make our way in. She is with her friends and some guys in suits. She pulls me to the side while Khanye sorts out our drinks

Kamo: is that your rebound?

Me: no. He is a friend from varsity. He is engaged to the friend I was telling you about

Her: stop calling that agent of Satan your friend. Anyway he is hot. Can I?

Me: don't involve me. You are both adults, Khanye knows his relationship status and so do you. It's none of my business

We start off with shots then Khanye buys bottles of Krone. He is being bhuti madlisa right now and no one is complaining. We drink, we dance and I'm taking pictures and doing live videos. This is turning out to be exactly what I need. I notice Kamo dancing extra close to Khanye and him enjoying every moment of it. Angizingeni.

Me: men are trash

I'm shouting, Kamo and her friends cheer me on while Khanye laughs and shakes his head

Kamo: we don't need them

She is shouting as well while we toast to all the nonsense we are saying. We leave around 3am, Kamo is driving as drunk as she is while Khanye drives behind us. When we get to the house, I go straight to bed.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 24

The thing about hangovers is that they are made personally by the devil to torture us for liking nice things. That's the only explanation plus alcohol was created by God. Jesus did turn water into wine. I wake up with a pounding headache and a very dry throat

Me: fuck me

I feel like shit but I drag myself from the mattress, find sweatpants and make my way to the kitchen. I need water or alcohol. I'm not sure at this point. Memories of last night come flooding back when I see Khanye in our kitchen. He slept here, clearly

Khanye: morning Starlight

Me: not so loud dude. Morning

Him: you went in hard last night. Here

He hands me something green in a glass, it doesn't look appetising at all

Me: are you trying to kill me?

Him: I'm helping you. Drink up

I do as I'm told and feel like throwing up almost immediately. I wish I could say ngibuyekile but I'm not about to lie. Alcohol is nice

Me: you hate me

Him: drama. You people have no food. How are you still alive?

Me: we have wine for breakfast

He looks at me with a raised eyebrow and a concerned look and I laugh

Me: yho ngiyadlala. We haven't had time to do groceries

Him: go put on decent clothes. I'm buying you alcoholics' groceries

Me: have I mentioned that I love you so much more now that you have money

Him: money I should be spending on my kid

Me: I'm your first born. Let me change then we can discuss my allowance on our way to the mall

Him: you are mad

I quickly wash my face, brush my teeth and change into leggings and an oversized t-shirt. I put on my all-stars and head out to find Khanye on the phone in the lounge. Judging by his facial expression, it's quite an intense conversation. He is on the phone the whole way to the mall so I busy myself with looking at people's statuses. I also check the views on my own status updates and Sihle's name is there as always. Our last conversation plays on my mind and then Amy's accusations cross my mind as well.
Arg

Khanye: yeses Amy can be so annoying sometimes

Me: the mother of your child aka your fiancé

Him: stop it. I know what she is in my life but that doesn't mean she isn't annoying. She went home because; me confronting her about the shit she said to you stressed her out

Me: yho the drama. I don't want to talk about Amy. What happened between you and Kamo?

Him: nothing. We flirted, she wanted to sleep with me but I wouldn't do that to you. I can already picture Amy blaming you for that

We laugh. He loves her, he is obsessed with her but clearly they annoy each other. Not my business, she isn't my friend anymore anyway. We get to the mall, I load the trolley and he pays. Employed friends are the best kind of friends.

Him: this is my kid Star. My first kid and that's the only reason why I'm taking Amy's crap. If it wasn't for my kid, I would have put her in her place ages ago

Me: you must really love her

Him: I do. I love her and I love you. You are my family and my kid will make her and I family. I'm not saying forgive her because what she said is unforgivable but I'm saying at least tolerate her. I don't want my kid not knowing you because you are beefing with his mom

Me: it's fine Khanye. I'll be the rich aunt who teaches your kid about the importance of alcohol

There is this sparkle that he gets in his eyes when he talks about his kid. It's cute and beautiful to watch. I can't think of anyone who deserves this kind of happiness more than Khanye. Kamo is awake when we get to the house, she looks as bad as I did when I woke. We make breakfast together then chill in the lounge.

Me: last night was wild

Kamo: stick with me and you'll have more of those. Too bad your friend doesn't stay this side

Khanye: I'll visit you guys. I had fun last night

Me: Kamo needs to experience the Bloem night life

Khanye: its subtle, she would get bored

Kamo and I get along so well. As time went by I learnt that she came to Joburg because she was running away from her ex that used to abuse her. Apparently he is in jail now. It goes to show that we all have our demons, no one has the perfect life. Kamo suggested I go on a few dates. It's been a month since Blake and I broke up, I've cried and drowned myself in alcohol. Now Kamo thinks I need to be around a hot blooded man. Her words, not mine

Kamo: I'm signing you up for Tinder

Me: I'm not the Tinder type. Strangers freak me out

Her: I'm on Tinder. We'll do double dates. I won't let you go on these things alone

I leave all the admin in her hands. She might as well swipe left or right for me. This is her baby to nurse

Her: this guy looks cute

Me: let me see

She shows me a white guy with brown hair. I'm done with the other race. Andizi. We all have our preferences and this is no longer mine

Me: African only please

Her: PTSD still has you by the boobs

Me: the trauma babe. Never again

She keeps showing me guys, I decline them. I'm finding the whole experiment scary but I'm glad she will be there with me. I would never do this on my own

Her: ok I have a top 3 for you

Me: I'm listening

Her: we have Nqaba Simmons, 30, a financial broker at Simmons Inc

Me: pass

Her: why? He looks good plus he is probably rich

Me: if he is rich and hot, what is he doing on Tinder? I mean he could have any woman he wants

Her: ok point taken. Next I have Lubanzi Barnes, 25, marketing executive

I roll my eyes. These people are not my type. I don't know what my type is but this is not it. These young and rich people are on Tinder to find women like Kamo and I so they can control them with their money and power. Nope I'm staying far from all of this

Her: I might as well just hook you up with Mr Dlamini from our school

Me: he is hot though

Her: that was a joke and you can't date someone at work. Mvelo is hot, just not for you.
We will stick to Tinder

I receive a call while we are busy arguing about Mr Dlamini. It's Khanye.

Me: hey buddy

Khanye: Star, I need you. Amy is in labour

Me: what? The baby isn't due for another 2 months. What do you mean she is in labour?

Him: please just get here. We are on our way to the hospital right now

Me: ok I'll see what I can do

We hang up and I immediately get on my feet. Amy and I haven't fixed things, we actually haven't talked since the text she sent me. However this is also Khanye's baby and Khanye is still my friend

Me: we have to go

Kamo: we? Where to?

I tell her about the call and she agrees to drive us there. We don't even pack, we just grab our purses and drive off. I really hope Amy and the baby will be ok. The one person I don't want to see is Blake but I know he is probably driving there as we speak. We stop in Kroonstad for energy drinks and snacks then continue driving. We arrive at Mediclinic at midnight. Khanye comes to us at reception and he looks a mess. The moment he is close enough, I hug him and he just breaks down

Me: buddy talk to me

Khanye: it's all a mess Star. Everything is just fucked up

Me: please just tell me that they are both ok. Please

Now I'm crying. I don't even know what's happening but he is crying so something bad must have happened

Him: we lost her

A lot like friendship

Chapter 25

Nothing prepares us for death. Even when a person was sick for years right in front of your eyes, their death would still hit you like a ton of bricks. How much more a person that was fine a few hours ago and then suddenly she is gone. How do you even deal with that? Then there is an innocent soul, tiny and fragile that is fighting for her life. She will grow up without a mother. How messed up is that? Then there is Khanye, he doesn't deserve this. This is their first child, they were supposed to be enjoying this moment together but how does he enjoy a birth at the expense of a death? I'm not going to allow myself to feel anything at this moment, this pain is bigger than me. My best friend has just lost his fiancé. I have to be there for him, I need to be strong. I have to be his shoulder the same way he has always been mine. This is not my place to cry and break down. I won't do it.

The doctor had to explain to us what happened because Khanye just wasn't strong enough to repeat what he had been told. Apparently Amy had preeclampsia, she knew but she didn't tell anyone. She knew that when it was time for deliver, only one of them would make it out alive. She was prepared for this but Khanye wasn't. She never let him in and I know it's wrong to speak ill of the dead but what Amy did was fucked up. Khanye had the right to know. Their baby girl is in the NICU, she was born at 32 weeks so she is still quite tiny. Kamo and I stay with Khanye in the hospital, no one is saying anything. I'm just comforting him because it looks like he is going to lose his mind. It doesn't take long before Blake arrives then Avuyile and Lisa rock up. Now everyone is crying except me, I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to allow myself to feel. Kamo and I take Khanye home while the others wait for Amy's parents. Khanye's parents are also on their way.

Me: I think it will be better if you sleep in a different room tonight

Khanye: yeah. Thank you for being here

Me: there is no other place I'd rather be right now. Get some rest

He sits on the bed and I walk towards the door but stop when I hear him sobbing. This is just too painful to watch. He doesn't deserve any of this

Me: I'm really sorry about this

He doesn't respond so I walk out. I don't know how we are going to get through the next couple of days, I really don't.

Kamo: this house is beautiful

Me: I need alcohol

I'm going through the cupboards like a crazy person until I find a bottle of wine and a bottle of whiskey. I put the wine in the freezer then pour the whiskey in glasses for Kamo and me

Her: thanks. Are you naturally this strong or are you pretending?

Me: neither. I'm not in a position to be expressing feelings right now. I need to be there for Khanye

Her: and I'm here for you

Me: I'm fine

I am not fine but it doesn't matter. This isn't about me. Lisa, Avuyile and Blake walk in. Blake looks at me for a few seconds then moves his eyes to the bottle of whiskey on the kitchen counter

Blake: celebrating my sister's death already

Lisa: Blake don't

Blake: don't what? Don't you think it's weird that Star hasn't shed a single tear? She was so quick to take Khanye away from the hospital and bring him home. Did you give him sympathy sex?

Me: fuck off Blake. I'm not going to do this with you. You are grieving and its fine but don't use Amy's death as an excuse to be a cunt. Just don't

I walk out and sit by the grass outside. I'm going to need super strength to get through being around these people. I don't understand why suddenly this has become my fault? I'm celebrating Amy's death? How does a person celebrate another's death? Yho

aboBlake and their rubbish. I've had enough. I take my phone and dial a number I never thought I'd be dialling anytime soon

Sihle: Hello Nkanyezi

Me: Hey Sihle

Him: how are you?

Me: can you please come get me? I'll send you my location. I just need to get out of here

Him: you are in Bloem?

Me: yeah

Him: send me your location and I'll be there soon

Me: shap

I send him my location then wait. Kamo comes out to join me outside. She wraps her arm around me while I rest my head on her shoulder and sigh

Kamo: your ex is a dick

I chuckle softly. Pain changes people. Insecurities change people and I guess that's what happened with Blake and Amy. The switch up happened so fast but maybe if I hadn't gone through his phone, we'd all still be pretending with each other.

Me: arg I've learnt to ignore him. Listen babe, I'm going to go out for a bit. Will you be ok with laba?

Her: I'll be fine. Lisa and Avuyile seem like cool people.

Me: they are. Call me if someone tries to come at you sideways

Her: alright

Sihle texts me to say he is outside. When I get to him, he hugs me then opens the door for me. I don't think he knows what's going on but maybe he does

Sihle: are you ok?

Me: yeah

Him: where are we off to?

Me: anywhere but here. I just need to breathe for a second

We drive around until we get to Naval hill. This is my spot with Khanye but it's also the right place for me to be at right now. We get out and he puts me on top of the bonnet then sits next to me

Him: are your friends having a party or something? Why are there cars there?

It broke my heart even further that he doesn't know. As much as they broke up 3 years ago, this was his girlfriend and friend for years before that.

Me: they didn't tell you?

Him: who was supposed to tell me what?

Me: about Amy. She passed away a few hours ago

The laugh is a clear indication of disbelief and denial. Why didn't anyone think to call him? He stops laughing when he realizes that I'm not joining him in the joke

Him: Nkanyezi are you being serious right now?

I nod

Him: Amy died? Amy Mathews?

Me: yeah

Him: shit

Saying it out loud triggered the emotions for me because without even realizing it, I start crying. We didn't get a chance to fix things, we thought we still had time but little did we know that time was not on our side. I cry in Sihle's arms while he tries to keep it together. It feels good not to have to pretend to be strong right now. It feels good to be able to express my feelings without the guilt. Amy was a big part of my life for a long time. She was like a sister to me but in the last month of her life, we managed to destroy all of that. I'm not going to guilt trip myself for her death but it still hurts that she is no longer here. Sihle and I stay in that position for a while, just crying and being a hot mess. When I start getting cold, we move to the backseat and I lay my head on his lap while he rubs my back. I've calmed down and he is still silent.

Me: you don't have to be strong right now. Being strong is draining

Him: I'm not trying to be strong. It's sad what happened to her but I'm not going to dwell on it

I lift my head from his lap and look at him. His face is dry. He cried for 2 seconds and that was it. Yho amadoda will shock you

Me: Sihle

Him: what? I haven't spoken to Amy in years. We were friends then we were in a relationship and when the relationship ended, it all ended. There is no love lost between her and me. I'm sad for her family but I'm not going to spend my days crying about it

Me: wow

Him: don't do that. I'm being honest right now. I'm not going to pretend. I'm here for you though. Just a phone call away

I don't respond, I just lay my head on his chest and he wraps his arm around me. He smells good and being here with him feels right. I'm feeling recharged. His hand is squeezing my waist and rubbing my stomach. This is the closest we've ever been and his touch feels good. His hand moves up to my boob and he gives it a gentle squeeze. I lift my head from his chest and look at him for a few seconds before leaning closer to him. He cups my face and lowers his face towards me. His lips are soft and cold. He kisses me slowly but I don't want slowly. I need something that's going to take my mind off everything that's happening around me. The kiss gets intense, I climb on top of him and he tightens his grip around my waist. His hands move to my ass, he grabs it while my hands brush over his head. I'm grinding on his erect manhood over his sweatpants

and moaning as if my life depends on it. This is the first time I've been this close to a man since Blake and I broke up. Sihle pulls out of the kiss and looks at me

Me: why did you stop?

Him: because I know you Nkanyezi, you don't want this. You are hurting and you will regret this when your senses come back

Me: I want this Sihle. I need this and judging by the boner in your pants, you want this too

He chuckles and I smile. I'm so horny right now and this conversation is wasting time

Him: I want this but not like this. I want all of you not just your vagina and I'm not about to have sex with you in a car. You deserve more than that

I'm still stuck on him wanting all of me. I try to climb off him but he grips my waist tighter

Him: those 3 weeks we spent together changed everything

Me: that was 3years ago. You kept quiet for 3 years

Him: me telling you how I feel wasn't going to change anything. If anything, it was going to complicate your life and I didn't want that.

Me: 3 years Sphiwesihle. 3years

Him: the number of years didn't matter. I knew that what is meant for me will find its way to me even if it takes 3years or more. And besides, there was no space for me in your life back then.

This is not what I was hoping would happen when I called him. I just wanted to get away from that house but now this has happened and it's Sihle. I can't date Sihle. Yes he is attractive, he is funny and smart but monogamy gives him a rash. I just came out of a messy relationship a month ago, I'm not going into another one with my eyes wide open. I'm not stupid. I am naive at times but I won't be naive about this. Nope.

Me: look, I'm not Amy

Him: I know that

Me: I don't take bullshit. I broke up with Blake because I found out that he cheated on me. You don't know how to be faithful so I'm not going to be in a relationship with you knowing very well that you will cheat on me. I'm not doing that

Him: so you don't have feelings for me?

I have never thought of Sihle in that way. In my eyes he has always been Amy's person. Even when they broke up, I still considered him off limits

Me: wait, didn't you say I'm not your type?

He laughs. I remember him clearly stating that he is not my type and me saying the same thing

Him: you said I'm not your type either yet you were ready to take advantage of me in this backseat

Me: it was a moment of weakness

Him: lies. You crept into my heart Nkanyezi and you are nothing like the girls I've been with. You challenge me, you make me laugh, you are beautiful and you are strong and confident. You are compassionate and you put others before yourself. You make me see life differently

Me: I hate cheaters Sihle

Him: I'm not going to cheat on you. I swear. I would never risk not having you in my life

He kisses me and I allow him. When he pulls out of the kiss, I climb off him and he pulls me closer and kisses my forehead. We stay silent for a while until he speaks

Him: Amy's funeral means you will have to go home

Me: oh crap

Him: how do you feel about that?

I hadn't thought about it. For some reason I just figured the funeral would be here. I'm not ready to face my mother. We haven't spoken in over 4years. The thought of going back to that place is making my heart beat like crazy

Him: breathe. I'll be there if you need me.

Me: I really didn't think about this

Him: you'll be surprised by her. She has changed. I went to see her a few months ago and she asked me about you. She is proud of you Nkanyezi.

Me: you went to see her? Why?

Him: I was checking up on my future mother in law. There is no harm in that. I've already started paying lobola

He says this with laughter in his voice. He is full of nonsense, paying lobola for who? For what? They must leave me out of this

Him: maybe Amy's death is a blessing in disguise. Life is short Nkanyezi, we need to make the most of it while we still can.

Me: I'll see when I get home how I feel about all of this. Anyway you need to take me back to that house

Him: or you can sleep over at my place

Me: tempting but no. I came with someone and I've already left her alone with strangers. Asambe

Him: kiss me

We kiss then move to the front seat. If someone told me yesterday that today I'd be kissing Sihle and making out with him at my favourite place, I would have laughed in that person's face because not so long ago the thought of this sounded ridiculous.

The next day Kamo has to go back to Joburg, it's a Sunday and she has work to go to on Monday. Amy's parents arrived in the early hours of the morning with his sister. It's been a sad space to be in but I've gone back to being emotionless about it all. Sihle has been calling to check on me and I'm slowly warming up to the idea of him and me but his cheating ways are still throwing me off. I can't ignore them.

Mrs M: the funeral will be on Wednesday. We will leave to go home tomorrow and Blake will come with the funeral parlour people on Wednesday morning

Nicole: so what about Jasmine? We are just going to leave her here alone?

Nicole is Amy's older sister. Jasmine is Amy's daughter. Jasmine Lisakhanya Zikhali. I haven't met her, she is still in the NICU and only family is allowed in. Khanye has been weird, he is in and out of his emotions. We have been talking, he has been crying when with me and then he has been iron man in front of the others

Khanye: my parents will be here with Lisakhanya. The hospital will contact them should they need to

Blake: she is a fighter. She will be fine

I'm not going to say anything about this, it's not my place. I decide to be busy in the kitchen with Khanye's mom. She is such a lovely lady. So warm and loving

Mrs Z: I'm so happy that I finally got to meet you Star. I've heard so much about you

Me: you can call me Nkanyezi ma, its fine

Her: oh no, I also want to be fashionable like you kids. So how have you been? Khanye told me that Amy was your friend for a long time

Me: I've been coping ma. It's tough on everyone and it won't do us any good if we all break down. One has to remain strong and be the shoulder to cry on

She nods. She tells me all these stories about how Khanye was when he was growing up and how raising girls is so different than raising boys.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 26

The day before the funeral, I ride with Khanye, his sisters and brother to KZN. I have so many mixed emotions about this trip but I can't avoid it. When we leave Bloem, Khanye is driving and I'm seated in the backseat with his brother, Zubenathi and his sister Ziyanda. Zubenathi is 13, Ziyanda is 18 and his other sister, Zinathi is 20. She is sitting in the front. They will be taking turns with the driving. Khanye's siblings are sweet and caring. His sisters are so much like their mother. I've been given the heads up that Nathi has a crush on me. It's cute and funny because he is trying to hide it and acting all macho about it. I spend majority of the ride sleeping or just browsing through my phone. There are a lot of things on my mind, my mother being one of them. I can't help but wonder what Sihle meant when he said my mother has changed. A part of me is anxious about this whole trip and another part of me just wants to get it over and done with. We stop in Montrose to get food and stretch our legs

Khanye: are you ok? You've been so quiet

Me: I'm ok. I just didn't think I'd be taking a trip back home so soon.

Him: life is just going against all the plans we have made

Me: how are you coping?

He shrugs his shoulders. We are sitting by the dining area in debonairs/ steers. I don't know whether I'm imagining it but he looks as if he has lost weight. He has dark circles around his eyes and the beard is not trimmed. He looks a mess

Him: I don't know. I'm trying so hard not to think about Amy not being here so I shift all my thoughts to Lisakhanya. That doesn't even help because all I see is Amy when I look at her

Me: she is beautiful

Him: and tiny. I'm happy she is still in the hospital because I have no idea how I'm going to raise her on my own

Me: your mom will be around or you can take her to Amy's parents

Him: I'm not going to abandon my child Star. I'll figure something out but she will stay with me

I somehow knew he would say that. Khanye has been excited about his baby for months and even though I doubt he pictured his reality to be anything like this, he would want his daughter with him. We finish eating and leave. Zinathi is the one driving now, Nathi is sitting in the front and Khanye is at the back with me and Ziyanda

Khanye: tell me something

Me: what?

Him: anything that isn't about Amy, Jasmine or death. Something that will make me laugh

Me: I'm thinking of asking Blake to accompany me when I go to see my mother

Him: why him?

Me: so that I can set the kasi dogs on him. They must just bark and chase him until he shits on himself

Ziyanda is the first one to laugh then Khanye and I break into laughter. Hai Blake is annoying and for absolutely no reason. He is acting as if I'm the one that did him foul kanti nix. He is the one that got down and dirty with his skinny Becky with the good hair (eye roll)

Him: Star you are cruel

Me: he drives me insane and not in a good way

Him: he still loves you

Me: uyanya then in that case. They switched up on me overnight. I have to forgive Amy because she is no longer here but Blake owes me an apology

He doesn't say anything and I realize that I've hit a nerve. He didn't want to speak about Amy and me and my big mouth have dragged her into this conversation

Me: I'm sorry

Him: it's ok. You are right. All I'm going to ask is for you not to make my daughter pay for her mother's sins

Me: I won't. I love Lisakhanya

Him: good

When we get to my hometown, my heart sinks. I haven't been here in 4years. I always knew I'd come back here a different person, I just never pictured these to be the circumstances. Khanye and his siblings have booked themselves into a guest house. I help them get settled in then I call Sihle

Sihle: my future wife

Me: hayi tone it down a bit bhuti.

He laughs. Sihle is such an idiot at times. One make out session and suddenly I'm referred to as his future wife. This is how girls end up with their panties around their ankles when they see him. They get impressed by this nonsense

Me: where are you?

Him: I'm at home

Me: I need to get home as well, can you fetch me?

Him: say please

I roll my eyes. Kwaze kwanzima

Me: please

Him: send your location and I'll be there

I send him my location then chill on the couch with Khanye while I wait

Khanye: what's going on between you two?

Me: nothing. I need a ride home and you need to rest

Him: hmmm.

Me: stop it

He has this weird look on his face which I ignore. I'm not going to date Sihle. I don't even take him seriously. The guy is forever chasing skirts

Him: we won't judge

Me: he isn't my type

Him: girl please, since when do you have a type? You've only ever dated Blake

Me: and even he isn't my type

Him: you see how you are but don't date Sihle. Take time off and heal from your break up with Blake

Me: don't give me advice because when I give you relationship advice you don't listen to me

Him: it was that one time and it worked out for the better. Imagine if I'd listen to you, you wouldn't be with Sihle right now

Did my eyes not roll? Since when am I with Sihle? This guy is being forced on me and I'm not going to entertain these people. Khanye is right about taking time off men though. I guess I need to dust up my vibrator and have a reunion. Sihle texts that he is outside

Me: my ride is here. I'll see you tomorrow

Him: be safe, use a condom and teeth are not invited during a blowjob

Him: you need deliverance. Bye buddy. I love you

He gets up to give me a hug

Him: I love you too. Remember, use a condom

I give him the middle finger as I walk out. I'm surrounded by idiots every day of my life. The one that is fetching me, is leaning against his car looking all kinds of sexy. Once you've exchanged saliva with a man, you start noticing the things you've always blocked yourself from noticing. He is in black jeans, a striped black and white t-shirt and black air force sneakers. He also has a black baseball cap on

Me: why are you out of the car?

Sihle: hey Nkanyezi, how are you? You good? Oh I'm good too, thanks for asking

Me: the drama

Him: my hug please

He already has his arms stretched out. I go in for the hug, taking in his scent in the process. Does he really have to smell this good? I pull out of the hug and get in the car

Him: are you ready for this?

Me: I don't have a choice, I can't exactly sleep on the streets

Him: you have so many other options but let's leave that. Should I leave you or should I wait for you?

Me: I don't know. I guess it will depend on what I find there

Him: alright. Let's go check it out

He drives off and my heart starts racing. Memories of the life I used to live with my mother come flashing back at me. I used the coping methods my therapist gave me just to try and calm myself down. I appreciate the silence in the car the most, I just need to remain calm. It doesn't take long for us to get to the house I used to call home. The grass is cut and the gate is different. Even the paint is different

Him: are you ready?

I shrug my shoulders. Here we go. We walk out the car and into the gate

A lot like friendship

Chapter 27

My therapist once said that holding a grudge against someone is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. You punish yourself, you disturb your peace all in the name of hoping that the other person suffers. We are quick to forget that we are only responsible for our own feelings and reactions. We can't control how another person feels or reacts to things. I don't regret leaving home the way I did, it was the best decision I've ever made for myself but I can't help but wonder if I've robbed myself of a relationship with my mother by running away. Deep down I know I yearn for a mother's love, I've never received it. My mother has never loved me, she never protected me and she has never supported me in anything. I've always said that I love her because I have to not because I want to. We get to the door and Sihle knocks. It's in the afternoon, the sun is out and it could be a beautiful day

Sihle: breathe

Me: I am breathing

After a few minutes, the door opens and there she is. Short hair, sober and clean. She smiles when our eyes lock but I quickly look away. She looks nothing like the way she looked when I left here.

Mama: Nkanyezi

Me: ma

My voice is soft. I'm still in disbelief that I'm actually here. She opens the door for us, hugs Sihle then ushers us into the lounge. This house is different. Our old couches are gone and have been replaced with different ones. There is a table and chairs in the kitchen now and there is a TV. Feels like I'm in a totally different house

Sihle: how are you, ma?

Mama: I'm well mfana wami. How are you? Unjani Nkanyezi?

Me: ngyaphila ma

Sihle: I'm well too ma

Then there is an awkward silence. I'm playing with my fingers, I don't have the strength to look up. With all the new stuff in the house, you'd think the memories of pain and suffering would be faint but no. They are as clear as a new day.

Sihle: let me go buy cold drink. I'll be back

I look at him and he smiles faintly. I know what he is doing but I won't confront it. Maybe it's what we need

Mama: ngyaxolisa Nkanyezi

Me: don't do that

Her: I mean it. I'm sorry mntanami. I failed you

I shake my head. I'm not ready for this conversation. I'm not prepared. Everything about being here hurts me. Even being around my own mother is hurting me

Her: there isn't an excuse in the world for what I did, for how I treated you and for everything I put you through. I failed you and I'm sorry. It took you leaving me for me to fully understand the extent of the damage I did to your life. I'm sorry

Me: what did I ever do to you?

Her: nothing Mntanam. You did nothing wrong, it was all me

Me: and yet I suffered the most. You gave those men power over me, you sold your own child to strangers to do as they pleased with me. Your own child that you carried for 9 months; that you gave birth to. You say you are sorry and I don't know what to do with that. It's not going to change anything. I've been hurt, I've cried, I've been embarrassed because I wet the bed but I've healed. I'm a better person now and it took me getting away from you for that to happen.

I'm fighting back the tears while she sobs. I'm not going to sugar coat anything. I will speak my heart because I was innocent in all of this. I know none of what happened to me was my fault. I was a child, my mother was supposed to protect me but she chose her addiction over my own life. She might have changed now but that doesn't change what I went through. Nothing will change that

Her: I don't blame you for hating me

Me: I don't hate you. I hate what you did to me. You are my mother, I could never hate you but you and I will never have a relationship that a mother and a daughter should have. I'm better off without you. This is not me acting high and mighty, this is me being honest because of what I've seen over the past 4 years

Her: angisaphuzi Mntanam. Ngibuyekile. It's been 3years now. I have a job, I'm taking care of myself but no matter what I do or achieve, it can never replace you. I just pray that one day we will find a way to fix what I have broken. I would like to be a part of your life. I'm not asking you to come home but I'd like to have my daughter's phone number, I'd like to have the privilege to contact you when I miss you and to know what is happening in your life even though I won't have an opinion on it. That's all I'm asking for. Maybe the little that you give me, will open doors for more. Angaz but I'm begging you Nkanyezi, just to get to know you

The tears that flow down my cheeks are an indication of pain, of freedom and of washing away the past. I love my mother, I have to love her which is why I never allowed myself to hate her. Instead I loved myself more.

Me: I can give you my number, you can call me and I'll try to reach out as well but don't guilt trip me when I don't call or when I don't take your calls. It's not going to be easy, no two days will be the same but I'm open to at least trying.

When Sihle comes back, he is carrying 2l coke and Romany creams. We have that over a light conversation. I discover that my mother works for Amy's family as their domestic worker which I don't really care much about because it's a job and they are paying her.

Me: I need to buy something to wear tomorrow

Sihle: which means I must take you to the mall now?

Me: yes. Angithi you say you are my future husband, this is the perfect time to start practicing

Mama: he will be a great mkhwenyana. He is respectful

Me: yho mama don't put ideas in his head. I'm just playing

I'm feeling a lot lighter than how I was feeling when we got here. I don't know if that went well or not but it happened and it moved us from where we were at the start of this day. The drive to the mall is also louder than the ride home was

Sihle: so do you have an answer for me?

Me: I'm not getting into a relationship with you or anyone for that matter. I need to do some soul searching. I need to figure myself out, figure out what I want from life and what I want from a partner. My focus right now will be Nkanyezi

Him: and how long will that take?

Me: honestly I don't know

Him: should I wait for you?

Me: that's all up to you. I can't make that decision for you

He nods and focuses on the road again. There is a spark between Sihle and I, I'd be an idiot to deny that we have chemistry but the timing is just off. Umjolo is not my focus right now. Whether I'd still find him attractive after all this, asazi but I won't hold it against him if he decides to move on. We are not together.

We get to the mall and head to Foschini and I immediately head out because I'm not about to pay R600 for one dress. I'm working but I'm not at the 1 dress for R600 level. Not yet. We head to Legit and I find a dress and shoes for R650. Which is reasonable. I got a few casual clothes, toiletries and underwear when I was in Bloem. Kamo and I had left Joburg with only the clothes we were wearing so I had to sort myself out. After shopping, Sihle gets us Pizza and we go to the beach. I've missed the beach so much.

Sihle: are you ok?

Me: yeah I'm good. I'm glad I did this

Him: I'm happy to hear that. Will you stop running now?

Me: I don't know. I like the life I'm living now. I'm happy with my job and the city I work in. I'm content

Him: ok. So about us

Me: there is no us Sihle. I'm not ready for there to be an us

Him: I know that. I'm going to step back again. I don't want to influence you or put any pressure on you.

I don't know why I always find myself in his arms with his lips on mine. It's becoming a habit now. A habit I need to stop before I find myself in exactly what I'm trying to avoid.

When he drives me home, he has his hand on my thigh, I did try to remove it but he kept bringing it back so I've let him. I secretly like it there. We get home, he doesn't come in but he doesn't drive off until I'm inside the house.

The next day I wake up early, Khanye is picking me up so we can go to the funeral together. Sihle will be picking up my mother, he offered and she didn't turn him down. After taking a bath, I get dressed in a black wrap dress and black block heels. I grab my black handbag and shades when Khanye arrives and we leave. It's just after 8am

Khanye: how did it go yesterday? I wanted to call but I figured you needed a moment

Me: it went well I guess. We didn't kill each other and Sihle was there

Him: of course he was

Me: stop it

Him: my lips are zipped

The funeral is held in a church and the service is going to be short. I allow myself to cry as I listen to everyone talk about Amy. They wanted to put me in the program but I refused. I'm not ready for that. From church we go to the cemetery. I don't leave Khanye's side, I know he is acting tough but when the casket goes down, he sobs. This is not how it was supposed to be. We were all supposed to grow old together, we were all supposed to watch our kids become best friends and raise them together. It just wasn't supposed to end like this.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 28

I have been working for 6 months now and I must say I'm loving my job. Seeing my kids is the highlight of each day and I love that they love me as well so coming to school is a joy for them. Their words, not mine. There is a child in my class that has me worried though. When the year started, she was the loud and talkative type, very bright kid too but now she is always sleepy in class, quiet and her homework is always rushed. I ask her to stay behind after school when the other kids leave. Her name is Nolwandle.

Me: come closer Lwandle

I watch her as she slowly approaches my desk. I notice that her uniform is dirty as well but that's probably from her playing during break time

Me: how are you?

Lwandle: I'm fine miss.

Me: today I'm walking you home. Is that ok with you?

Her: yes miss

Me: ok let me just grab my things and we shall be on our way

I pack my bag, we walk out and I lock my classroom. She takes my hand as we walk towards the gate

Me: who do you stay with at home?

Her: my mom, my dad and my cousin

Me: how old is your cousin?

She shrugs her shoulders

Her: I don't know but he is bigger than me

Me: so your cousin is a boy?

Her: yes

Me: and do you like your cousin?

She shakes her head and her grip on my hand tightens. She is tense but we continue walking

Me: you don't like him?

Her: no

Me: is there a reason for you not to like him?

She doesn't respond. I'm trying to get her to open up to me but at the same time I'm avoiding pushing too hard.

Me: Lwandle?

Her: he touches me and hurts me

My heart starts racing. I immediately see myself I her except I didn't have anyone to talk to. My teachers never noticed anything or maybe they did and didn't care to ask

Me: where does he touch you?

Her: on my private part. He hurts me with his thing.

Me: have you told your mom and dad?

She shakes her head. My heart is slowly breaking into little pieces. She is only 8years old and some idiot male child has already violated her. Men don't understand the kind of damage they cause on little girls all in the name of a boner they refuse to control.

Her: I'm scared. They made him come live with us. They won't believe me

Me: I believe you. You know that right?

Her: thank you miss. I wish my mom and my dad would believe me too

Me: maybe if we talk to them together, they will believe you. I'm sure your parents love you and wouldn't hurt you. They wouldn't stay with a person that hurts their child

Nolwandle lives close to the school so it doesn't take long for us to reach her house. We knock on the door and a boy opens the door. He looks about 16 or 17. He looks at Nolwandle then looks at me with panic in his eyes. He is a kid himself which makes me wonder if he knows and understands that his actions are wrong

Me: hello

Him: hello

Me: is Nolwandle's mother home?

Him: yes she is home. Come in

Nolwandle walks in first and I follow behind her. The cousin walks out, he is definitely running. The mother is in the kitchen, I clear my throat and she turns around

Her: hello

Me: hello, I'm Nkanyezi Myeni. I'm Nolwandle's teacher

Her: I'm Busisiwe Jonas, Nolwandle's mother. Please take a seat

I pull out the chair and sit down. She offers me something to drink before calling Nolwandle to join us

Her: how can I help you Miss Myeni

Me: the boy that opened the door for us, is he your son?

Her: no, he is my husband's nephew. His parents passed away a few months ago in a car accident so we took him in. What's this about?

Me: over the past 3 months I've noticed a change in Nolwandle's behaviour. She doesn't concentrate in class, her homework is always rushed and her performance and interaction in class has dropped

She looks at her daughter who immediately looks down. You can easily tell that she is scared right now which pains me because this isn't how it should be. A child shouldn't fear a parent to this extent. What good does it do you as a parent to be strict when your child can't even come to you when she is hurt? Who is the strict behaviour meant to benefit?

Her: kwenzakalani Nolwandle?

Nolwandle doesn't respond, she looks at me with tears in her eyes. I have to constantly remind myself that she isn't me and I have the power to make a difference and change her situation

Me: Nolwandle has confided in me because she is scared to talk to you. I'm not going to sit here and tell you how you should raise your child. It's not my place to do that.

Her: what has she told you?

Me: your nephew is raping your daughter Mrs Jonas

There is silence for a few minutes, I'm fighting back the tears and she is sobbing while covering her mouth with her hand. She looks at Nolwandle then shakes her head

Her: no. Not my daughter. Not my innocent, precious daughter. No. How did I miss the signs?

Me: it is not your fault Mrs Jonas. Now you know, it's up to you what you do with that information

Her: it is my fault. I took my eyes off her, I focused on this monster because I felt sorry for him. I wanted him to feel the warmth of having a family kanti he is doing this nonsense to my child. I'm sending him to jail. He is going to pay for this

She gets up and hugs her daughter. She is crying more than Nolwandle and I at this point. She blames herself, she keeps repeating that this is her fault

Her: thank you Miss Myeni. We really need more teachers like you. Teachers that pay attention and are not just doing it for the money. Thank you so much

Me: please just get her the help she needs. She is traumatized and scared at this point. It's not going to be easy, be patient with her and for what it's worth, talk to the boy first. This could have been a cry for help

She shakes her head. I knew she wouldn't agree to that but it was worth mentioning

Her: I'm taking him to the police station the moment he gets back. No cry for help could ever justify hurting my baby. Nolwandle is 8years old, she is a baby. No Miss Myeni, I'm not interested in his excuses. Nolwandle is my priority right now and I have a duty to protect her

I leave that house with a heavy heart. Rape is and will always be a sensitive matter to me because I've been there. I know the kind of damage it causes and if not confronted, it can be permanent. I just hope and pray that Busisiwe will do right by her daughter.

When I get to my place, Kamo is out. I change into leggings and a crop top then make myself food. After eating, I video call Khanye just so I can see Jasmine. She spent a month in the NICU then she was discharged. Khanye's mother stayed with them until she was 5 months old then Khanye hired a nanny.

Khanye: auntie Star

Me: look at my baby girl. She is so cute. Hello baby. Hey Jasmine

Him: Lisakhanya

Me: they are both her names, I'll call her what I like. How are you guys?

Him: I'm sleep deprived and she is growing. You look horrible, what's going on?

I sigh. Today really took a toll on me but this is one of the reasons why I chose this career. I want to make a difference. I watch as Nomusa, Jasmine's nanny takes her. I

wave goodbye at her and she giggles. She is so cute, she looks exactly like her father just with her mother's hair colour and skin tone

Me: I had a long day at work

Him: the kids have finally turned into little demons?

I laugh. He always says to me that one day the kids I always praise to be angels will one day turn into demons. He hates my job but I don't care. I love it

Me: no. I just came across a rape matter. An 8year old getting raped by her 16year old cousin

Him: oh shit, that's hectic. This is why raising a daughter in this day and age is so scary. I'd die a thousand deaths if anyone harmed my baby

Me: this kid is lucky to have a loving mother that wants to protect her

He sighs

Him: don't make this personal Star

Me: I'm not

Him: you are and you know it. You need to find a way to detach from these situations so you'll be able to help objectively

Me: it's not easy to do that

Him: it's not impossible either. Just try

Me: let's talk about something else. Have you seen Sihle?

He laughs. I haven't heard from Sihle since Amy's funeral. He is still lurking on my Instagram and my WhatsApp but he doesn't say anything

Him: why don't you just call him? It's clear that you want him

Me: I do not. I have a date Friday night

Him: a date with who?

Me: a guy I met on tinder

This idiot laughs at me. This tinder thing is exhausting, I'm only doing it to humour Kamo. We are double dating on Friday

Me: stop it

Him: this is hilarious. Just call Sihle and stop doing crazy things. Since when do you casual date?

Me: since now. I want to have fun

Him: be careful

Me: Kamo will be with me. Just having fun

Him: I'll take your word for it. I need to bath my kid, we'll talk later

Me: love you

Him: love you too

A lot like friendship

Chapter 29

Sometimes you have to be honest with yourself when things are not for you. Be honest and accept it. I tried the whole blind dating slash internet dating thing and it's not for me. Small talk is not my thing, I'm not the casual sex kind of girl so I have no business having Tinder on my phone

Kamo: I didn't think there was a person that sucks at internet dating until I met you

Me: I told you it's not for me. Do your thing girl, I won't judge you

Her: should I get you a cat? I can already picture you as one of those old ladies with a house full of cats

Me: I'm black sisi, cats are not our thing. I've been single for 6 months now. My vibrator has ran out of batteries so many times

Her: because you abuse the thing

I work hard so the sexual frustration will always be there. I know I'm over Blake and that scam of a relationship we had. I miss being in a relationship though, I've dated myself for 6 whole months and now I want to date a man. Deep down I know exactly who the man I want is but I'm just not sure if he still wants me and I'm scared to find out

Me: can we go on a trip when schools close?

Her: where do you want to go?

Me: Bloem. I want to see Jasmine but I know I'll be bored if I'm there on my own. Khanye will be working

Her: aaah Khanye. Sexy, gorgeous, single dad with a cute baby Khanye. Count me in

The faces she is making have me laughing my heart out. This right here is none of my business and I refuse to involve myself

Me: you are nasty

Her: just because you are blind doesn't mean that we are all blind. He has been cleansed, right? It's been 6 months already

Me: I'm not having this conversation with you. So are you game?

Her: yep. Schools close in 2 weeks for 3 weeks. We need to have fun

The two weeks of school dragged for dear life. During the last week, even waking up in the morning was a drag but we got through it. Today we are packing for our trip. Khanye is excited and expecting us. We plan to make the most of these weeks even though we will freeze our butts off. Bloem doesn't play games when it comes to winter

Kamo: you need to learn how to drive and get your license so you can stop abusing us

Me: it's on the top of my list for things to do next year. I promise

We arrive at Khanye's place around 5pm. Judging by how he is still in a suit and tie, he just got back from work. I spot Jasmine on the carpet and pick her up while her father chats to Kamo

Me: hello you gorgeous baby. Hello Jazzy Fizzle

Khanye: yho sisi, don't give my child ghetto names

Me: it's a cool nickname. Stop being a hater

I turn to Jasmine who is pulling on my braids

Me: your dad is a hater

An hour later Avuyile rocks up with Thingo and Lisa. I'm so excited to see Thingo, I haven't seen her in so long. She didn't come for Amy's funeral which I won't hold against her. They stopped being close years ago. I introduced her to Kamo

Me: we should go out

Lisa: in this cold weather?

Kamo: yes. I want to see the city of Roses

Avu: I'm always game for that. You know me

Khanye: let's not forget that we are no longer varsity students so we can't stay up until the sun rises

I change into mom jeans, a polo neck, and denim jacket and ankle boots. My braids are tied in a bun and Kamo is doing my face. I'm not much of a makeup person but Kamo has it in her to make me look like a porcelain doll.

Kamo: and the vibe between Khanye and Thingo?

Me: they used to date but Khanye cheated on her with Amy

Her: drama. So Amy nyana wasn't a saint?

Me: don't let Khanye hear you say that. He might be single but Amy was his fiance and he loved her. She is still a sensitive topic

Her: understood. Check your gorgeous self out?

She gives me a mirror and I'm impressed. I look beautiful. If I had the time and energy, this would be me all day every day. We join the others then call a cab. There are no ubers in Bloem. Civilization will find this place late in life

Thingo: where are we going?

Khanye: Capellos. We are less likely to run into students

Avu: that's funny because we did Capellos when we were students

Lisa: all thanks to you and your connections

We get there, order shots first then cocktails. There is a reason we came here in a cab and that reason is that we are getting sloshed tonight

Khanye: someone must watch Star tonight. She tends to be all kissy face when drunk

Me: phuma kimi. I'm single, I can kiss whoever I want

Avu: drunk Star is my favorite version of Star. Zero fucks given

Me: exactly

I take pictures as always, I drink my alcohol and dance as if I know how to. After the cocktails, we order a bottle of champagne and a bottle of cognac. We are about the expensive life today. We will cry over our bank balances tomorrow. Those are tomorrow's problems. The thing about alcohol is that it gets the blood hot and hormones raging. Kamo and Khanye are making out by the couches, Thingo and Avuyile are vibing and giving us some inappropriate dance moves. They must just take it to the bedroom, klaar.

Me: are you good?

Lisa: I'm good. Just observing Thingo making a fool out of herself

Me: haibo

Her: she is trying to make Khanye jealous and yet Khanye isn't even looking at her

Me: let her be. If what she is doing makes her feel good, let her have her fun. We are not here to judge

I pour a glass of cognac, add ice and soda water then take it back to the dance floor. I'm having the time of my life. I knew coming here would be the kind of fun I need. I'm attached to this place plus my friends are here.

I feel hands on my waist and I quickly turn around. Our eyes meet and I smile. I know I led him here, he is always lurking so I knew he would find me

Sihle: Nkanyezi

Me: Sihle

He looks at me. His eyes shift to the glass I'm holding then back at me. He doesn't smile, he is clearly not impressed

Him: are you good?

Me: yeah and you?

Him: I'm good. Don't leave without saying goodbye

Me: join us

Him: I can't. I came with people but I want to leave with you. Let me know when you are ready to go

He walks away, towards his annoying cousin and some other people he came with. The way he looks so good makes me want to say I'm ready to leave right now. Flash backs of our make out session in his car on top of Naval Hill flood my mind. I can't help but wonder what else he can do to me if we are not in the backseat of a car.

I pull Khanye away from Kamo, I need to talk to him

Khanye: no lecture please

Me: oh no buddy, do you. I won't judge nor lecture. You deserve to be happy

Him: oh ok. So what's up?

Me: Sihle is here

Him: umuntu wakho is a stalker

Me: that is not even close to being the point of this conversation. Focus please. He wants me to go home with him

Him: awesome. Did you shave?

I hit his chest with the back of my hand. This one can't be serious to save his life. Why I still keep him around is a question I ask myself every day

Me: phuma lapho please. What should I do?

Him: do you. I won't judge nor lecture. You deserve to be happy

Me: wow, you are so creative. Dude, I literally just said those exact words to you

Him: I know and they apply to you too. I'm going to sleep with Kamo tonight.

Me: ungamithisi umntana bantu please

I try to sober up for about an hour and then text Sihle that I'm ready to leave. It's just after midnight, I'm almost sober, I'm horny and crazy as it may sound and I miss him.

He texts me back to meet him outside. I quickly send a text to Khanye as I approach the door. Just a heads up that I'm leaving.

Me: I'm hungry

Sihle: the only places that are open now are KFC and McDonalds

Me: let's go to McDonald's. I want a spicy Cajun what what

Him: alright. Don't throw up in my car

Me: I sobered up

Him: such a pity

There is gqom playing in the car as we drive to McDonald's. We get food then drive to his place. I've never been to his place but I've heard the he lives in Woodland Hills now, in some estate. When we were all still students, he stayed in universitas like the rest of us.

Me: wow, how much do you even pay to live here?

Him: I don't pay. My dad bought this house for me as a graduation gift

Me: must be nice. It's beautiful. Everything looks so expensive

Him: I don't know how to respond to that so I'll just say thank you. Let's eat so we can talk and sleep

We sit on the counter in the kitchen, I'm having my burger and he is having a foldover. McDonald's food hits differently when you are drunk and it's the middle of the night. It's so good.

Me: I came here for you

Him: that's funny because you didn't tell me you are here

Me: I thought about telling you but I didn't know whether you still want me or not

Him: do you know now?

I shrug my shoulders. I don't know but here I am with him after he said he wants to go home with me. I don't want to assume anything

Him: hmmm

Me: what does that mean?

Him: let's go to bed

A lot like friendship

Chapter 30

He wanted us to sleep but I wanted to talk so we ended up talking all night. The more we talk, the more I realize that I don't know this guy as well as I thought I did. He has really changed from being the Sihle I knew from high school. I guess it was bound to happen, none of us are still the same people we were in high school

Sihle: what do you want Nkanyezi?

Me: I want you but I don't want the pain and stress that comes from dating you

Him: so how do you expect us to be in a relationship when you don't trust me? I'm here and you are in Johannesburg

Me: I don't know

Him: figure it out. Before we can start this, you need to get to a point where you trust me. Don't judge me based on the person I was while I was still dating Amy

He gets up from the bed and walks into the bathroom. I check the time and its 6am. We haven't slept and I can already feel that I'm exhausted so I allow myself to drift off to sleep. Khanye was right, we are not kids anymore so staying up all night will kill us. When I wake up a few hours later, I'm starving. I'm alone in the bed, Sihle isn't even in the room. I use this time to check on my friends, I call Kamo first.

Kamo: hey you

Me: why do you sound so chirpy?

Her: because I got laid last night and I woke up within cuddles. Why do you sound so grumpy? I thought you went home with a man last night

Me: mxm a man that doesn't want me. It's a long story. Where are you guys?

Her: we are at Khanye's. We are all still here.

Me: alright. I'll be there soon.

Just as I hang up, I notice Sihle standing at the door. He is in sweat shorts. Just sweat shorts and looking like a snack. Nah scratch that, he looks like the whole damn meal.

Me: hey

Sihle: a man that doesn't want you?

Me: it's rude to listen in on other people's conversations

Him: just like it being rude to spread lies about people. Anyway, are you up?

Me: yeah. I'm hungry though

Him: I know. Let's take a shower then go out for lunch

Let's? He did say let's, right? As in take a shower together? This should be interesting. I get out of bed, follow him into the bathroom where the shower is already running. I'm in my underwear and his t-shirt. There was no way I was going to sleep in jeans. I need to be comfortable when I sleep

Him: I don't know how you take a shower but I usually take my clothes off

Me: don't be annoying. So we are doing this?

Him: it's just a shower Nkanyezi but if you are not comfortable with it, you can shower after me or use the other bathroom. Whatever you like

I remove the t-shirt and my underwear while he removes his short and we get in the shower booth. I'm looking everywhere except in his direction. I've gained weight over the past 6 months, my stomach is not flat and my butt has a few stretch marks. Sihle on the other hand has the abs, the v line and the biceps. I want to stare at his gorgeous body but at the same time, I don't want to see him looking at mine

Him: why are you being so awkward right now?

Me: I'm not

Him: you are a bad liar

He pulls me towards him and kisses me. I can feel a shiver down my spine as his lips feast on my own. His hand moves up to my boob and he caresses it gently causing me

to release a moan. I can feel his erection against my stomach which turns me on even more. The kisses move from my lips to my collar bone, down to my chest as he sucks on my boobs. My head is thrown back as I take in all the pleasure I'm receiving. His gentle, every touch is soft and slow which just prolongs all the tingles I'm feeling all over my body. At this point I've forgotten about the insecurities I had about my body a few minutes ago. I'm making my way to heaven right now. His kisses get even lower, he squats in front of my then raises my leg to be on his shoulder and I stop him. The first time I properly had sex with Blake was in a shower, I'm not starting whatever this is with sex in the shower as well.

Him: I haven't even started and you are already stopping me

Me: you refused for us to have sex in the backseat of your car, I'm refusing sex in the shower

He chuckles while staring at me with his bottom lip tucked between his teeth. His eyes are already looking smaller than usual and his manhood is standing at attention. I can't help but stare at it. It's big, it's hard and it's veiny

Him: so this is pay back?

Me: no, I want to but not like this and not in the shower

Him: ok then

He already has me pinned against the cold tiles. He is kissing me again and the wildest idea crosses my mind. I want to taste him. I've never voluntarily given a blowjob before but I want to taste Sihle. I get on my knees in front of him and caress his manhood, I give him a hand job and he groans. I close my eyes, put it in my mouth and suck on it. Khanye's advice comes into my head, "teeth are not welcome during a blowjob" so I avoid using my teeth. His groans turn into moans as his hand lands on my head. This is supposed to be for him, for his pleasure and enjoyment but I'm getting turned on from hearing him moan. After a while, he lifts me up to my feet then lifts me up so I can wrap my legs around his waist. We get out of the shower and walk into the bedroom, still dripping wet. He throws me on the bed and I giggle like a love struck teenager. My legs separate as I feel his warm breath on my thighs. All the hairs on my body are standing, my whole body is tingling and when I feel his tongue on my clit, I release a moan. The way he eats me out has me arching my back and grabbing onto the sheets. It's slow, he is taking his time which is somehow prolonging my orgasm

Me: Sihle

Him: hmmm

Me: please

I don't know what I'm asking for but I want it. He lifts his head then replaces his tongue with a finger, then another one and I'm done. I release a loud scream as my orgasm takes over. He finger fucks me through it which just intensifies it even more. Before I can even catch my breath, I feel him on top of me and his manhood knocking on my coochie. He buries his face on my neck while trying to make his way in. It's a struggle at first, it's been a while for me and there is also the issue of size but nothing is impossible when you are horny and determined

Him: fuuuck

My eyes are shut while I enjoy every feeling about this. He moves slowly at first while I adjust to his size then he picks up the pace. My legs go around his waist as he continues to pump in and out of me. He is moaning in my ear while my fingers dig onto his back. My own moans are getting louder at this point. We change positions and he lays behind me, lifts my leg into the air and inserts himself inside me. His hand is kneading my boob while he kisses my neck

Him: this feels so good

I respond with a louder moan. This is about to go down as the best sex I've ever had. The way he has filled me up, the way he is caressing my body and taking his time with pleasuring me feels amazing. He takes my hand and lowers it to my clit and I get the hint immediately because I start rubbing my clit, slow at first but when he picks up the pace, I do the same as well. The pleasure I am feeling is intense and my orgasm washes over me. I don't even try to control my screams at this point. He flips me over, making me lay on my stomach then places a pillow just under my pelvic area and inserts himself again

Him: oh shit

He thrusts a few times before I hear a loud groan and he collapses on top of me. He places wet kisses on my neck while breathing heavily. That was amazing, I won't even lie.

Him: nyakthanda Nkanyezi

I don't respond, I don't have the energy to say anything right now. After a few minutes, he removes himself from me, gets off the bed and returns with a towel. He wipes me clean then wipes himself before tossing it aside. We cuddle without saying anything to each other, he is rubbing my back while I'm drawing circles on his chest. I'm still trying to wrap my head around what just happened when I feel his lips on my forehead

Him: we should go get food

Me: yes we should

I lift my body up and look at him, only to find him looking right back at me

Him: you are beautiful and I love your body almost as much as I love you

Me: don't say things you don't mean

Him: I won't. Stop fighting the inevitable. Trust me. I'm not going to cheat on you. I've grown up

Me: ok

Him: good. Let's take a quick shower and get out of here

Me: you go first while I clear up la

He kisses me again before getting off the bed

A lot like friendship

Chapter 31

I've been with this man for over 12 hours, just the two of us getting up to no good. I honestly have no regrets, I'm happy and I deserve this. I'm just praying that he doesn't screw me over because I'm forcing myself not to judge him based on his past. We are starting this on a clean slate.

Me: Sihle

Sihle: yes babe

I smile to myself because that catches me off guard. Never in a million years did I think Sihle would ever refer to me as babe.

Me: I need to change

Him: you are fine though

Me: I'm in yesterday's clothes and not wearing underwear. I need to change

He gives me that seductive look the moment I mention that I'm not wearing underwear but I quickly shut him down. I'm hungry

Me: don't even think about it

Him: I said nothing. Let's have lunch then I'll drive you to your friends

We have lunch at The Lbow Room. It's a restaurant close to where he stays, it looks all fancy and stuff just like everything in this area. I order a burger and coke while he orders something that sounds all sorts of fancy

Him: so when am I going to see my girlfriend again?

Me: I'm here for 3 weeks. We will make time

Him: or you can just stay with me for these coming 3 weeks

Me: tempting but that would make me a bad friend. I'll find a way to balance it all out. I promise.

Him: ok baby, I'll hold you to that promise. From here we have to pass by clicks so we can get the morning after pill

Me: oh shit, yes we must do that. I haven't had my injection for months now. I figured I don't need it because I was single

It's a good thing he remembered because a baby is the furthest thing from my plans right now. I need to get a license then buy myself a car. That's the goal right now

Him: so will you go back on it now that you have a man?

Me: yes. I don't like stressing about morning afters and pregnancy

Him: so that means we won't be using a condom?

Me: I'm also on Prep but I don't know your status so I'd rather be safe than sorry

Him: we can test together when we get to clicks, how about that? We can even make it a thing to test together every three months. I'm sure that will also help you with your trust issues

I squint my eyes at him and he isn't moved by my reaction

Him: don't give me that look

Me: you are making me out to be paranoid

Him: are you not? Babe, you already have it in your head that I'm going to cheat on you, that I'm going to hurt you and treat you like trash. I'm just trying to get you to trust me

Me: you don't get it. I was her best friend, she told me everything and yet I still fell for you

Him: I don't know what you want me to say Nkanyezi. You are the girl that changed everything for me, it was because of you that I got to let Amy go that easily and it was because of what I feel for you that I decided to do better. I didn't decide a few hours ago or a few months ago, I decided when Amy and I broke up. I want to be with you and only you. I want to give you my surname, I want you to be the mother of children and I

want to live life with you. I love you and I loved Amy but I just didn't see in her what I see in you. That's why you can't compare our relationship to the one I had with Amy

I'm fighting with myself about whether agreeing to this was a good idea or not. He has a point though, I should just wipe everything I know about him and Amy from my mind but it's not easy. If he screws me over then that will be on him and I'll walk away

Me: I'm trying

Him: that's all I'm asking for. We will make this work, I promise. I've waited too long for you

After lunch he drives us to clicks. We get the morning after pill, do the counselling before the test and then get tested. We leave after getting our results. When we get to the car, I take the pill then he drives me to Khanye's place. It's just after 3pm, I'm still in yesterday's clothes and about to do the walk of shame. Kunzima for me. He parks outside then turns the engine off before taking my hand into his

Me: I don't want to leave

Him: you are the one that wants to leave me for your friends

Me: will I see you tomorrow?

Him: do you want to see me tomorrow?

I nod. If I can pull off seeing him every day, I'll be a happy girl. He leans closer to me and we kiss for what feels like the longest time then I pull out of the kiss and peck his lips

Him: if I end up missing you tonight, I'm fetching you

Me: Sihle, no. I have to spend time with my friends. I'll see you tomorrow

Him: alright baby. Have fun with your people

Me: text me when you get home

I get out the car after kissing him again then call Khanye to open the gate for me. Sihle only drives off once I've entered the gate

Khanye: the walk of shame

Me: voetsek

Kamo: you look better than you sounded this morning

Avuyile: she even has the 'just fucked' hair

Me: stop lying Avuyile mahn

He laughs at me as I walk past them and into the room I'm using. I change into sweatpants and a hoodie and join them in the lounge. They are watching a movie on Netflix. There is popcorn and snacks everywhere. Hangover is clearly still nysing them

Me: where is my Jazzy Fizzle?

Khanye: she is taking a nap

Me: and we are watching a movie on a Saturday because?

Thingo: because alcohol fucked us over last night. No one has the energy to do anything

Me: so what are we eating for supper?

Lisa: pizza and hot wings. Someone just needs to go to buy

I look at them and they all look like zombies. I sobered up early and had great sex so I'm the only fresh looking one here but I can't drive so I can't go get food on my own

Me: Khanye and I will go get food later

Khanye: cool

Sihle texts me that he is home. I'm not even going to try and focus on this movie so I might as well chat to my man.

Me: these people are so hungover. I'm chilling with zombies

Sihle: that's what you get for ditching me

Me: you need to learn to share

Him: I'll try as long as you find a balance. I really don't know how we are going to make the long distance work but I'm willing to try anything that will be possible

Me: I think we can work around seeing each other for two weekends in a month. We'll alternate between Joburg and Bloem. I'll come here for school holidays

Him: for a person who didn't want to be in a relationship with me, you seem to have it all figured out

I laugh to myself as I remember myself saying he is not my type. Look at me now, going gaga over him

Khanye: Star is in the land of love lives here. Look at her blushing while being rude

Kamo: hayi this Sihle guy is clearly doing something right. Look at her

Me: seriously guys? Leave me alone

Lisa: stop being rude

Me: I'm not being rude. This movie was already halfway through when I arrived, I don't know what's going on

Khanye: it's almost over then we can go get food

I send my last text to Sihle telling him I have to go since I'm being judged for being rude. The moment the movie finishes, I get up on my feet.

Me: asambe

Khanye: ok let me grab my phone and my wallet

He disappears into the direction of his bedroom. Kamo comes to me and we walk towards the garage

Me: how was it?

Kamo: awkward at first then it became amazing.

Me: protection?

Her: yes, definitely. Not a risk I was willing to take

Me: good girl. Whatever you guys are doing, don't let me get caught in the middle. You are both my friends and I love you both. Your sex life is not my business

Her: we talked about that actually and he pretty much said what you just said

Me: good. I want gossip. Did Thingo sleep with Avuyile?

She shakes her head. That's a relief, I don't see those two working out. Avuyile is too much of a free spirit while Thingo is the serious type

Her: I think they were just putting on a show at the club

Me: Lisa said the same thing

Her: so what about you and Sihle?

Me: we are dating

Her: what? I really need to meet this guy then. I'm happy for you babe. Is he hot? How was the sex?

Me: yes and totally out of this world

Khanye walks into the garage and approaches us. He grabs Kamo's ass before kissing her

Me: haibo am I invisible?

Khanye: we see you

Me: annoying much? Unlock the car please

He unlocks the car, I get in while he continues to suck face with Kamo. I hoot and only then he let's go of her then gets in the car

Him: the jealousy buddy

Me: I could be within cuddles right now but I ditched my man for you people.

He turns on the car's engine, opens the garage and drives out

Him: your man? So you finally stopped lying to yourself?

Me: I agreed to the relationship while I was highly dickmatized

He laughs at me. I am a joke, honestly but I'm happy. It feels good to have a grip on my happiness again. My relationship with my mother is going well, I have amazing friends and ngiyajola again. All I need now is to be rich and I'll be owning this life thing

Him: I think he will be good for you

Me: you hate the guy

Him: I don't hate him, I just hate the shit he was doing to Amy

Me: he will probably put me through the same shit, asazi

Him: I doubt it. If he wanted to smash and go with you, he would have done it when you guys spent holidays together

Me: buddy I'm terrified of this. I have all these feelings for him and he is already throwing the L word around. What if it ends in tears?

I sigh while he just shakes his head. I don't want to be taken for a popayi again.

Him: don't do that. You can't make him pay for Blake's fuck ups. It's draining having to pay for another guy's mistakes, I know because I had to pay for Sihle's fuck ups. Just breathe and enjoy being happy. You deserve to be happy Star, your life doesn't always have to be filled with tears

Me: ok, you are right. I just have to convince my heart

We get food then drive back to his house. We find everyone still sitting in the same position they were sitting in. Zombies I tell you

Thingo: food

Lisa: let's dish up, I'm starving

We eat in the dining room and somehow the food makes them come alive again.

The next day I'm woken up by a call from my mother

Me: mama

Mama: morning Nkanyezi

Me: how are you mama?

Her: I'm well and you?

I'm tired and should still be sleeping but I know better than to give her that response

Me: I'm well too

Her: Sihle told me the good news. I'm so happy for you Mntanam

Me: what good news mama?

Her: that the two of you are in a relationship now

Me: oh that. It's not a big deal, we just started dating yesterday

Her: either way, it's a big deal to me. He is a good boy

That's debatable but I'm not going to say that either. We continue talking for a few more minutes before hanging up. I check the time and it's only 7am. This is abuse in its purest form

A lot like friendship

Chapter 32

I think Ella Mai had me in mind when she wrote Naked or maybe she had both Sihle and I in mind because that song speaks to us more than any of the songs I've ever heard. I remember the first time he played it, it was 4 years ago when we were driving back to Bloem from Grahamstown. Just before we spent those weeks together. I'm an Ella Mai fan but I only fell in love with that song on that day. The reason I'm thinking about it right now is because I'm walking into the kitchen and he is playing it. It's a Saturday morning, I slept over last night.

Me: I love this song

Sihle: because it's our song

I walk over to him, wrap my arms around his waist from the back and rest my head on his back

Me: morning baby

He turns around, I throw my arms around his neck and his hands go for my waist before he kisses me.

Him: good morning babe

Me: I thought you'd sleep in today

Him: you want to take advantage of me?

Me: its only called taking advantage if you don't enjoy it

It's the look on his face that does it for me, the way his eyes almost close when he smiles and the way he tucks his bottom lip between his teeth to suppress a laugh or to seduce me. I hit the jackpot with this one. The song ends but he starts it over and I sing along

Me: "Take away the big shirts, the tattoos, the sweatpants and Vans

Okay I don't wear no makeup, no purse in my hands

My resting bitch face is mistaken for the mean girl but what if I told you there's nothing I want more in this world than somebody who loves me naked"

Him: "Someone who never asks for love but knows how to take it

Are you that somebody?

Who sees a wall and breaks it?

Are you ready to fight just to see what's lost behind my flaws?

Can you love me naked?"

Our singing sucks but we don't care, we are even dancing and enjoying the song. It's a beautiful song and I guess it is our song. We make breakfast together then eat while chilling on the kitchen counter. The honeymoon phase in a relationship is my favourite part, we are having the best time. We are getting to know each other, goofing around and spending most of our time naked. We take pictures of the most random moments and upload them. He actually uploads our pictures more than I do.

Him: are you planning on staying in Joburg forever?

Me: honestly, Joburg was never part of my initial plans. I wanted to go back home because that's where I feel I can make the most difference

Him: I'm not even going to ask how you ended up in Joburg. The reason I'm asking is because I'm over this place now and I don't plan on doing long distance with you forever. At some point, hopefully soon I want to at least be living in the same city as you

Me: my contract states that I have to at least be working for a full year before I can request a transfer

After Blake and I broke up, I made sure to go through my contract again. Especially the part about transfers. Joburg was his idea not mine and it went up in flames within the first week. I learnt a valuable lesson from that, following a man while not having a back-up plan is the higher grade of stupidity.

Him: and you want to go back home?

Me: yeah

Him: ok so I guess in a year from now we are going back home

Me: I made the mistake of following a person to a city I didn't want to go to all in the name of love. Don't do that

Him: you followed him, I'm not following you. I'm supporting you through something you are passionate about. You have a dream and I want to be by your side when you realize it. Besides that, I did mention that I'm over this place. Going back home means we will be closer to our families and just like you, I can work anywhere

Sihle is a pathologist so he is right when he says he can work anywhere. Going home will be easier now that I've fixed my relationship with my mother and as much as I've lost a friend, I've gained a lot. That's what growth is though, you lose some and you gain some.

Later that day Kwenzo and two other guys come to the house. Sihle introduces the guys as Lusapho and Siya. I don't know why hot guys always have to friends, it just sends out the wrong message. Looking at them together right now, they look like the heartbreak squad. I know I'm judging a book by its cover but that's what I see right now.

Siya: there is a soccer game happening tonight. Celtics and Pirates

Lu: I'm sure we can still get tickets. We should go

Sihle: count me out majita, I'm spending time with umuntu wami tonight.

Siya: she can come with. Bruh our team is playing

Sihle: she isn't a soccer person. I'll catch the game on TV

Kwenzo: come on cuz, this is your team we are talking about. We've been looking forward to this game for ages

Sihle looks at me, I don't say anything. Saying anything right now will be me shooting myself on the foot so I'd rather keep quiet.

Sihle: maybe next time gents.

Lu: alright man. I don't know about these guys but I get it

Kwenzo: I can't believe you are ditching a Pirates game to watch romantic comedies. Yho the Sihle I know would never do this. You've changed bruh

Sihle: and that's ok. Change isn't always a bad thing

I don't know why Kwenzo is throwing daggers at me because I've literally said nothing since this soccer game topic came up. I'm avoiding being labelled as a control freak. My phone rings and I excuse myself. This call comes at the right time because I needed to get out of that room

Me: light of my life

Khanye: Starlight, we miss you

Me: I only left your place yesterday, stop lying

Him: I need to talk to you about something. Can we meet up?

Me: you'd have to fetch me though

Him: sure. Send me the address and I'll come in an hour

Me: shap

I send the address then walk back into the lounge and there is silence the moment they see me. I ask to speak to Sihle and he follows me to the kitchen

Me: do you want to go to this game?

Sihle: I want to spend time with you

Me: ok let's compromise since your friends are already here. You can go to the game and I'll be here until Tuesday

Him: won't you be bored while I'm gone?

Me: Khanye needs to discuss something with me so I'll be with him. You can fetch me from his place after the game

He pulls me closer and kisses me then smiles. There is always a win win solution in every situation, you just have to find it

Him: I love you

Me: I know and tell your cousin to stop giving me the stink eye

Him: ignore him. He is just bitter but I'll talk to him

Me: thank you. Let me go get ready

We kiss again before I rush to go change. I put in black skinny jeans, a mustard t-shirt, Sihle's maroon hoodie and maroon Puma basket sneakers. I fix my braids and wait for Khanye. Sihle walks into the bedroom to find me laying on the bed facing the ceiling. He climbs on top of me and rests his whole body on top of me

Me: you are heavy

Him: I feel bad about this

Me: you shouldn't. As much as we would love to live in our own little bubble forever, we can't. We have people in our lives that we share life with

Him: true. As soon as the referee blows his whistle, I'm coming to fetch you

I laugh because I know that's exactly what he will do. I just hope he really puts his annoying cousin in his place before him and I have a problem. I'm not scared of Kwenzo and I will easily dismiss him. Khanye texts that he is outside and Sihle decides to walk me to the gate. We are holding hands. My friendship with Khanye isn't a problem in our relationship because Sihle knows and understands that we are just friends. Sihle has that confidence about him, he is sure of himself which is probably why insecurities are not his thing

Sihle: have fun and you look beautiful by the way

Me: thank you and have fun too

He opens the gate for me and I walk out to Khanye's car and get in

Khanye: he walked you to the gate, how adorable

Me: your sarcasm is not welcomed here sir

Him: he makes the rest of us look bad

Me: awujoli bhuti so this is the best time to be taking notes

He rolls his eyes and I laugh. Today is my day to throw shade his way and he must just take it like I always do. He drives us to Rocomamas. My friends know I love food so they are always feeding me. I love it. They speak my love language

Him: I want to talk to you about Kamo

Me: ok I'm listening

Him: I'm falling for her yet I feel guilty about it. Amy hasn't even been gone for a year and I'm already sleeping with someone else.

Me: can I be honest?

He nods

Me: I don't understand what time has got to do with moving on. If you feel you are ready and you are feeling someone, why should you wait? If you have grieved and accepted that a person who was a great part of your life and the mother of your child is gone and you are not about to use my friend as a rebound, then why wait?

Him: not everyone is going to see it that way

Me: pleasing people won't get you anywhere. They don't know, they don't know how you feel and they don't know what you've been through. All I'm going to say is that you should talk to Kamo, find out how she feels. Don't leave Jasmine out of that conversation either because Jasmine is a great part of your life

Him: we are a package deal

Me: exactly. I don't even know why we are having this conversation because you never take me relationship advice anyway

After lunch we go to his place. I spend time with Jasmine while he does lord knows what with Kamo in the bedroom. I take pictures and videos with my baby and upload them on my status. A few minutes later I receive a call from an unknown number

Me: hello

Blake: what are you doing with my sister's child Star?

Me: are you stalking me?

Him: don't flatter yourself. What are you doing with Jasmine?

Me: last time I checked I had blocked you on all my social media so if you can see my uploads, it means you are stalking me which is really pathetic, even for you

Him: you are the pathetic one Star, lusting over a man that has never wanted you. You are even trying to get to him through his daughter. I'm sure my sister is turning in her grave right now

Blake's insult stopped getting to me ages ago. I've always just let them be like water on a duck's back but today I'm not doing that. He is at the point of pissing me off

Me: your stupidity is really annoying right now. You are so stupid that you can even distinguish between friendship and a relationship. You think these tantrums of yours are cute when in actual fact they just prove how dumb you are. I don't owe you any explanation and even if I was sitting on Khanye's face right now, it would still have absolutely nothing to do with you. So do us both a favor and get a life so you can stop stooping so low to focus on mine

I hang up, toss my phone aside and continue to play with my Jazzy Fizzle.
Uzongijwayele kabi umsunu kaBlake. Bloody entitled piece shit.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 33

[6 MONTHS LATER]

Sihle has proved to be nothing like what I thought he would be. I am spoiled with love and affection to the extent that you'd think I'm lying when I say I'm in a long distance relationship. He sends flowers and chocolates to my workplace every Monday and Friday, white roses and Ferrero Rochers on Mondays and red roses and Lindt Lindor chocolate truffles on Fridays. I start the day with a text or a call from him and end it with a video call. Sometimes the video calls are innocent but a majority of the time they are x rated. I have fallen in love with him, it was bound to happen and I'm at what Khanye calls the "shitting rainbows and glitter" stage. It's mid December and we got home in the early hours of this morning. We are at his house, his parents' house to be exact. I wake up to him staring at me with a smile on his face

Me: so creepy

Sihle: what's creepy is your fart and snores

Me: you need to stop lying about that

Him: I'm going to record you next time. Good morning babe

He kisses me then I sit up with my back against the headboard. My eyes wonder around his bedroom, it's clean and spacious.

Me: good morning baby

Him: so my parents are here

Me: which makes sense considering that this is their house

Him: oh so you are a smart ass now? Anyway my mother wants to meet you, my whole family does actually

Me: are we there yet?

Him: I've been there since day one. The question is, are you up for it?

Me: yeah. I mean I can't exactly hide in here forever

Sihle's parents have a beautiful home, everything is just minimalistic and clean. There is that boho chic theme going on throughout the house. We have showered and I'm about to have brunch. We walk into the lounge and his dad and his brother are there

Sihle: hey guys

His dad looks at me then at Sihle and smiles before getting up and approaching us

Mr K: what do we have here? Ya ndoda, you've brought us umakoti

Sihle: baba this is Nkanyezi, Nkanyezi this is my dad and that's Nande

Me: it's nice to meet you baba

He gives me a hug, Nande just waves and we make our way into the kitchen. His mother and his sisters are busy with preparing food

Talitha: Sihle is here

She runs to wrap her arms around him. He spins her around while she giggles then puts her down

Me: sanibona

Mrs K: hello Nkanyezi, how are you?

Me: I'm good ma and how are you?

She wipes her hands with the dish cloth before giving me a warm hug. These people are so nice and they seem genuine. There isn't a hint of hostility in sight. Sihle introduces me to Talitha and Asiphe. I offer to help out in the kitchen while Sihle joins his dad and Nande in the lounge

Asiphe: so you are a teacher?

Me: yeah. It's something I'm passionate about which I really enjoy doing

Asiphe: yeah that must be it because there is no money in teaching

Me: true but I didn't go into it for money. I knew from the beginning that I won't make 6 figures but I'll be happy doing it because I know I'll be making a difference

Mrs K: that's an important thing to consider when choosing a career, will you be happy with it considering that you'll be in it your whole life

What I like about Asiphe is that she speaks her mind in a mature way as opposed to being rude and condescending. She knows what she talks about and she doesn't invalidate your opinion

Asiphe: I'm all about the money, I'll just buy things that will make me happy. Simple but I admire your willingness to help and give back. It's admirable

Me: thank you

When we are done, Asiphe and Talitha set the table and we sit down to eat. The one person I'm most nervous around is Sihle's dad. He just has that presence about him that commands respect

Sihle: Nkanyezi and I are thinking of moving this side a few months from now

Mrs K: and you will be living together?

Me: no ma. I'll get my own place and he will have his

Mr K: oh good. He must marry you first before he thinks of reaping the benefits of marriage

Nande: I think you moving this side will be a good idea since I won't be around next year. You can keep Talitha away from boys

If looks could kill Nande would be six feet under just from the look his sister just gave him. She is 13 and will be starting high school next year while Nande will be starting varsity. Asiphe is 26 and working as a nurse in a private hospital

Mrs K: Nizenande leave my baby alone

Talitha: thank you mama. I can't wait for him to leave, I'm sure the groceries won't run out so fast when he is gone

Nande: I'm not loved in this family

Sihle: you asked for it bro. You know Talitha is untouchable in this family

Talitha: you'd think after 13years he would get it but nix

After brunch I say goodbye to his family and Sihle drives me home. He plays when I see you by Fantasia and I laugh. When last did I hear that song? It's been years

Me: the golden oldies

Sihle: that was the best kind of music. So how was my family?

Me: they are nice and funny. I'm glad to see that you and Asiphe are getting along

Him: I've never had a problem with her, it's her attitude that I didn't like and her parents' behavior

Me: either way I'm glad there is peace

Him: thank you for agreeing to meet them. It meant a lot to me

It's always the little things that we think don't mean much that end up being the most meaningful. When we get home, we have groceries and takeaways for my mother. We stopped at the mall from Sihle's house. The joy on my mother's face is priceless. Again, it's the little things.

The day before Christmas, Sihle invites my mother and I to spend Christmas with them. We accept the invitation. Saves me from having to wake up at the crack of dawn to cook. I have a standard that I have set for Christmas and I always want to live up to it.

Mama: merry Christmas Mntanam

Me: merry Christmas mama

Her: I made breakfast, come sit down

She baked scones and we are having them with tea and strawberry jam. I moan from the first bite until the last one. That's how good they taste

Me: mama these taste amazing

Her: it's a secret recipe

Me: Yama scones?

Her: yes and I won't give it to you because uyaphapha

Me: haw mama but I'm your favorite child

Her: by default

After breakfast we get ready for lunch with the Khumalo's. Sihle will be fetching us. I put on a denim off the shoulder dress with pockets and gladiator sandals. I decide to call Khanye as I wait for Sihle

Khanye: merry Christmas Starlight

Me: merry Christmas buddy. Your first Christmas as a dad. I hope you have a very magical set up happening for my Jazzy Fizzle over there

Him: yep we have the whole set up and a safety gate around the tree because she wants to pull the whole thing down

Me: that's so cute. I can't believe she is almost a year old. Where did the time go?

Him: it just flew by. What's fucked up is that her birthday will always be a reminder of her mother's death

Me: only if you let it. You and Kamo are doing well, I'm happy about that

They are dating but apparently they are taking it slow. I don't what their definition of slow is because it's always sex waya waya with them. They are happy together though and that makes me happy as well. I just hope it lasts. We deserve happiness man, we've cried for too long. Sihle walks in while I'm still on the phone, he kisses me before staring at me

Me: buddy I have to go. Enjoy your day and kiss my baby for me

Him: will do. Enjoy your day too. Love you

Me: I love you too

I hang up then focus on this sexy man of mine

Me: hey baby

Sihle: hey my love. Merry Christmas

Me: merry Christmas babe. Mom is almost ready

Him: awesome. You look beautiful

Me: you don't look too bad yourself

He knows he looks good so I'm going to try and humble him for at least today. My mom joins us and we leave. The whole way to kwaKhumalo, I'm listening to Sihle and my mother chatting like old buddies. I don't even get a word in. They are laughing and talking while I'm sitting in the backseat confused as fuck. When we get to his house, I'm the first one out of the car. Hai these two can talk. I exchange greetings with everyone, hugging them and just excited to be back here. This family has that thing nje.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 34

As we walk into the dining area, I notice something about the setup. It is almost exactly the same as the one Sihle had for me on the Christmas we spent together. The only difference is that we are using an actual dining table as opposed to the two study desks we had back then. I look at him with the biggest smile on my face and he just winks at me. This man really knows his way to my heart, he never gets lost or deterred and he always finds his way there

Mrs K: we don't usually do Christmas decorations but this year Sihle made sure we have them

Me: it looks lovely

Talitha: we even have a Christmas tree this year with presents for everyone. This is the best Christmas ever

My mother mingles with people her age while we are having drinks and waiting for the chef to serve us the lunch. Yes, they hired a chef. We are having champagne, those that don't drink are having no alcoholic sparkling wine. I'm deep within the champagne but I'm not trying to get drunk

Me: I can't believe you did this

Sihle: phela I know how seriously you take Christmas, you even put Jesus on the guest list

Me: I love Christmas, leave me alone

Him: and I love you so I'm not going to leave alone

Me: I love you too

He smiles. I'm so in love, it's sickening. I've become one of those people who has her boyfriend has her profile pic and our pictures on my status updates every two days. I've waited so long for a feeling like this that I don't want to cheat myself. I've gone fully in

and I'm happy. The chef serves us the lunch and it looks and tastes amazing. I can get used to living like this, the soft life suits me

Sihle: we had this much food when we spent Christmas together and it was just the two of us

Mrs K: Nkanyezi went all out?

Sihle: like crazy mom and don't think she did it to impress me. She did it for her own satisfaction

Asiphe: what a queen

She starts clapping her hands while everyone around the table laughs. Sihle continues to tell stories about that day and I feel like running away because he is spicing everything up

Sihle: and she would remind me every 5mins that I'm not her type

Me: first of all, you are exaggerating and secondly, I remember you specifically saying those words as well

Sihle: I was telling you what you wanted to hear because I knew that one day we would find ourselves in this exact moment

Mrs K: yho Sihle, you are such a charmer. Whose child are you?

Mr K: uyazama shame. He has nothing on me. I'm capable of charming you so much that you offer me your number, forgetting that you are my wife already

This man, as scary as he is, is ridiculously funny and what's amazing about him and his wife is that they still have that cute love going on. You'd swear they got married yesterday, the way they are so touchy feely and lovey dovey

Nande: because you couldn't just let Sihle shine baba

Mr K: shine where? He will shine in his own house, in front of his own children. In this house, I take all the shine

Sihle: ai mama talk to your boyfriend please

Mama: I think young love is beautiful and it's even more beautiful when you have great memories to look back on. Sihle is a good boy and I can't imagine someone more deserving of being with my daughter

Me: we will never hear the end of that

We have bar one cheese cake for dessert and I feel as if I've died and gone to heaven. This is way better than the trifle I always have on Christmas. This has been a great day, I wish it wouldn't have to end. Sihle gets up while rest of us are still too full to move. He walks towards the lounge and plays music

Mr K: I think it's time

Mrs K: yep

They have the biggest smiles on their faces. Even my mom is smiling. I'm just enjoying the song that's playing, it sounds beautiful

"I found love in you

And I've learned to love me too

Never have I felt that I could be all that you see

It's like our hearts have intertwined and to the perfect harmony

This is why I love you

Ooh this is why I love you

Because you love me

You love me

This is why I love you

Ooh this is why I love you

Because you love me

You love me"

I watch as Sihle walks towards me, offers me his hand to take, which I do and get on my feet. He is looking at me with that smile of his that I love. As much as I don't know what's going on, I'm smiling too.

Sihle: ngyakthanda Nkanyezi. I fell in love with you unintentionally but when it happened, it made all the sense in the world. I knew that you are the one for me, that you are the girl that gets to change everything for me and that you are the girl that gets to have my heart in its purest form. You are beautiful, you are kind and caring and you make me laugh. You are everything I've ever dreamed of in a person I'd want to build a life with. You see me for who I am, beyond the physical parts and as much as I know you make me weak, I also know that having you loving me the way you do, makes me strong. I have a thousand reasons as to why I love you but the most important one is that I love you because I found love in you and I know no other love will do. So today, in front of our family, I'm getting down on one knee to ask you if you'd do me the honour of becoming my wife

He gets down on one knee and my eyes follow his face. My vision is blurry because my tears are just flowing. It seems as if everyone knew about this except for me, they are all smiling and Nande is recording the whole thing

Him: will you marry me baby?

Me: yes

My voice is low so I clear my throat, nod and smile

Me: yes, I'll marry you

He takes the ring out of the box and slips it into my finger. Our mothers ululate, his dad whistles and his siblings are clapping. He gets up from the floor, cups my face and kisses me as if our lives depend on it.

Him: I love you so much

Me: I love you baby

He spins me around and I giggle like a child. If all the pain I went through, all the tears I cried and the heart break I felt were all so I could find myself in this moment then I'd gladly go through it all again.

His parents pop another bottle of champagne and we drink. It's a fully blown celebration right now so I step away from it all just so I can call my best friend. I opt for a video call

Khanye: hey buddy

Without saying anything, I show him my left hand

Him: oh shit, is that what I think it is? He proposed?

Me: yep buddy, he proposed. In front of his family and my mother, he asked me to marry him

Him: oh wow, that's beautiful Star. I'm so happy for you. It's only going to be tears of joy from now on words. I'm so happy right now, congratulations buddy. You truly deserve this and Sihle is lucky and blessed to have you. I hope he knows

Me: he definitely knows it. I have to go buddy, we will talk tomorrow

I hang up and make my way into the house. Even if I wanted to, I don't think I'm capable of taking my eyes off my left hand. Ever. This ring is just right for me, not too flashy and a perfect fit

Sihle: hey fiancé

Me: you are so goofy. I can't believe you planned this whole thing without even a hint to me

Him: that's why it's called a surprise babe. You really said yes to be my wife

Me: did you think I'd say no?

Him: nah, I'm just happy you said yes. Now I can spend the rest of my life showing you just how much I love you

Welcome to your happily ever after Nkanyezi, no one deserves it more than you do

A lot like friendship

Chapter 35

Sihle and I were engaged for 3 months when we moved back home. The primary school I went to had a job opening which I have to thank God, my lucky stars and my ancestors for because going back to where I started is what it has always been about. Sihle now works at Ampath Laboratory at a Netcare hospital. We made a lot of decisions together, which was a first for me. We decided to rent from his dad. Sihle's father is into property so he has houses and flats all around. We settled on a 5 bedroom house and put up the house in Bloem for rental. It just made financial sense to rent it out instead of keeping it as a holiday home. We've also decided that I stop the injection, we are not trying for a baby but if it happens, it happens.

Sihle: my phone tells me it's your birthday in 2 weeks

Me: is it? I had no idea

Him: uyaphapha. Are we going all out or are we keeping it on the low?

Me: keeping it on a low. There is nothing exciting about turning 24 plus we still have a wedding to plan

Him: two different celebrations with their own budgets. You need to stop stressing so much about money. We are good

Sihle has always had the comfortable life, I haven't so I'm cautious about money. He isn't from a wealthy family but his parents have done pretty well for themselves and I want to build the same kind of life for my children. I can't do that if I'm throwing money around like confetti

Me: you know your dad's money isn't your money, right?

Him: yes I know that but I'm not going to cheat myself from making my wife happy just because I have to save every 2c. Relax, I've got us. I've got my own money too

He pulls me in for a kiss and I melt in his embrace. Everything is just so easy with him, even our disagreements end without us being hurtful towards each other. We've had our fights but not once did we go to bed angry or said something so hurtful to the other that

we can't fix it. We've learnt to compromise a lot without feeling as if we are settling and I love that.

Me: we can have something small for my birthday

He smiles

Me: emphasis on the small babe

Him: it's so weird how you go all out for Christmas but when it's your own day, you want to be all subtle

Me: I'm not big on birthdays

Him: that's a lie and you are trying to trick me. All women are big on birthdays

Me: no lies, no tricks. I'm really not big on birthdays. Doesn't mean you shouldn't get me anything though

Him: you see, I'm being tricked

We've been having this conversation over breakfast before we head to work and by breakfast, I mean cereal. I don't understand women that wake up to make bacon and eggs during the week. Where do you find all that energy? Weekends is when we go all out on breakfast but during the week, cereal and oats is our best bet

Him: I have to go. I love you and we will talk at lunch time

He kisses me before grabbing his bag, phone and car keys

Me: I'm also going to head out soon. I love you too and drive safely

Him: you too

Yes, I drive now. I got my license 6 weeks ago and I've only been driving on my own for 3 weeks. I use Sihle's old car that he drove in varsity. He got himself another car after he started working. It still takes me forever and a day to get to work because I drive like

an old woman. Rather safe than sorry. The only thing I miss about Joburg is Kamo. That girl and I lived our best lives in the city of gold. Now I'm here and I have no friends.

After my long day at work, I drive to the mall to get our weekly groceries, I was meant to go yesterday but I was just so tired. I get what we need then go queue to pay

"You look more exhausted than I do and I feel pretty burnt out"

I turn around and I'm met by a lady who is now waving at me

Me: hey

Her: hey. Long day?

Me: you have no idea

Her: I can tell. I just worked an 18hr shift. I'm beat

Me: and what do you do?

Her: oh sorry, where are my manners. I'm Nobantu Mkhize. I'm a doctor

Me: nice to meet you. I'm Nkanyezi Myeni, I'm a teacher

Her: nice to meet you too. I know this is going to sound weird but I just moved here and I don't know anyone outside the walls of the hospital I work in. Can we go out for coffee sometime?

Its funny how life works, just this morning I was bugged by being back home and having no friends and now I'm about to bag a doctor friend. Look at me stepping up in the friendship world. We exchange numbers and go our separate ways. When Sihle gets home, I have just finished taking a shower

Sihle: hey babe

Me: hey baby

Him: let me take a quick shower then join you there

I'm on the couch watching Grey's anatomy on catch up. I've cooked, I've showered and now I get to curl up on the couch with my man. I'm am exhausted and I'll probably fall

asleep soon. 20 minutes later he walks into the lounge wearing his beautiful smile. Sihle has that beautiful and innocent smile that always leaves me gushing. He brings out the innocent side of me sometimes, the teenage girl falling in love for the first time kind of feeling.

Him: I'm going to be the guy with the most beautiful wife in the world

Me: same way I'm going to have the most handsome husband ever

He pulls me up and into his arms then kisses me. He knows his lips on mine are a weakness for me. I can already feel the environment down there getting moist. He knows how to kiss and touch me in order to get to the point of me begging him for it

Him: I want to fuck my wife

The moment he says that, I feel a chill down my spine. I don't know what it is about the crude words that just always have my clit tingling so much more than when he uses the sweet words. He kisses me again while trying to take my clothes off. I've forgotten all about the long day I had, I've forgotten that I was barely getting through cooking when I got home and that I'm pretty much exhausted. All that has gone out the window and all I want to do is feel him inside me and moan his name. I want him to please me, satisfy me and own my body. We are naked before I can understand when and how then he lowers us onto the couch.

Him: you are so sexy

He is fondling and grabbing on my ass and my boobs. He is rough but gentle, slow but intense and setting my entire body alive with ecstasy. Each thrust sends me to heaven and the next one is rougher than the previous one. I'm moaning, digging my fingers on his back as he continues pumping into me

Him: you are mine

Me: I'm yours

He lifts me up, turns me around and I bend over the couch. He spans my ass and I scream

Me: Sihle

He spans me again and I rub my clit, occasionally dipping my fingers in my opening. He moves my hand and rests his manhood on my coochie but doesn't push in

Me: Sihle please

Him: what do you want baby?

Me: you. I want you. Please

He moves his manhood over my coochie, tapping my clit and rubbing it over my opening. This is torture on some other level, I'm so turned on I actually feel like I'm going to cry. That's how badly I want him right now

Me: just put it in. Fuck me. Please just fuck me

I feel his manhood move away from me and a few seconds later I feel his warm tongue. It's wet and sloppy but still feels so good. My legs are getting weak as I'm still leaning over the couch

Me: baby please, I want you inside me

Him: cum for me first

He eats me out until I reach my orgasm which almost has me losing my balance. This man's tongue game is not from this planet. The things he does to me...

He gets back on his feet and slams into me, no warning and I release the loudest moan. My body is always responding so well to him, nicely lubricated and stretching to accommodate him. He pumps in and out of me, holding my waist tightly and groaning like a wild animal. I tightened my walls around his manhood, I know that always drives

him over the edge. He cums inside me and I collapse on the couch. My legs are already feeling numb

Him: you will be the death of me

Me: says the person who is trying to kill me with sex

He kisses my back then pulls out of me. He leaves to get us a warm towel, comes back a few minutes later and wipes me before sorting himself out. We kiss again and just lay naked on the couch. I think I'm starting to love rough sex, no one has ever given it to me like Sihle just gave it to me

Me: I love you

He kisses me

Him: I love you too

I feel his hand over my boob and my clit throbs. He just came a few minutes ago, why is he still hard?

Me: baby come on

Him: I am on, how about you come on

I get up on my feet and look at him. His cum drips down my thighs and I shake my head.

Me: you did a lousy job at wiping me

Him: because I'm not done with you

I take the towel, wipe myself and put my underwear on

Me: it's half time. We need to eat

Him: I can't get enough you

Me: the feeling is mutual my love

*

We decide on having a braai for my birthday with just our family. I also invite Nobantu, she is a nice lady and she and I get along well. We've gone out for coffee and lunch a couple of times.

Sihle: happy birthday sthandwa sami

He kisses my cheek. He just walked in from lord knows where and it's the first time I'm seeing him today because when I woke up, he wasn't next to me

Me: thank you. Where did you go?

Him: somewhere

He has this smirk on his face that tells me he is up to something

Me: let me guess, you bought me a car

He laughs. He is extra so I can't put it past him to get me such an extravagant gift

Him: I love that your dreams are so big my love. I love it. You are buying yourself your first car. Maybe I'll get you your second car one day when I'm a millionaire. Until then, you are getting hugs and kisses for your birthday

Me: mxm I should have married a millionaire

Him: shame that ship has sailed. Khethile khethile

I love him, all of him but his goofy and savage side is my favourite. Asiphe arrives with Talitha to help set up for this braai. It's my birthday and yet I still have to work.

Asiphe: happy birthday mfazi kamfowethu

Me: sizoxabana

She hugs me while laughing at me then I hug Talitha. She is just so pretty, throws shade like all the members of her family and has the men in her family wrapped around her finger. It's impossible not to love her.

Talitha: happy birthday sis Nkanyezi

Me: thank you baby

Asiphe: where do you need us?

Me: ngoba usile wena, I need you at pap making

Asiphe: only because it's your birthday and I know I will have so many moments to get back at you for this. Come Litha, you can make salads

Me: yes. I'll make chakalaka while your brother sorts out the fire and meat situation

We put aprons on and get to work. There is music playing in the background, the conversation is amazing and we find ourselves dancing

Mama: weeeh I wonder if we will eat if all you guys are doing is dancing

Asiphe: don't worry ma, I was on MasterChef so best believe you will have the best pap you've ever tasted

Talitha: the lies, the dreams yho it's too much

We laugh. We know when we are being launched and Asiphe is launching us right now.

Mama: happy birthday Nkanyezi

She hugs me. This is the first birthday I've spent around my mother since my 18th birthday which was 6 years ago

Me: thank you mama. You got me a gift?

Mama: the gift of life Mntanam

Me: wow

Mama: the most important gift

Me: yeah but

Mama: do you guys need my help or are you fine?

Asiphe: we are fine ma. You can just chill in the lounge and watch TV. We've got this

The gift of life. Yho people don't like spending money so they give you the gift of life, the gift of friendship and the gift of love. Those are important gifts, I know but... but... that's all I'm going to say...but.

The front door opens, I hear his voice before I see him and I scream

Khanye: surprise

Me: what are you guys doing here?

He is with my Jazzy Fizzle and Kamo. I'm so happy to see my people. I haven't seen them since Jasmine's birthday party in January which was the most glamorous party for a 1 year old I have ever seen. I hug Khanye and Kamo then take Jasmine from Khanye and kiss her face. I'm so happy they are here

Khanye: happy birthday buddy

Kamo: oh yes, happy birthday friend

Me: thank you guys. You guys being here is the best gift ever

Talitha: better than the gift of life?

I introduce them to my mother and Sihle's sisters before Khanye goes to join Sihle by the fire. We leave Jasmine with my mother. Later Sihle's parents arrive and then

Nobantu is the last one to arrive. We eat, get to know each other and just have a good time. This is turning out to be a great day

A lot like friendship

Chapter 36

Kamo pulls me aside just as everyone is getting into the groove of things. We are all having a good time. I actually prefer this kind of set up or going out as opposed to throwing a huge party that you can't escape.

Me: what's going on?

Kamo: who is that girl?

Me: which girl?

Her: the one that was the last to arrive and is friendly with everyone

She is referring to Nobantu and judging by the tone, Kamo is not feeling her

Me: it's Nobantu, the doctor friend I told you about

Her: something is off about her

Me: what do you mean? Nobantu is nice. I think you are just being a bit territorial right now which is understandable but I didn't replace you with Nobantu. You are still my girl

Her: no, that's not it. I just have this feeling that something isn't right about her

Me: ignore that feeling and enjoy the day

My mother leaves with Sihle's parents and Talitha. Khanye takes Jasmine to Amy's family. Now we can fully enjoy our evening without worrying about a baby and old people

Nobantu: so how long have you guys all been friends?

Me: Khanye and I have been friends for 5years

Khanye: going on 6

Me: yep. Kamo and I have been friends for just over a year now

Nobantu: and Sihle?

Sihle: I'm Nkanyezi's fiancé, not really their friend

Kamo: and how did you meet Star?

Nobantu tells the story of how we met but I'm not listening. My focus is on the hostility Kamo and Sihle are showing her. My people are territorial

Khanye: that's such a random way to meet a friend

Nobantu: I guess I'm just random like that

She sips on her Bernini while looking at Sihle. I am tipsy but life has taught me to avoid being naive. There is a vibe between Nobantu and Sihle but it's not on the same frequency. Sihle is on the same frequency with Kamo

Me: oh my word, I keep forgetting to ask which hospital you work in

Nobantu: The Bay Hospital

Me: oh that's nice. I need something from inside the house, babe can you come help me look

Khanye starts laughing and his girlfriend hits his arm. I know he is about to say something stupid because Khanye is Khanye.

Khanye: buddy that was the worst hint for a quickie, ever

Me: we are newly engaged, leave us alone. We'll be back though. Just 2mins

Sihle: maybe 10

Sihle and Khanye fist bump. I'm trying so hard not to think the worst right now but staying calm is proving to be impossible. For his sake, I pray he doesn't lie to me. We walk towards our bedroom in silence. My palms are sweaty, I'm actually even feeling a bit hot right now. Anger can do that to a person. Sihle closes the door the moment we walk in

Me: why is she here?

Sihle: she is your friend, not mine. You invited her, not me

Me: who is she?

Him: Nkanyezi you need to calm down. I'm not going to talk to you if you are going to scream at me. What's the point of having this conversation in private if you are going to shout so loud that people outside can hear you

I take in a deep breath then slowly exhale. Nobantu is beautiful, she is the "I doll myself up every day" kind of girl. She has a weave, lashes on and the waist of an ant. She has the booty and the kiss madolo to match it. My point is that she makes me look like a plain Jane even on my good days

Me: are you sleeping with her?

Him: no. I'm not sleeping with anyone but you

Me: then why did she approach me, why is she here and why are you and Kamo being so hostile towards her? Something is going on Sihle and I'm not stupid so stop making me feel as if I'm stupid. It's not a coincidence that a doctor from the hospital you work in suddenly decided to be my friend

Him: I met her a few weeks ago at work and she was flirting with me from day one but I blew her off. I told her I'm not interested and I have you. She accepted that and that was it

Me: you are lying. That was not it because if that was it then how come she recognized me from Checkers

He sighs, runs his hand over his head and stares at me. I can't read the expression on his face but I can already feel my tears wanting to flow down my cheeks

Him: I don't know what she is trying to achieve but I swear to God Nkanyezi; that is the only encounter I've had with this girl. I love you baby and I meant it when I said I would never cheat on you. I played the field for years and when I stopped, I stopped for good

Me: I told you about her but you didn't think to give me a heads up

Him: I didn't think it was the same person. I didn't think she would stoop this low to try and get my attention

Me: I'm going to ask her what she wants and baby, I really hope you are telling me the truth because if you slept with this girl then lied to me about it, shit will hit the roof

I try to walk away but he grabs my arm and pulls me towards him then cups my face and kisses me. He is being his gentle self that I love.

Him: trust me

Me: I do trust you. It's the women you work with that I don't trust but I'm going to set an example with this one. Asambe

Him: yes ma'am

We walk out and find them still sitting in front of the braai fire. We kept it going since its a bit chilly outside

Kamo: that was quick

Khanye: hence it's called a quickie my love

I ignore them, drop myself on my camp chair then take a glass and pour some cognac in

Kamo: Nobantu was telling us that she works with Sihle. Did you know that Star?

Me: I just found out as well

I turn to Nobantu. She seems so unbothered for a person engisazomnyisa soon

Me: so what do you want?

Nobantu: excuse me?

Me: don't act dumb. What do you want? What's your plan? In your head, how did you see this going?

Nobantu: Nkanyezi, I really don't know what's going right now but this is getting awkward and you are making me uncomfortable

Sihle: cut the bullshit Nobantu, Nkanyezi sees right through you.

Me: and I want to know what you want. So Sihle rejects you and you decide to be my friend to achieve what?

Kamo gets on her feet. Kamo is the kind of friend you take to a street fight. She doesn't need to know what you did but the moment someone messes with her people, that person will see flames. Khanye is the same way, very overprotective. Nobantu looks at Sihle

Kamo: yeyi! Don't look at him. He is not yours to look at

Nobantu: seriously? You guys are behaving like a bunch of high school kids. Fighting each other's battles. This has nothing to do with you Kamo so back off

Khanye: I think you should leave

Nobantu: with pleasure

She gets up then looks at me with her arms folded against her chest. The attitude she is giving me is disgusting to the core. The audacity to give me attitude after you lust over my man and invite yourself into my life

Nobantu: keep your friends close and your enemies closer. I wouldn't get so comfortable in this relationship if I were you

Me: then it's a good thing you are not me

As she walks away Kamo quickly snatches her bag from her and runs into the house. Nobantu tries running after her but have you ever tried running after a person while wearing heels and on grass? You will see flames

Nobantu: what the hell? Is your friend crazy? She can't just take my bag. I'm calling the cops

Sihle: with what phone sisi?

Nobantu: fuck

Khanye: chill wena. I'm going to go check on Kamo

Me: nah, watch her and make sure she doesn't try to rape Sihle. I'll go check on Kamo

I walk into the house and call Kamo's name out. If I ever doubted that I have crazy friends, this just confirms it. Kamo is crazy

Kamo: are you alone?

Me: yes. Where are you?

Her: bedroom opposite the bathroom

I knock and she unlocks the door for me. She locks again after I walk in.

Me: you are so crazy

Her: I do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. Look

She is pointing at Nobantu's bag on the floor, its contents emptied next to it.

Me: what the hell is all this crap and are those underwear's? Wait that's Sihle's underwear

Her: and yours

I take a closer look and it is my underwear. My heart starts racing when I see all the other stuff. There are small bottles with weird things inside, small plastic bags tied with stuff in side and a black candle with needles on it

Me: what the fuck is all of this?

Her: this girl was going to deal with you traditionally. I told you there was a vibe about her

Me: all this just because of Sihle? Yho ngiyasaba

I don't know what I should do right now because we can't keep her here forever and even if we get rid of all this stuff, she will go back wherever she found it and get more.

Her: we need to burn this stuff and you need to stop being so trusting. Not everyone has good intentions for you

Me: I have learnt my lesson. Thank you Kamo. Had you not snatched her bag, we wouldn't have found all of this and lord knows what all this voodoo stuff was going to do to Sihle and me

We walk back outside with Nobantu's bag

Khanye: what were you guys doing in there?

Kamo: stopping a storm that was about to come our way

Kamo throws Nobantu's phone and purse at her and then empties the contents of the bag into the fire

Nobantu: what the hell are you doing? You can't do this

Sihle: is that my underwear? Why is Kamo burning our underwear?

Me: we found it in her bag. With all the muthi and voodoo stuff

Khanye: you should throw her in the fire as well. Burn the witch too

Khanye snatches the weave from Nobantu's head and throws it in the fire. She is now quiet and not the loud mouth that she was not so long ago

Sihle: all because I didn't give you attention. You were willing to go to such lengths, hurt Nkanyezi when she didn't even know you. What kind of a person are you?

Nobantu: I didn't mean for it to get to this. I just saw your pictures on Instagram and I got jealous. No one has ever blown me off and I just wanted to prove a point. You embarrassed me at work

Me: and what did I do? I was going to die for nothing just because you felt embarrassed? Wow sisi. Just wow

Sihle: leave and I hope for your sake you stay the fuck away from me. If you even breathe in my direction, I will make sure you suffer and if Nkanyezi even gets a flu, you will feel my wrath. Get out

Sihle and Khanye drag her towards the gate while she cries. This night almost turned into a complete nightmare, our lives almost turned into a nightmare. What bothers me the most is how comfortable people are with fucking up the lives of others? I didn't even know this girl but because Sihle embarrassed her, I was going to suffer for it. The world has really gone to the dogs and maybe Kamo is right, I need to stop being so trusting

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The experience with Nobantu taught me to keep my guard up at all times. People might as well call me stuck up or unapproachable, it's fine. I'd rather be safe than sorry. I bought myself a car after my birthday, a Kia Rio which I love and can call my own. It's the first big thing I bought myself and proud doesn't even begin to describe how I felt. Slowly things are starting to come together for me and in just taking it all in. I deserve it. I constantly have to remind myself that I deserve this and it is mine.

Four months after my birthday Sihle wanted us to have an engagement party, I refused. I'm not going to tempt fate and invite strangers into my space again. The important people in our lives were there when we got married and they celebrated with us so who must the engagement party be for? It's now August and we are getting married on the 1st of September, spring day

Sihle: apparently Nobantu resigned a month ago

Me: good. She must go back to wherever she came from

Him: but you shouldn't let her stop you from living your life to the fullest

Me: I can't get those images out of my head. The muthi, the candles and our underwear. She actually went into our bedroom, into our bathroom and took our underwear. Our private space was invaded

Him: and we cleaned and cleansed the whole house. She is gone baby

The hug he gives me is assuring but I'm still not going to let my guard down. Especially with the wedding coming up. I know Blake is still going to irritate me somehow. That's another Satan I have to deal with because hayi he refuses to rest.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 37

"Couldn't make you wait forever, for forever

This is forever

I gotcha

If there's a question of my heart, you've got it

It don't belong to anyone but you

If there's a question of my love, you've got it

Baby don't worry, I've got plans for you

Baby I've been making plans, oh love

Baby I've been making plans for you

Baby, I've been making plans

Baby, I've been making plans for you"

I wake up feeling like a princess in a Disney movie, not at the beginning of the movie but towards the end when she finds her happily ever after. I'm getting married today and I've slept all of probably 3 hours. I can't sleep when I'm excited so Sihle and I ended up texting most of the night. He can't be sleeping when I'm not sleeping. We are in this together. I'm at home with my people and by my people I mean Kamo, Lisa, Thingo and of course my mother.

Lisa: we should probably get up. The makeup artists will be here in an hour

Me: you are right. We need to bath before then

Kamo: and eat

Me: you guys will eat, I'm too nervous to eat

Thingo: nervous or excited?

Me: a bit of both actually

We take turns with the bathing and the makeup artists arrive 45 mins later. The getting ready part is a mess, everyone is running around all over but by the time we are done, we look amazing. Lisa is my maid of honour. I chose her because I've known her the longest and I know I can always count on her for anything. We don't talk every day but when we need each other, we show up. My mother walks into followed by Sihle's mother

Mama: awusemuhle Nkanyezi yami Enhle

I smile. I can't cry, I have make up on that I am not trying to mess up. My mother hands me a bible and a journal

Mama: go into this marriage knowing that it is a blessing from God and put God first in all that you do. A couple that prays together, stays together and the closer you get to God will be the closer you get to each other. Be strong in your faith and in prayer

Fighting back the tears right now was proving to be impossible. I hug my mother, holding her tight. Just to be able to share this day with her is a blessing on its own. We've come so far with our relationship and it keeps getting better and better each day.

Sihle's mother gifts me with a diamond bracelet and diamond earrings. Not the diamond earrings you get at Game, these are real diamonds.

Mrs K: every woman deserves to sparkle on her wedding day. Welcome to our family Nkanyezi, I hope you and Sihle will make each other happy and continue to love each other. I'm not just lucky but I'm blessed to have a daughter in law as wonderful as you are. We love you

These women came in here prepared to make me cry and they have achieved that.

Me: thank you so much to you both. You are both amazing women and I appreciate you so much

After the tear fest, it is my turn to get ready. My maid of honour and my bride's maids helped me into my dress, the makeup artist touches up my makeup. I turn around to

look at myself on the full length mirror and I look beautiful in every sense of the word. The door opens and Khanye walks in, he stops and stares at me looking shocked

Khanye: woaw. Starlight is that you?

Me: yes

Khanye: are you sure? I've known you for years and never have I ever seen you looking like this.

Me: shut up

He smiles then shakes his head. I don't know why God chose him to be what he is in my life. I don't question it though, I love him and he has been everything I needed whenever I needed it. The guy threw Satan's weave in the fire for me, what more could I ask for? Khanye's friendship has remained constant and solid since day one. He gets me and I get him. He is my soulmate, the friendship version

Khanye: you are the one person in the world that deserves this. You deserve to be this beautiful, you deserve to be this happy and you deserve to have all the blessings in the world. You are an extraordinary woman Nkanyezi and watching you become this fear fokol, outspoken and brave woman has been such a joy. I love you buddy and own this because you deserve it. Never let anyone tell you anything different

He wraps his arms around me and hugs me. I don't think there are enough words in the world to best express how much I appreciate this guy.

Thingo: aah guys, you are going to make all of us cry

Mrs K: we need to get going guys

I'm being driven in a Mercedes Benz C63 S Coupe. I don't know what the other cars are but I know I'm the only one being driven in a Merc. Sihle and I are getting married at the Premier Hotel. It's a small wedding, we are both from small families and we are all about exclusivity. Well when it comes to family, my mother is all I have. That's why she will be the one walking me down the aisle. When we get to the hotel we are ushered towards the area where the wedding will be taken place. People have already arrived and I'm fashionably late. My mother takes my hand, we look at each other and smile

Mama: I am so proud of you Mntanam

Me: ngyabonga mama

So High by John Legend plays as my mother and I walk in. Sihle and I decided on this song a day after we got engaged. The lyrics, the melody and just everything about it is beautiful and fitting for this day. Sihle keeps his eyes on me as I walk towards him. I don't know why I'm smiling but he returns the smile with his beautiful smile. He looks drop dead gorgeous in his tux. Siya is his best man and Nande and Kwenzo are his groomsmen. They all look good. When my mother hands me over to Sihle, they share a hug before he takes my hands.

The pastor greets everyone, opens in prayer then gets to our verse for the day which is 1 Corinthians 13 verse 4 - 10:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.

When it is time to say my vows, my whole body is shaking. I've written and rewritten my vows a thousand times but every time it felt like something was missing. It felt as if the words weren't enough or they were empty. I got to a point where I was like 'screw this, I'll see when the moment comes'. The moment has come and I'm a nervous wreck. I take in a deep breath then slowly exhale. My eyes focus on Sihle, who even now I still don't believe is about to be my husband

Me: You are a prayer answered because I prayed about this. I prayed for happiness, I prayed for unconditional love and I prayed to be as content as I am right now. I prayed for this moment and to see it come to pass and being able to share it with you blows my mind. You make the sun shine on a cloudy day, you make me laugh when I want to cry and you make me feel as if I'm living on heaven. I don't know when I fell in love with but when I knew that I love you, I wanted the feeling to last forever. I don't have to be brave or fearless when I'm with you because you take my fears away, you assure me when I'm in doubt and you are my biggest cheerleader. You make it easy for me to be myself

and that makes it easy for me to love you wholeheartedly and without doubt or fear. I vow to love you, to assure you of my love for you. I vow to be the wife that makes you happy, to make you laugh and never to be your stress. I am yours and you are mine

Once I started, everything just flowed and I wanted to go on forever but I was also anxious to hear what he was going to say. Even looking at him right now, I'm falling deeper in love with him. How is that even possible?

Sihle: From the moment I took a chance on getting to know you, my whole life changed. I looked at you and wanted to change and be a better man for you. Life hasn't been kind to you sthandwa sami but I made a promise to myself that you will never cry because of me. I want to make you so happy because you are worthy and you deserve it. I love you for so many reason, some I share with you every day. You are my best friend Nkanyezi, you are my always and forever and you are my sunshine. I vow to always keep that smile on your face, to protect you and cheer you on in whatever you do. My heart belongs to you. Ngiyakthanda Nkanyezi

The moment he is given permission to kiss me, he does it to the fullest. We are married. Our wedding has turned out to be absolutely beautiful and everything has gone perfectly which is a great relief to me. I needed it to just be perfect. After the ceremony, we take tons of pictures before moving on to the reception venue. This is why I love you by Major plays as we have our first dance. The same song that played when he asked me to marry him

Sihle: Mrs Khumalo

Me: Mr Khumalo

Him: I love you

Me: I know. I love you too

Him: thank you for marrying me

Me: thank you for making me a wife and a mother

He stops swaying our bodies and looks at me. If confused was a person then Sihle would be it right now. I found out I'm pregnant 8 weeks ago and I didn't tell anyone. I needed a moment to just take it all in before sharing the news. Hiding it from Sihle has been the most difficult thing ever because he notices everything

Him: you are pregnant?

Me: yes

Him: that's amazing baby.

He spins me around while laughing and I giggle. He is happy. I can just see it in his eyes. What I love is that we weren't trying for a baby but we are happy we are having one. Trying to conceive can get stressful so I'm grateful we don't have that

Him: I get to be a father and a husband all in one day

Me: just a husband for today baby. You'll be a father in April

Him: this is amazing. You are amazing

A lot like friendship

Chapter 38

We went to Hazyview in Mpumalanga for our honeymoon and what a beautiful experience that turned out to be. Sabi River sun resort was our home for our stay there and because we wanted to experience the place to its fullest, we geared up for an adventure honeymoon. During the 10 days that we got to spend there, we went on a helicopter ride, a hot air balloon ride, we visited the cultural village and the reptile park. Sihle did the cable trail on his own because I was not about to risk my life. Overall the place was beautiful and I would love to come back here again.

It was only after we got back from our honeymoon that we sat our families down and told them about the pregnancy. I thought Sihle was excited but judging from his parents' reaction, they are way more excited than he is. My mom is also happy for us and excited for her first grandchild

Sihle: your friends are planning a baby shower for you

Me: I don't want it

Him: I told Kamo but she is adamant about it.

Me: Kamo should be planning her own baby shower and accept that I don't want one

It's now the beginning of March, I'm 34 weeks pregnant and literally counting down the days. I can't recognize myself when I look in the mirror, that's how much weight I've gained. The baby I'm carrying is a big and heavy boy. The reason I don't want a baby shower is because I'm protecting my pregnancy. Not a lot of people get and understand that but it's a choice I've made. Not because I think the people in my life have bad intentions but life has taught me that not everyone has good intentions. Some people come into your life just to hurt you. E.g. Nobantu. My child, my marriage and my family all come first when compared to things money can buy. It took a while for Sihle to understand it but he gets it now. His friends are throwing him a daddy shower which I have nothing against because it doesn't require my presence.

Kamo and Khanye are also expecting but Kamo is only due in July.

Him: it's supposed to be a surprise so I can't exactly pass messages to her ngoba you are not supposed to know about it

Me: I'm not going to show up for it if they will keep forcing matters. I promise you, I won't show

Him: ok I'll try talking to her again

Me: I'm going to talk to her as well. I won't show her that I already know

His hand moves to my belly and he starts rubbing it. His baby isn't even trying to entertain him. It's very rare for him to kick when his father is around me but when I'm alone, I know the kickboxing is in full swing. It's been such a dream to watch Sihle falling in love with his unborn son. Every scan I've been to, he has been right next to me. The excitement on his face everytime he hears his heart beat is just priceless.

Over the past couple of months, Asiphe and I have gotten close. We've been hanging out more and I'm learning a lot about her. Today she is taking me to lunch.

Me: how do I look?

Sihle: where are you going?

Me: lunch with your sister

Him: hawu baby, you are leaving me?

Me: pretty much. How do I look?

Him: you look beautiful sthandwa sami, as always. Asiphe is trying to steal my wife

I'm in a floral maxi dress, I'm always feeling hot so I wear only light material things. Pregnancy is an extreme sport, don't allow anyone to tell you something different. They will be selling you dreams.

Me: no one is trying to steal me

Him: lies. Where are your shoes?

I point him in the direction of my sandals and he puts them on my feet.

Me: thank you

Him: I've got you. Nawe uyaz. Where are you meeting Asiphe? I'm driving you there

Me: elephant and I

Ever since we started the third trimester, I've been treated like an egg. I'm loving every moment of it, I won't even lie. Sihle has been spoiling me rotten, he has been helpful around the house and taking care of me. I don't even ask him to cut my toenails or shave my coochie area because he told me from day one that he will not be doing that. Instead I get money to get it done. It's a small compromise really if we consider all that he already does for me. On our way to my lunch date, I play what is love by V Bozeman. It's one of my favorite songs from empire season 1. When we arrive at the restaurant, Asiphe is already waiting for us

Asiphe: I didn't invite you

Sihle: we are a package deal sis. Accept it

She hugs her brother first then hugs me. I already want to sit down and they want to argue over nonsense

Sihle: call me when you want me to fetch you

Asiphe: I'll drop her off. Go away

Sihle: stop trying to steal my wife. Get your own person

Me: bye baby

We kiss then he leaves us.

Asiphe: so how are you? You look like you are ready to pop

Me: I'm ready, this baby still has 6 weeks to go before he arrives. I'm good though, you?

Her: I'm good too. When are you going on maternity leave?

Me: at 38 weeks

Her: superwoman. You must just not give birth to my nephew in a classroom. Please

I laugh. The waitress comes to take our orders. I'm having apple juice and steak with a side of veggies. I'm supposed to eat healthy, I do it in public then eat a whole chocolate cake when I get home. I balance things out.

Her: there is a guy I met at your wedding that has been hitting me up

Me: what guy?

Her: Lusapho. He is Sihle's friend

Me: I know Lu but isn't he a kid to you?

Her: he is. The problem is that I didn't know that when I slept with him

Me: you did what?

Some conversations need you to be a bit tipsy because they stress a sober mind. I'm not going to judge, instead I'm going to laugh because this is funny. I never imagined Asiphe for the meaningless sex type but different strokes for different folks.

Her: it was once, we were drunk and we used protection. He has hunted me down because I didn't give him my number

Me: you are single

Her: I don't date kids

Me: you slept with a kid though and set his world on fire hence he has hunted you down.

Her: I'm fire babe, I can't help it

The confidence runs in the family with these Khumalos. We continue talking about Lu and other things until she brings up the baby shower saga

Her: I think it's a nice gesture

Me: it is but just not for me right now and you'd think Kamo would understand that. I didn't want an engagement party but she thinks I'd want a baby shower

Her: what's the story with that friend of yours?

Me: there isn't a story. She is dating my best friend but she was my friend before they started dating

Her: hmmm

She sips on her drink while I stare at her. There isn't anything wrong with Kamo, if anything she is the one person that has always had my best interest at heart. She helped me get rid of Nobantu. No man, Kamo is a good person

Me: spit it out

Her: she is in competition with you

Me: nah babe, you've got it all wrong

Her: she got pregnant just after you got pregnant

Me: human nature

Her: how did she know about Nobantu's bag?

Me: strong guy feeling

Her: seriously? No Nkanyezi. There is no such but I'll let you handle this your way. She is your friend not mine

It all just got me thinking but no man. I've known Kamo for a while now. I would have spotted shady behavior already. I lived with her at some point. After lunch, Asiphe drives me home and the moment I walk in, I dial Kamo's number

Kamo: hey Star

Me: hey, how are you?

Her: I'm good and you?

Me: I'm good. Is this the right time to talk?

Her: yeah sure, what's up?

I put the phone on loud speaker while I change. Sihle walks in and just stares at me while I'm in just my underwear. It's hot and I'm tired

Me: listen, I want to ask you about something. That night when Nobantu was here, how did you know about her handbag?

Her: I didn't know. I just took a chance. I'm a woman too and my handbag is like my safe. Everything I need on the go, is in my handbag. I didnt take it because I knew there were strange things in it but I took a chance and I'm glad I did

Me: oh that makes sense. I just needed to check that

Her: why? Did something happen?

Me: Nah. I was just thinking about that night.

There was silence for a few seconds. I'm just glad of the approach I took. Accusing her wouldn't have been a bad move. I prefer asking over accusing

Me: also, I was serious about not wanting a baby shower so please don't plan one

Her: note. Listen, I have to go. Bye

She hangs up. She sounds upset which is understandable but I'm not going to push. I'll give her a bit of space for now

A lot like friendship

Chapter 39

A few days later I decide to call Khanye because his girlfriend has ghosted me. I didn't think it would get to that but I guess I was wrong. At the same time I still can't figure out what it is that I said that was so offensive that Kamo would block me.

Khanye: Starlight

Me: light of my life

Him: are you good? How's my nephew?

Me: he is fine, getting bigger and heavier with each day that passes.

Him: shame man.

Me: your girlfriend has blocked me

Him: I know. Apparently you accused her of witchcraft. Obviously I know you and you'd never do that

Me: what? I did no such thing. I asked her about that night kaNobantu and how she knew what was in the bag

Him: that's funny because I had asked her about it just after your birthday. I'm not going to get involved in this because I don't want history repeating itself.

I know the history he is talking about but we both know that Amy dying was not my fault. It had nothing to do with the fight we were having. He has a valid point though, I'd hate to lose another friend while we are fighting. It's difficult to come back from that

Me: I'll call her

Him: thank you. I love you buddy

Me: I love you too.

I hang up, sigh then dial Kamo's number. It rings unanswered at first then I try again. She can't ignore me forever. After the 7th attempt, she answers

Kamo: yes

Me: I'm sorry

She sighs

Me: I think you misunderstood me but I'm sorry either way

Her: I would never harm you, you are my friend Nkanyezi and I thought you and I spoke the same language

Me: we do. I guess I just let people get in my head. I am sorry though

Her: it's fine. I forgive you and I won't be organizing a baby shower for you. I understand that you don't want one and I accept that

Me: thank you. Please unblock me now

We speak more about pregnancy and work. I don't have many friends so the few that I have, I treasure. People will always have opinions, the same way it takes people forever and a day to understand that Khanye is just my friend. I am happy that Kamo and I have fixed things. I'd hate to lose another friend

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The date is April 17th, I'm exhausting and the happiest person on earth right now. I am a mother to the world's most beautiful boy. After being in labour for 36 hours, my son is finally here. Love at first sight is what I'm experiencing right now. I have never seen anything so perfect in my life before. It's as if there was a gap in my life i wasn't aware of but his arrival has filled it to the brink. I feel complete and at peace now that I get to hold my son

Sihle: he looks like me

Me: no he doesn't

Him: he doesn't look like you either

Me: it's fine but he doesn't look like you. He looks like Nande

Him: never

Sihle is holding him in his arms and staring at him while he sleeps. I never want to be without my people ever again, this feeling right here is everything and more. I've been blessed far beyond what I had prayed for. My tears have been wiped and replaced with tears of joy. What a magical moment this is. The gift of life

Me: I love you

He takes his eyes off his child and looks at me with that smile of his that I love so much. I hope our son will have his smile and his heart. He places a soft kiss on my lips then pulls back

Him: I love you more sthandwa sami and thank you so much for our son. He is perfect

Me: he is and he needs a name

Him: his name is Nhlanganiso Khwezi Khumalo

Me: Nhlanganiso meaning unity and Khwezi meaning brightest morning star

Him: exactly.

Me: beautiful. I love those names

Him: I knew you would

The next day Nhlangano and I are discharged and we go home. During the last few weeks of my pregnancy, Sihle and I put the nursery together. He was working and I was pointing where I want everything to be. It was fun and it turned out beautifully. My mother will be staying with us for a couple of months just to help with the baby. Hopefully that will mean I get to sleep through it all. It's a dream so allow me to dream. Our whole family is there to welcome us home and meet the baby

Mrs K: such a big baby but he is adorable

Me: my body appreciates that he is out. He has put me through the most

Nande: is it safe to say that he looks like me or is it too soon?

Sihle: stop it.

Asiphe: I see it too Nande

Mr K: but Nande and Sihle do look alike so don't feel bad son. If he looks like Nande then he looks like you too

I take a look at my husband and he is sulking. Shame man. He must just be content with knowing that this is his son and he will look like him one day. We hope. I decide to take a bath and a nap while everyone is still obsessing over the baby. I'm all for getting as much rest as possible especially when there is family around. I wake up just after 1pm. I'm hungry and I need to breastfeed my baby

Sihle: welcome back to the land of the living

I smile faintly as he makes his way towards me. This man is sexy and beautiful all at once. I love it. He kisses my lips then places a kiss on my forehead

Me: I'm starving

Him: let me get your food from the microwave. Nhlango is asleep in his bassinet

Me: thanks baby

The weeks that follow are crazy. My son is a screamer, he wants to be held at all times and he loves attention. I can't get anything done when he is awake because I must just look at him. That's how he wants things to be done. He is definitely his father's child.

A couple of weeks after Nhlango turned 3 months, Kamo gave birth to a baby boy too. They named him Langelihle Khazimla Zikhali. Langelihle means beautiful day and Khazimla means shine bright. My son and my godson are 3 months apart which means they will grow up together. Khanye says they have no choice but to be best friends from the get go. I'm all for my kid choosing his own best friend but we will see how it goes.

When our 1st anniversary comes around, Nhlango is almost 5 months and still the most adorable baby. I'm obsessed with my son. I'm at the point where if a choice came between deleting my banking app and deleting a picture of my son sleeping, it shall be bye bye banking app.

Sihle: happy anniversary my love

Me: we made it through our first year together.

Him: we were even blessed with a son. This has been our year, no doubt.

Me: I still love you just as much as I did a year ago if not more

Our kiss turns into sex. We have that slow and gently love making. It's emotional yet so satisfying. I moan as he pours all his emotions into every thrust and every position. After we reach our climax, we get cleaned up and cuddle in bed. His parents took Nhlango last night and will bring him back tomorrow. We have this whole sunday to ourselves

Him: how do you want us to spend the day?

Me: just like this

My hand is already stroking his manhood and he groans

Him: we have to eat at some point

Me: or we can just feast on each other

I say this as I'm planting a trail of kisses down his chest to his stomach, past his belly button until I reach my destination. I stroke him first before wrapping my lips around his manhood. His groans get louder, the deeper I take him

Him: I love you so much

We manage to squeeze in a few more rounds before we take a shower and get breakfast going. It feels so weird being with just him in the house. No baby crying or screaming in the background

Me: I need to get a morning after pill

Him: we'll go get it after eating.

I decided not to go back on the injection after I had Nhlanganiso because I want to be done making babies by the time I'm 30. I don't want to struggle to conceive when we decide to have another baby

Me: we haven't had the conversation about babies yet

Him: you want us to discuss babies on our anniversary?

Me: yes because we are spending the whole day participating in baby making activities

Him: point taken. Ok let's talk ke muntu wami

Me: how many would you like us to have?

Him: 3. All before we turn 30. I want them all out of the house by the time we retire. How many would you like us to have?

Me: 3 is fine by me.

We finish eating then leave. I don't know what the plan is for the day but all I know is that the morning after pill is at the top of my list. He plays spirit break out by Kim Walker as we drive to the mall. That song has the power to make you feel like you are in church while still in the car. It's an amazing worship song. He watches me as I butcher the song, I don't care that I can't sing to save my life

Him: she must sue you. You are murdering that song and not in a good way

Me: all the great musicians have haters and you are hating on me right now

He laughs at me while shaking his head. Every day I feel as if I married the right guy. I married my best friend and he makes fun of me every chance he gets. That's just how our marriage has been over the past year. It's been playful, lesson filled and a challenge but we made it through.

Our first stop is clicks then we buy snacks and food for our picnic at the beach. He lets me drive when we are going to the beach, I still drive like an old woman so he is complaining all the way there. We get to the beach, he sets up on his own while I'm doing a live video. I'm still all about documenting things. When he is done, I join him on the picnic blanket which looks amazing. He did a great job in setting up. He pulls me closer to get between his legs as he wraps his arms around me

Him: are you happy?

Me: more than I've ever been. You are turning out to be a great husband

Him: that's because I have a great wife. I want to give you the world Nkanyezi

Me: you already have. You and Nhlanganiso are my world. I'd marry you again if you asked me to, I'd choose you over and over again. That's how much I love you

Our anniversary turns out to be exactly what we wanted it to be. We are happy together, our son is healthy and happy and we get to shower him with all this love everyday

A lot like friendship

Chapter 40

[5 years later]

Life doesn't always go according to plan. Sometimes we make plans and God just looks down on us, laughs then changes everything. Sihle and I wanted a daughter after we had Nhlanganiso but a few months after our son turned 2years old, we welcomed another son. This one looks exactly like me and is a lot calmer than his older brother was. Sihle named our second son Nyaniso which means truth and I named him Thandulwazi which means love knowledge. That same year Siya, Sihle's friend and Lisa got married. They dated for a few months, had a baby girl, Lesedi then got married a year after their daughter was born. It was crazy but we all went to the wedding and had a lot of fun.

Sihle and I welcomed our last son a year ago and named him Amani Ibanathi Khumalo which means peace be with us.

We are all adults now with families and it's crazy to think that we've all been in each other's lives for over 10years. We have had our fair share of fights, fighting demons and growing our friendship. I'm glad I get to walk through life with this bunch. They have become my family.

My mother has the kids while Sihle and I are in Bloem. We are all here for his 30th birthday celebration and we are hosting it at the house he used to stay in while he was living here. The previous tenants moved out last year and no tenants have moved in yet. The whole gang being here just brings back all those varsity memories. Tonight we are just chilling since the actual party is happening tomorrow.

Me: where is Kamo?

Khanye: she stayed home with Lango and Lisakhanya

Me: why? You guys have a nanny

Khanye: we will talk later about that buddy

He looks stressed which is weird because Khanye is always a happy person. My husband brings me a glass of sparkling wine before settling down. His friends are also

here but luckily his cousin isn't here. That one didn't even come to our wedding. It's just Avuyile, Sihle, Siya, Lusapho, Khanye, Lisa, Zinathi, who is Khanye's sister and myself. We are drinking, talking, dancing and having a good time. You best believe that when Avuyile is around, it's going to be a great party

Zinathi: Lisa you are not drinking

Siya: she can't drink. She is still breastfeeding

Avuyile: I still can't believe that you got my friend pregnant with two babies now. You son of a gun

Lisa: you do remember that he is my husband, right?

Avuyile: yeah but that doesn't mean he has to get you pregnant

Siya: that is basically what it means. Bruh how high are you right now?

Avuyile laughs. This one must stop smoking weed or else he will lose his mind. He and Lisa became very close over the years, at some point I thought they would end up together but nope. Siya came along but then again I don't think they saw each other as anything more than friends

Khanye: stop smoking

Avuyile: never. Weed is a herb not a drug

Zinathi: you take 7 working days just to finish one sentence and you think this is normal

Avuyile: weed is sexy. It doesn't talk too much like women do. I'm happy with my weed

Me: so if I take my kids and walk out the door, you will be fine with your weed?

Avuyile: this conversation is getting abusive very quickly. I need a time out

This one is a real idiot but we all love him because he keeps us entertained. Avuyile and Zinathi have 3 daughters together, the youngest being only a couple of months old. At first Khanye was not pleased about their relationship but over the years, he has learnt to accept it. While everyone is getting nicely drunk, Khanye steps out onto the patio and I follow him

Me: what's going on?

Khanye: a lot. Where do you want me to start?

Me: buddy you and I talk every day, how did it get to a lot without me knowing anything?

He sighs, sips on his drink then sighs again. It hurts me to see him like this because he seems really troubled

Him: take a look around Star, you guys are all growing and moving on with your lives. You guys are all happy, even Avuyile has grown up to some extent. I feel like my life is at a standstill. I go home to an angry woman who keeps denying that she is depressed. She quit her job and shut everyone out

Me: Kamo quit her job? What happened? I thought you guys were good

Him: we were until you guys had Nyaniso and she wanted us to have another baby. We tried but then she lost the baby and refused to get counselling for the loss. She wanted us to replace the baby we lost and it just wasn't happening. It's a mess. Things got worse when our other friends had more kids. She has become obsessed with making babies and if I won't have sex with her, she becomes angry and starts throwing things around.

My arms wrap around him and I try hard to contain the tears. I feel like shit for not picking up that something was wrong but this isn't about me. My friend needs me. We pull out of the hug and continue drinking in silence. Khanye doesn't deserve this but the most important thing is that Kamo needs help before she hurts herself or the kids or Khanye.

Him: I want out but I can't leave her because despite all the shit she is putting me through right now, I love her. I know she isn't herself and I want to help her

Me: how do you help someone that doesn't want to help herself?

Him: that's the problem I'm faced with. I can tell that the kids are being affected by her behaviour. She is impatient with them and it frustrates them

Me: I'm going to go see her after Sihle's party. Hopefully I'll be able to get through to her

Him: I'd really appreciate that buddy

We walk back inside and join everyone. I have my head resting on Sihle's shoulder and he has his arm around me.

Sihle: are you ok?

Me: I'm fine babe

He places a kiss on my forehead then squeezes me in a side hug. People start leaving around midnight and Sihle and I start cleaning up

Me: I'm so tired

Sihle: at least you are not drunk. Doing this while wasted would have been a mission

Me: I was going to leave you on your own

Him: you don't love me

Me: I love you more than anything

Him: more than the kids?

Me: I wouldn't have them if it wasn't for you

After cleaning up we go to bed. I need to get as much rest as possible because tomorrow is going to be a hectic day trying to get everything in order for his birthday celebration. The next day I wake up before him and decide to call the kids. Nhlanganiso has his own phone which he only uses for games but I call him on it so he knows and understands that a phone is for phone calls

Nhlango: hello

Me: hello baby

Him: mama is that you?

Me: yes it's me. How are you?

Him: I'm fine. Amani has been crying for you. He misses you

Me: don't you miss me?

Him: I don't know. Maybe I'll miss you tomorrow

I hear shuffling around and Nyaniso's voice shouting at his brother. I think they are fighting over the phone because a few minutes later Nyaniso starts talking

Nyaniso: mama

Me: hello my boy. Are you fine?

Him: I'm fine. Amani is crying

They tell me about their little brother and his crying and that Gogo cooks them nice food. I've been gone for a day yet they have forgotten that I can cook nice food too. The disrespect from my own children.

Nhlanganiso: where is baba?

Me: he is still sleeping

Nyaniso: wake him up mama

Me: I'll tell him to call you guys when he wakes up. Kiss your brother for me. I love you

Nhlanganiso: love you too mama

Nyaniso: love you too too mama

I hang up and smile to myself. My babies are adorable and I miss them. Especially Amani because he is my youngest and doesn't talk yet. Nhlanganiso and Nyaniso talk from sunrise to sunset, it's crazy.

I make breakfast for hubby and I and when he walks in, I've already set the table. He kisses, grabs my ass and pulls me closer to his growing erection

Me: food first then dessert. Good morning

Sihle: good morning MamKhumalo.

Me: Happy birthday sthandwa sami

Him: thank you my love

After breakfast we have sex in the kitchen and end up in the bedroom then have another round in the shower before getting ready for the day.

Me: people are going to be in and out of the house today. Will you be here?

Him: yeah. Siya and Lu are coming over, we have a few things to discuss

Me: awesome. I'm going to be with Lisa all day today

Him: be safe and I love you so much

Me: I love you more

He kisses me before I leave. We've been married for 6years now but I still have the biggest crush on him. I still get butterflies when I'm around him and we still behave like teenagers in love. I'll forever be grateful to have him in my life

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Khanye

Over the past couple of years my house has become a battlefield and I hate the effect it has on my children. They don't want to be around Kamo anymore and she shouts at them the whole day. Everything is just a mess and I don't know how to fix her. I love Kamo so much, she made me happy for a long time before the obsession with children started. We have drifted so far apart that I don't know how we will find our way back to each other. When she is angry, she gets physical and I can never lay my hand on the woman I love. I wasn't raised like that.

I just woke up and I sigh. I sleep in the spare bedroom now because we can no longer share the same bed. Usually the kids don't see me when I'm in here, they still assume that we still sleep in the same bedroom. Things have gotten that bad between us. I get out of bed, put sweatpants and a t-shirt on then make my way out. My kids are in the kitchen with their nanny

Me: good morning

Lisakhanya: morning daddy

I kiss the side of her head

Lango: morning baba

We fist bump before I sit next to them. Their nanny greets me as well

Me: where is mama?

Lango: in your room. Why didn't you sleep in your room?

Me: I didn't want to disturb her. I came back late last night

Lisakhanya: can we go to the movies today?

Me: yes

Lango: and the arcade?

Me: yes

Kamo walks in with her robe on. The kids immediately take their bowls and go sit in the dining room. They don't like being around her anymore

Me: morning

Kamo: hmmm

Me: I'm saying good morning Kamo

Her: and I heard you. Actually where were you last night?

Me: at Sihle's place. We were supposed to go there and you refused

Her: because they gossip about me. I don't want to be around people that talk about me behind my back

I sigh and continue to eat my breakfast. It's way too early in the day to start fighting with Kamo

Her: I'm not going to the party either

Me: ok

Her: is that all you are going to say? You never support me Zukhanye

Me: I support you all the time but I'm not going to force you to go to a party you don't want to go to. I'm not going to stay here because I want to go to that party

Her: so you are choosing Star over me again. Perfect Star with the perfect life always gets everything she wants

Me: Kamohelo you need to stop this crap. When have I ever chosen Star over you? I am here with you because I love you but you just can't see that. It's Star this and Star that. No man

Then she starts crying and I'm defeated. This is what I have to deal with every day. The doctors say its postpartum depression but how because it's been years since she had Lango and she was fine for 2years after she gave birth. She is falling apart and it's painful for me to watch it all happen without doing anything about it. I feel so useless because I know this is a cry for help

Me: please stop crying

Her: don't go to the party. Please just stay with me.

Me: ok I won't go. I'll stay with you

Her: you promise?

Me: I promise

Her: we can try for another baby tonight. I'm hoping we get twins.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 41

The party turns out exactly as I had hoped. My husband and I are dressed up for it and I can tell just from the look on his face that he is happy. All his people that he hasn't seen in a long time are here to celebrate with him and his wife made it all possible

Sihle: I don't think I tell you enough just how much I love you

Me: you show me and that's what counts the most. I love you too

Him: you look gorgeous. I don't think I'll be able to take my eyes off you tonight

I smile because I know he is telling the truth. The one thing I value the most about our marriage is the values we've set for ourselves which are unity, truth/honesty and peace. We've built our marriage on that and named our kids after those values. I love that we have the easy type of love, nothing has been difficult for us and maybe it's because I've been through enough difficulty to last me a life time. I trust him and I believe that he will always do good by me and the boys.

When all the guests have arrived, we take pictures, eat and share great memories about the man of the hour. The photographer better capture him blushing because he looks so cute. I am a bit surprised that Khanye isn't here, he did text that he can't come but it is just weird that he isn't here. Maybe something happened with Kamo

Sihle: thank you everyone for being here today to celebrate my birthday with me. It really means a lot that you still want to drink all night with me even in your old age. I love you guys and you are what I call my extended family now.

He turns to look at me then gives me that smile of his that I love so much. He gestures that I should stand up and I do

Him: seven years ago I took a chance and told the girl I love how I feel about her and 6 years ago I married her. Every time I look at her, I still can't wrap my head around the fact that we are now parents to 3 boys. You are an amazing wife and an amazing

mother sthandwa sami. I'm so blessed to be able to do this life thing with you. I just want to thank you for pulling this off. It truly means a lot to me. I love you so much

We share a hug as I try to contain my tears. This man though. He is just everything and more

Avuyile: don't turn this into your wedding day please

Me: kill joy

Avuyile: you guys are cute and all but we are here for a party not a romantic comedy

Zinathi: please don't tell people you know me

Avuyile: I won't have to. People will take one look at our children and know that you let me hit it raw

Lisa: Avuyile!!

Avuyile pulls Zinathi in for a kiss and we all laugh. These two are just a weird couple but they work so well together. They match their craziness so well. The night goes from sophisticated to wild in a matter of hours. We drink our hearts out, we dance like crazy and we have the time of our lives. My man turned 30 in style

Siya: I love you guys. You never make us forget our youthful days

Me: you are as old as you feel and right now I'm 16

Sihle: a sexy 16year old

He spanks my ass and I squeal

Lu: you guys are wild though

Zi: I love it. Forever young is the motto

Avuyile: I'm actually going to play that song

He connects his phone to the sound bar and plays Forever Young by Jay Z. Everyone that knows the song sings along and some of us only join in at the chorus. Lisa has the

phone tonight and taking our pictures and videos. I know I'm going to have a hangover from hell tomorrow but those are tomorrow's problems. Tonight I'm forever young. Everyone ends up sleeping over because they are too drunk to drive home.

The next day I wake up to Sihle's tongue doing the most on my coochie. He is eating me out as if I'm the last supper. I'm low key addicted to the sex we have, I can never say no to him because I'm always turned on when I'm around him. It's so crazy. I release a loud moan when his fingers enters me, one at a time

Sihle: you are so wet

We have rough and sloppy sex then cuddle in bed naked. I love the way he takes ownership of my body when we make love. He knows what turns me on the most and what reaches my climax the quickest

Me: I have to go see Kamo

Him: what's the story with her and Khanye vele?

Me: she is apparently depressed because they can't conceive

Him: yho that's hectic

Me: yeah and now that Khanye didn't show last night, I have a feeling something must have happened

Him: I'll drive you there

Me: nah babe, you can look after our guests while I'm gone

We take a shower together, I get dressed in a mustard jumpsuit and black mules. I pack my phone and other essentials into my bag before driving out to Khanye's place. I call Kamo while I'm driving there

Kamo: Star

Me: hey, how are you?

Her: I'm fine and you?

Me: I'm good, listen I was hoping to swing by that side and see you guys. Is now a good time?

Her: yeah sure. I'm sure the kids would love to see you

Me: awesome I'll be there in a few minutes

We hang up and I continue with my drive. I call Khanye to open the gate when I'm there. The moment I walk I into the house, the kids come running towards me. They hug me tightly, we are all just happy to see each other.

Jasmine: we missed you auntie Star

Me: you did? I missed you too. You guys should visit me soon

Lango: that would be awesome. I'll go ask dad right now

Jasmine: yeah me too

They disappear into the passage while I walk into the lounge to find Kamo chilling on the couch

Me: hey friend. I missed you

Kamo: I can see

Me: thought I'd see you at Sihle's party

Her: I wasn't feeling well. I'm fine now so don't go worrying about me

Khanye walks into the room before I can respond. I thought he would be with his children but they are not in sight

Khanye: hey buddy. Are you good?

Me: I'm good and you

Khanye: I'm good. What can I get you to drink?

Me: just water buddy, thanks

He walks towards the kitchen, Kamo keeps her eyes on him the whole time as if the guy is planning on making a run for it

Kamo: why are you here?

Me: I wanted to see you

Her: so that you can discuss me properly

Me: discuss you? Why would I discuss you? You are my friend, I love you and I care about you

Her: I see. Thanks I guess

Khanye comes back with the glass of water then sits down next to Kamo

Kamo: I've been thinking. Maybe I need fresh air, a change of scenery

Khanye: yeah that sounds like a good idea

Kamo: maybe I can visit Star for a few weeks. Just to catch my breath then come back to be with you and the kids

Khanye and I look at each other. We do want to help her and maybe a change of scenery will do her some good. Just to get out of this house that has all these memories.

Me: I don't think that would be a problem. I'll have to talk to Sihle first though but I'm sure he won't mind

Khanye: are you sure?

Kamo: of course she is sure. She just said so

Me: I'm sure buddy. I'll let you guys know what Sihle says but we are leaving tomorrow morning

Kamo: awesome. I can't wait

I stay with them for a couple of hours but I spend most of the time playing with Jasmine and Langa. Around midday I make my way back to the house. Our drunk friends have left and it's just my husband left.

Me: she wants to visit us

Sihle: do you think it's a good idea?

Me: I don't know. All I know is that she is my friend and I want to help her

Him: if you think this will help her then she can come home with us

The next day we wake up early and get ready to leave. We pick Kamo up from their house and drive off. I can never get used to how far this place is from home but after hours spent on the road, we eventually get home. Kamo and I settle in while Sihle fetches the kids

A lot like friendship

Chapter 42

Kamo bonded with the kids quickly. The older ones know her but what surprised me was how much she was bonding with Amani. We have a nanny but Kamo has taken over the nanny's duties when it comes to Amani but she does so while supervised. The last thing I want is for something bad to happen to my children. She has been with us for 2 weeks now, Khanye calls me every day to check if she is still okay and hasn't lost her marbles. It's admirable that he still loves her and cares about her despite all that they have been through. It takes a different kind of love, I must say.

While I'm at work, my phone rings and it's our nanny, Buhle. She knows not to call when I'm at work unless it's an emergency so it's safe to assume that this is an emergency

Me: hello

Buhle: Mrs Khumalo, its Buhle. I'm calling to ask if you know where Miss Kamo and Amani went. They left after you guys and they are still not back

Me: ok let me just call Kamo and find out where they went. Shouldn't you have gone with them? I've always told you that you go where Amani goes

Her: that was the plan ma'am but Miss Kamo left with him while I was still packing his bag

Me: ok Buhle, I'll call Kamo

We hang up and I dial Kamo's number but it goes straight go voicemail. This is straight so I call Sihle

Sihle: muntu wami

Me: hey baby, I can't reach Kamo and apparently she took Amani with her

Him: took him where?

Me: I don't know. Buhle just called me now, apparently they left a while ago

Him: I'm going to go home and hopefully they will be there when I get there. Don't panic

Me: ok babe. I love you

Him: I love you too

Trying to keep my focus for the rest of the day was impossible but I forced matters and when school was out, I drove home. Sihle hasn't called to say anything and now I'm really panicking. I decide to call Khanye because this is his girlfriend that we are talking about

Khanye: buddy

Me: hey buddy. Kamo is missing

Him: what do you mean she is missing?

Me: exactly that. She took Amani somewhere in the morning without telling anyone and now her phone is off

Him: no Star. This can't be happening. She kidnapped him

Me: no man. Kamo wouldn't do that

He sighs. Yes she has been paying more attention to Amani than the other kids but she wouldn't take my child. Kamo is my friend, she wouldn't do that to me

Him: Star, this is a woman desperate for a child and she disappeared with your baby. I pray and hope that I'm wrong about this. I really do

I hang up because talking to Khanye right now is hurting me and my tears are blinding my vision. My heart is pounding as I'm driving home. I keep convincing myself that Khanye is wrong but at the same time I can't shake of the possibility that he is right. The thought of my son being kidnapped will drive me crazy. Not my baby, Lord please, not my son.

When I get home, Sihle's car is in the driveway so I just park behind it and run into the house

Me: are they back?

Sihle walks up to me and wraps his arms around me but I push him away a few seconds later

Me: Khumalo, is our son back?

Sihle: no baby. I've called the police and they are on their way

Me: Khanye thinks she kidnapped him but no man. Kamo wouldn't do that.

Him: Kamo is not well Nkanyezi. Anything is possible at this point

Me: but she isn't a kidnapper. She wouldn't take my child. Maybe they got into an accident or something

Him: I've called all the hospitals in our area and they have not been admitted

The way he is so calm about this is freaking me out even more. I'm panicking like a crazy woman, pacing all over the place and he is just chilled. He is comforting me as if Amani isn't his son as well.

I start feeling hot and agitated so I take off my shirt and remain in the camisole I was wearing under it and my pants. I'm using the shirt to fan myself because it feels as if the aircon is useless at this point

Him: the police will find him sthandwa sami

Me: have you called your parents and my mother?

Him: not yet but I'll call them after we've spoken to the police. We will find him Nkanyezi. We will

The police arrive 20mins after me, they take Buhle's statement then ask for a picture of Amani and Kamo. Sihle had already printed the pictures so he gives them to him

Detective: should we open a missing person's case or a kidnapping case?

Sihle: a kidnapping case

I look at hom but he doesn't look in my direction. I'm finding this difficult to accept. My friend that I let into our home has kidnapped our child. Kanti who am I supposed to trust

in my life? Who am I supposed to let into my life? She came here because she needed help. How did we get to this point? She knows my pain yet she is causing me more pain

Detective: do you have any idea where she might go?

Me: she doesn't know anyone around here. She stays in Bloem with her boyfriend and she used to stay in Johannesburg a few years ago

Detective: she is from Johannesburg?

Me: no, she is from the North West somewhere, I don't know where

Detective: you don't know where your friend is from?

This detective will piss me off because I just said it right now that I don't know where she is from. All I know is that she ran away from her home town because of an abusive ex. She never used to want to talk about family with me so we never discussed it

Sihle: here is the number of her boyfriend, he might help with those questions

Detective: alright. This is my card, call us should they turn up or you hear something. No matter what that might be

Sihle: thank you

Me: just find them please. Find my son

Detective: we'll do our best

I couldn't sleep that night, I just kept tossing and turning. At times I'd get out of bed thinking I can hear Amani crying, only to be greeted by dead silence in his room. He is just a 1 year old, 14 months to be exact. He is a baby, my baby

Sihle: sthandwa sami, you need to try and get some sleep

Me: I can't do it. I close my eyes and I see our little boy. He should be here with us
Sihle: I just want him here

Him: I know baby. They will find him. I promise

He is making a promise he knows he won't be able to keep but I hold on to it. I hold on to the hope that my little boy will be returned to us.

The following week we sent the boys to Sihle's parents. I was not sleeping, I was not eating, I was just drowning my sorrows in whiskey. We posted on all social media platforms, sent his picture to our local newspaper and put up posters all over our neighborhood. We were doing everything and anything possible to try and find our son. Khanye calls me while I'm lying on the couch with a bottle of whiskey right next to me

Me: hello

Khanye: the cops are here

Me: ok

Him: they are raiding my house, frightening my kids

Me: ok

Him: Star are you listening to me? Do you honestly think I'd hide Kamo while knowing that she took Amani?

Me: don't say his name. Don't you dare. Tell the cops where Kamo is from. Tell them who her family members are

Him: I don't have that information Star. I've told you a million times that Kamo didn't like talking about her family

I hang up and toss my phone aside then take another gulp of my whiskey. No one is capable of just disappearing without a trace. Someone knows something and if it means the cops have to be in Khanye's house, turning the whole place upside down just to find something then so be it. Clearly I can't trust anyone and I'd rather get my son back than protect a friendship. Sihle walks into the lounge and stares at me

Sihle: we need to take a shower

Me: no

Him: Nkanyezi I know this is difficult for you but Amani was my son too

Me: is. Is your son. My son is not dead Khumalo. He isn't dead

Him: I'm sorry, yes Amani is my son too and this is painful for me as well. I'm not going to lose my wife as well. Come, let's go take a shower

Me: you blame me for this. I can see it in your eyes. You don't say it but your eyes speak for you. You blame me for bringing her here into our house. Naive Nkanyezi did it again, she trusted too much

He doesn't say anything but takes the bottle from my hand, closes it then puts it aside. He pulls me up and throws me over his shoulder. I punch his back as he walks towards the bathroom with me

Me: put me down Sihle. Put me the fuck down

He ignores me, turns on the water in the shower and gets in with me. We still have our clothes on as the water runs over us. He screams then starts crying loudly. He hasn't been showing any emotions over the past two weeks, he has been the focused one while I've been losing myself. Seeing him like that makes me sob into my own cries as well. I let him have his moment until he calms down

Me: I'm sorry

Him: I don't blame you. Our son is missing and blaming you won't bring him back. You need to pull yourself together Nkanyezi, we will find him. You need to believe that we will find him

Weeks turn into months and there is nothing from Kamo and Amani. The more days that past, the thinner the string that's holding my marriage together gets. We don't talk anymore, he is always at work and I'm always drinking. Drinking makes me forget that this is my fault, I trusted her and she did this to us. She has torn my family apart, turned our worlds upside down and destroyed my friendship with Khanye. It's been 3 months now and I don't have the energy to cry anymore

Sihle: can we talk?

Me: I don't have the energy to fight with you right now

Him: I don't want to fight either. I just want us to talk

I put the broom I am using to sweep the floor aside and sit down on the bar chair next to him. We both have lost weight, it's evident now. The only difference is that he hasn't turned into an alcoholic yet

Him: the police called earlier. Someone gave them a tip off about a woman and a child matching Kamo and Amani's description

Me: where?

Him: in Joburg. The police that side have been following up on that tip off and they will call us as soon as they have news

Me: oh my God. Do you think it's them? Do you think we've finally found our baby boy?

Him: I'm hopeful

A lot like friendship

Chapter 43

No pain in the world compares to that of losing your child and not knowing whether he or she is still alive. How do you find closure when you can't grieve? You hold on to hope so much that it ends up being the only thing you have. It's been 6 months without any trace of Kamo and Amani. I've moved out of our home and now live with my mother. Sihle and I were just not able to be under the same roof anymore. I know he blames me and I couldn't live with the way he looks at me. He tries to be strong but his eyes express his real feelings. The kids are still with his parents, I see them once in a while because even their presence makes me feel like crap. They ask about their brother and I don't have the answers

Mama: have something to eat Nkanyezi. You can't drink alcohol the whole day. You will die

I chuckle then shake my head

Me: that's rich coming from you mama. You are still alive and you lived on alcohol for years

Her: and you always said you want to be a better mother but how different are you from me now?

Me: my child is missing

Her: I understand that and it's a painful situation but you have two other children that need you. They are still young, they need their mother

Me: they don't need me. They are fine without me. I have nothing to offer them right now

I down my bottle of wine then toss it aside. My tears have dried up, I feel like I'm losing my mind and I don't have the will to fight anymore. Kamo has taken everything from me and as much now I know that Asiphe was right, there isn't much competition anymore. She has won. I have nothing left and I have nothing to live for

Me: I need a nap

I pour water into a glass and go into my room. I was prescribed so many sleeping pills and other medication that was supposed to help me with anxiety and depression. I empty the pill containers into my mouth and down them with water then get on the bed and laid down

Me: Dear God, may you accept my soul

I close my eyes. After a few minutes I feel cramps in my stomach but I endure them until I fall into a deep sleep. Everything is dark until its bright white again. I'm in a field of sunflowers which is weird because I don't know this place. The grass is a beautiful green colour, the sunflowers are fresh and alive. There is also a beautiful and calm river. I spot someone at a distance, waving at me but I can't see her face. I run towards her, maybe she can tell me why I'm here and what this place is. The closer I get to her, I realize that it's Amy which is weird because I know Amy is dead. Maybe I'm dead too now

Amy: hey Star

Me: Amy

She wraps her arms around me then pulls back. This feels so weird

Her: what are you doing here?

Me: I think I'm dead

She laughs

Her: you are not dead. How can you be dead when you haven't found your son yet?

Me: you know about that?

Her: when you are dead, you know about everything. I also know that you married my ex

Her: oh

Her: you are the girl that got him to settle down. Even if I had stayed with him, he would never have stopped cheating on me. You guys are destined for each other. I know that now

I don't say anything, instead I play with the grass. This place feels peaceful for some reason

Me: I love him but I've lost him

Her: then fight to get him back. Sihle loves you, it's just that he doesn't know how to handle the problems you guys are facing. He is trying to be strong for you

Me: he blames me for all of this

Her: no Star, he doesn't. You blame yourself then you project that on him. You need to forgive yourself. You made a mistake, you thought you were being a good friend because of how things ended between us. Kamo isn't me. Even though both you and Khanye have replaced me with her, she isn't me.

Me: I just wish we would have fixed things before you died. I hate how things ended for us. I really do

The tears stream down my cheeks. Amy's death hit me a lot harder than I had let on. I felt guilty

Her: forgive yourself Star. My death had nothing to do with you.

Me: I will work on it

Her: ok let's get to business. It's not good for you to stay here for too long. I'm going to show you where your son is. He is safe and has been taken care of. I've been watching over him.

We walk towards the river and stand on the bank. It's clear and peaceful

Her: look at the water, focus on just the water and calm yourself

Me: ok

I do as she says and I see Amani playing inside a house. There is an old woman watching him and then a few seconds later I see Kamo walking through the door. She really took my son.

Me: where is this?

Her: this is where she grew up. This is her family home

She gives me a paper with the address on it. I read it over and over in my head. I know there is a possibility that I won't remember this but I'm praying that I do. I need to get my son back and fix my marriage or at least try to fix it

Me: thank you so much Amy

Her: you love my daughter and you care about her, I should be the one thanking you

Me: she is my jazzy fizzle

Her: so ghetto

Everything goes dark again and it just stays dark

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SIHLE

Loss is painful in so many different ways and we all grieve differently but I don't think what Nkanyezi has been doing qualifies as grieving. She has pushed me away and I've decided to give her space before we become irreparably. When I got the call that my wife had overdosed on pills, my whole world came to a standstill. I can't lose my son and my wife at the same time. I won't be able to live with that. I rushed to the hospital and found my mother in law there.

Me: what happened ma?

Mama Thandi: I found her in her room with the containers on the floor. She said she was going to take a nap and when I went to check on her, I found her like that

Me: have the doctors said anything?

She shakes her head. Someone needs to tell us something before I lose my mind. My heart is racing and my mind is buzzing. What was Nkanyezi thinking? It's as if she has forgotten about our vows and how much I love her. Amani's kidnapping has been tough on us. It has broken us but the love I have for my wife is still there. I vowed to protect her but I didn't know that I'd have to protect from herself as well.

We stay in the waiting area for over an hour before a doctor comes to give us an update. I introduce myself and she introduces herself as Dr Kheswa

Dr: we've managed to pump her stomach of all the pills and she is now stable but we will be keeping her in the ICU overnight

Me: so she is awake?

Dr: not yet

Me: oh

Dr: but you can go in to see her. One person at a time

I turn to my mother in law

Me: you can go in ma. I'll see her when she is awake

Dr: you can talk to her even before she wakes up. She will hear you

Me: I'll wait for her to wake up doc. Thank you

Mama Thandi goes in while I sit down. My sons cross my mind. We have been such shitty parents to them over the past 6 months. We've been so focused on finding their brother that we've neglected them. They have been with my parents for months now and as much as I know they are well taken care of, I can't help but wonder what must be going on through their minds.

A lot like friendship

Chapter 44

Amani's kidnapping has taught me a few valuable lessons, one of them being that my weakness is that I see good in everyone. It's weird because I have always had trust issues but my friends created a safety net for me to be able to trust them with the deepest parts of my life. I let my guard down and I'm paying deeply for that. When I wake up, my mother is by my side. She looks a mess and it breaks my heart that I'm the cause of her current looks

Me: I'm thirsty

My throat feels dry and scratchy. At this point I don't know how long I've been out for. My mother pours water for me and helps me drink it

Me: thank you. I need a pen and paper

Mama: what for?

Me: I need to write something I dreamt about

Her: I don't understand

Me: please mama, before I forget

She hands me the pen and paper from her handbag and I quickly note down the address I got from Amy. I really hope this will work, it's my only shot at getting my son back.

The doctor walks in, checks me out and updates my file

Dr: I'm Dr Kheswa

Me: nice to meet you

Her: you'll be ready to be discharged in two days but you won't be going home. You'll be transferred to the psychiatric ward. They will keep you there for a minimum of 21 days

Me: no. I need to find my son. You can't keep me here

Her: it's for your own good Mrs Khumalo. You tried to take your own life, that's not normal behaviour. I'm going to get your husband for you. It's been a long 72hrs for your family

I don't respond. I'm still trying to wrap my head around going to the looney bin for 3 weeks. I'm not crazy. Now that I know where Amani is, I have no reason to repeat what I did. They must just let me go.

The doctor leaves with my mother and a few minutes later my husband walks in. He looks drained and I can't keep my eyes on him for long. He stares at me after he has taken a seat but neither of us says a word. I wouldn't know what to say even if I wanted to say something. I love Sihle with every fiber of my being so seeing him like this breaks my heart.

Sihle: why would you do this Nkanyezi? Why would you want to leave me on my own? What about us? Our kids and your mother. We love you, I love you and I've never shut you out. You could have come to me should things have gotten too much for you

I don't respond because he just won't understand. Our son is missing because of me, I'm strong enough to admit that now. Maybe Amy was right, I am projecting because deep down, I blame myself. I should have anticipated that something like this might happen. I should have chosen to protect my children first and not a person I assumed is my friend. I messed up, big time

Him: I'm here for you, I'll always be here for you. I love you so much Nkanyezi and the thought of living life without you makes my blood run cold. You are my life and it hurts to know that you felt that your only way to be free is to kill yourself. That means that I have failed as your husband, as your friend

Me: this isn't about you though

Him: who is it about then? You? Nkanyezi your actions impact me, they impact our children and they impact your family. You can't be that selfish. You used alcohol to deal with what was happening, I let that happen because you needed something toxic to help you cope. I'm not going to sugar-coat how I feel about your suicide attempt

Me: I was drowning. It's my fault that Amani isn't here with us. I couldn't take the guilt anymore

Him: no one blames you

Me: I blame myself

The tears started rolling at the start of this conversation and they haven't stopped. A lot has happened in a short space of time, I'd be superhuman not to reach my tolerance limit. I still haven't built up the courage to look at him

Him: you need to forgive yourself sthandwa sami. You made a mistake and it's ok. You are only human

Me: I don't deserve you

Him: stop it. Actually make space. I want to hold my wife

Me: are you even allowed to do that?

Him: only you can stop me

I shift over and make space for him. He gets on the bed then pulls me to his chest. He smells so good, as always. I've missed his scent and just being in his arms like this. I feel like I've just came home

Him: I love you so much Nkanyezi

He kisses my forehead and I hold him tighter. If only I could find the right words to express just how much I love him

Me: I love you too and I'm sorry

Him: you don't have to be sorry sthandwa sami. Just promise me that you won't ever try to leave us again. Please

Me: I promise

Him: kiss me

Me: I'm still feeling weak, I don't have the energy to

I laugh and he tickles me. I'm not lying though, I still feel as if I'm in a daze. My body also still feels a bit weak. He lifts my chin with his finger and kisses me. The kiss feels so good and after a while, he pulls back then places a soft kiss on my lips

Him: that kiss has left me so hard

Me: stop it

Him: it's been long though baby

Me: Sphiwesihle, I'm not having sex with you on a hospital bed

Him: ngizolifaka kancane baby

Me: grow up

We laugh. I've missed him so much and I appreciate him so much. We talk for what feels like forever and I tell him about my dream and the address Amy gave me

Him: it's worth checking out. I'll check it out actually and hopefully I'll find our son before your 21 days are over

Me: please check it out. It's worth a shot. Ai I'm not looking forward to the next 3 weeks

Him: it will be good for you plus you'll be coming back to our home after that

He wasn't asking me, he was in fact telling me what will happen. I love him for that, he knows when to be dominant and when to give me free reign

A lot like friendship

Chapter 45

SIHLE

I gave the address to the detective who is handling our case and he promised to forward it to the police in Klerksdorp. As much as he said he will keep us update, I wanted to handle this personally so I told my friends and cousin about my plan and they were on-board with it. We take Lu's car since it's the most fuel efficient one. We get tons of snacks and energy drinks then get on the road

Siya: my wife is going to kill me for this

Me: she won't. She knows we are doing this for Sihle. She will kill you for not telling her

Siya: it's not my business to share

Lu: don't lie, you already told her. We all know how much couples gossip. The only time you keep secrets from each other is when you are cheating

We laugh. He has a point though. Nkanyezi and I gossip like crazy, we laugh and share our friend's funny stories. We are best friends like that and it just keeps us feeling young and full of life.

The drive from Bloem to Klerksdorp takes us just over 3 hours and when we get there, we start at the police station. I ask to talk to the detective who is handling the case. He introduces himself as detective Maake

Detective: Mr Khumalo, I was not expecting you

Me: I know but I figured that someone would have to fetch my son from the police station so it might as well be me

Detective: I understand. You just arrived early. We haven't had a chance to go to the address that you provided for us

Me: reason being?

Detective: there are protocols that need to be followed Mr Khumalo. We can't just go in there without a search warrant

I am getting pissed by all of this because I provided them with the address 2 weeks ago. I don't believe that obtaining a search warrant will take that long. This makes me wonder if these people have been looking for my son or they have just been chilling here and eating snot all day

Me: you don't have a search warrant?

Detective: we do have it now

Siya: so what's the problem?

Detective: and you are?

Siya: don't concern yourself with my identity. Concern yourself with how you are not doing your job.

Detective: keep talking all that crap and I'll throw you in a cell

Siya: uzonginikwa ubani? Don't fuck with me, I know my rights.

Me: Siya bruh, relax

Siya and the detective have a starrng contest which I'm really not interested in. I just want to find my son and get the hell out of here. I will not leave this place without Amani.

Me: if you have the warrant, why haven't you gone to the house?

Detective: I have to put a team together and do things the right way

Lu: ok, you do that Mr detective. Majita we have the address, let's go fetch intwana and get out of here. This one and his team will go there for supper

We leave. I can't believe how useless these people are. Just full of unnecessary excuses yet these are the people that we are supposed to trust to protect us. Kudlaliwe ngathi. I punch the address into the GPS and Lu drives off.

Kwenzo: what's the plan?

Siya: we get in, we take Amani and fuck off

Me: that's not a plan

Lu: we don't have a plan

Kwenzon: this girl doesn't know me.

Me: she knows you, you were at my wedding as one of my groomsmen. She knows you. She knows all of us

Kwenzon: fuck

Siya: my plan still seems like the better option here. Get in, turn the whole place upside down and find Amani and leave. Simple.

We get to the house and it's in the township. There are kids playing around on the streets and the house is fenced. Lu calls one of the kids, he looks 14 or so

Lu: eita

Kid: sho

Lu: who stays in that house?

Kid: the blue house?

Lu: yeah

Kid: an old lady and some auntie

Me: that's it?

The kid nods. He didn't mention anything about a baby which makes me doubt that this is the house

Kid: oh and some lady that moved in a few months ago. She works at Shoprite

Siya: does she have a baby?

Kid: yeah she does. The old lady looks after the baby. They are all in the house. The lady didn't go to work

Me: thank you ntwana

I give him R200 and he walks away smiling. That was a close call. To think that I was already doubting all of this but it seems like we are finally at the end of this nightmare. We get out the car and follow each other into the yard. The door is open, it's quite hot at this place. We walk in and my heart almost stops when I see my son. He is playing on the carpet with Lego blocks.

Me: good afternoon

Old lady: good afternoon. How may we help you?

Me: is his mother around?

I point at my son and the thought of calling Kamo his mother is making my balls sting but it's all part of our non-existing plan

Old lady: yes she is here. Naledi!!

The auntie shows up, greets us and the old lady tells Naledi to wake Kamo up. For a brief moment, I thought Naledi was Kamo and she has been using a fake name all along. I haven't been able to take my eyes off Amani. He has grown so much and he looks exactly like Nkanyezi. The complexion, the eyes and the mouth. He is 2 months away from turning two years old.

When Kamo walks into the room, she stops in her tracks when she sees me. It's as if she was convinced that at some point we will stop looking for our child and just move on

Me: I wanted to look you in the eye before I take my son home with me. You ripped my family apart, you hurt my wife in the worst possible way and I hope you rot in hell on earth. I hope you suffer for the rest of your life, may you never find peace, may you never find happiness and may you live a long and painful life. I pray that your child grows up to hate you

Kamo: I'm not letting you take my child Sihle

Me: yeyi wena, yeyi. Ungazongihlanyisa. This is your child? Your child? Clearly you are crazier than we thought.

Old lady: Kamo what's going on? Who are these people?

Siya: long story short gogo, this one stole this child from her friend and disappeared

Kamo: they are lying mama. This is my child.

She is now crying which I know is all an act. This woman is crazy and I don't want my child to spend another minute with these crazy people

Naledi: I've called the police, they are on the way

Kamo: why the hell did you do that? You are going to mess up everything, keng ka wena mara? Yeses Naledi man

Me: we have no problem waiting for the police

Naledi: now I'm confused. I was just trying to help you Kamo

Kamo: help me? When did I ask for your help? They are going to take my child away and it's all your fault

Kwenzon: it's not your child and you are going to jail.

15 minutes later the cops arrive being led by the same detective that was still putting together a team. Team yamasimba because he is here with only 2 other cops

Detective: I'm going to arrest you

Siya: for what?

Detective: defeating the ends of justice

Siya: you are crazy. This is the person you must arrest for those ends of justice you are talking about and kidnapping

Amani is now in my arms, he isn't crying but he is just looking around at all the commotion happening around him.

Detective: you have to take the baby to the hospital to be checked up on

Me: arrest her

Kamo: you can't let them take my baby

Detective: Kamogelo Mere you are under arrest for the kidnapping of baby Amani Khumalo.

They read her, her rights then cuff her and walk out with her while she is crying and screaming for the whole township to hear. Someone needs to look into this girl's mental health. Something is definitely wrong with her. The way she is screaming and crying, it's as if she is really convinced that Amani is her child.

Detective: she will be transported to the police station that has jurisdiction over the area where the crime occurred tomorrow morning and will appear before the magistrate in a few days for the bail application

Siya: bonga phela

Detective: you are really pushing my buttons right now

We get into our car and drive off

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NKANYEZI

I've been in the psychiatric ward for 2 weeks now and it's been a complete waste of my time. Even the psychologist is ready to give up on me because she believes I think I know all the answers. I put myself here, I know why I did that so really when you look at it, I do know all the answers. I don't like that psychologist though, she is trying too hard to be fake deep. It's annoying. I'm reading a book when I'm receive a call from my husband who has been gone for what feelings like forever. He left for Bloem 3 days ago and they went to Klerksdorp this morning. He had left with Asiphe but left her in Bloem when he went to Klerksdorp

Me: hey baby

Sihle: we found him sthandwa sami. We found Amani

Me: are you serious? You are not playing with me right now? You found him? How is he? Has he been taken care of? Does he still remember you?

I can't help the tears that start flowing down my cheeks. This has to be some kind of dream. I've waited six months to receive this call and now that it has happened, I still can't believe it.

Him: slow down baby before you give yourself a panic attack. He is fine, he has been taken care off and I don't think he still remembers me but he hasn't started crying yet so maybe the bond is still there

Me: thank God he is alright. You guys need to come home already

Him: we will. Kamo was arrested and will be transported that side tomorrow morning. The bail hearing will be in a few days

Me: I hope they lock her up and throw away the key

A lot like friendship

Chapter 46

I've yearned for this moment for so long, just to be in the presence of this boy that I love with all my heart. He has changed so much in his absence but what's so painful is that he doesn't know us anymore. He doesn't know his brothers either. We are all just strangers to him. Amani has been home for two weeks and I've been home for a week. It has been the most heart-breaking week of my life. My own child doesn't recognize me.

Sihle: Give him some time sthandwa sami

Me: I hate this Khumalo. He is my baby

Him: I know baby. He will get used to us in a few months. Just don't take it to heart and be patient with him

He pulls me into his arms and rubs my back. I just put the kids to bed and we are cuddling on our bed. It's all just overwhelming, I'm rebuilding all my relationships and it's not easy. My marriage almost fell apart, I neglected my sons and Amani was taken from us. It's all just a lot to deal with. On top of all of that, I am unemployed. I had to quit my job because I wasn't coping so now we are a one salary household which is frustrating on its own

Me: we need to talk about something

Him: and what's that?

Me: money

Him: we are fine

Me: are you sure?

We both sit up and lean against the headboard. I love him so much and maybe I wouldn't have made it through this without his support. Sometimes I feel as if he deserves so much more than what I'm bringing to the table. I doubt myself so much when it comes to him because he is just so perfect

Him: we are not as comfortable as we were when we had two incomes but we are stable

Me: I need to get a job

Him: not right now. Use this time to find yourself again, to connect with the boys and me. We didn't only lose Amani during these past months, we lost more and we can't be in denial about it

Me: I know and you are right. I love you Khumalo, so much

Him: I love you more MamDolomba

The weeks that followed were tough but I had to be tougher. I had to withstand everything that came our way. I couldn't afford to break down. First we had to deal with Kamo's bail hearing. Khanye came this side for that but we didn't talk. Things are just so messed up between us that I don't even know where to start in fixing them. It hurts that I can't call him for everything that happens in my life. We've just gone from everything to nothing and it hurts. No one told him about my suicide attempt which I appreciated. I hate being pitied upon. Kamo didn't get bail. She remains in a psychiatric hospital while she is being evaluated. If she gets away with this, I will kill her myself. She doesn't deserve to play the crazy card and we forget about what she took away from us.

Its Saturday today and I'm making breakfast with my kids.

Nhlango: can we go somewhere for holidays? Not grandma's house or the other grandma's house. Just somewhere different

Me: where do you want to go?

Nyaniso: a beach house mama

Nhlango: yeah or a farm. Somewhere peaceful. We haven't been together like this as a family in so long. It deserves a holiday

What broke my heart is that I know we can't afford a vacation right now. It's November and we have to start saving up for uniforms and school fees. A holiday just doesn't make financial sense right now

Me: I'll talk to daddy

Nyaniso: awesome

Sihle walks into the kitchen with Amani. They are getting closer by the day whereas my relationship with him seems to be moving at a slower pace.

Sihle: good morning family

He kisses my lips

Nhlango: sies baba

Sihle: sies what?

Nhlango: you just kissed mom

Me: I kiss you all the time

Nhlango: but not like that

Sihle: your girlfriend will kiss you like that not my wife

Nyaniso: but you kissed mom like that and she is your wife not your girlfriend

They argue back and forth about the difference between girlfriend and wife. Sihle and his sons are quite entertaining. His mom says they are exactly like him. Both of them

Me: morning Amani

Amani: morning

Me: are you hungry?

He nods. I dish up for everyone including myself and we sit down for family breakfast. We only get to do this on weekends and it becomes such a precious occasion

Nhlango: tell him mama

Sihle: what am I being told?

Me: your children want to go on holiday

Nyaniso: at a beach house

Nhlango: or a farm

Sihle and I look at each other as we have our non-verbal conversation. Just as I had thought, we can't afford a holiday

Sihle: we'll go to the beach and I'll take you to a farm for the day. How's that?

Me: we can even have a picnic at the farm

Amani: picnic

He claps his hands with the biggest smile on his face. He looks happy so clearly picnics are one of his favourite things

Nhlango: that's fine baba

We spend the rest of the day watching their favourite movies, having snacks and listening to their stories. Some of these stories we've heard before but they get twisted every time. I've missed out on a lot when it comes to these boys but I intend to make up for it.

The next day we go to church in the morning, it has become our thing and honestly it was a bit strange for us but now we feel are home. After church we drop the kids off with my mom and go on our ice cream date. We haven't had one of these in ages

Sihle: you look beautiful

Me: your favourite words

Him: my truth. Umuhle Mkami

I blush like a love struck teenage. We've been married for 6years now and it still feels so new, so refreshing and so peaceful. We've changed from the people we were when we started dating but that's because we've gotten older and we've been through so much

Me: thank you for never giving up on me and for loving me even when I didn't deserve your love

Him: you've always deserved my love. You are a strong and beautiful woman. I'm lucky to have you as a wife

A lot like friendship

Chapter 47

It's the day of Kamo's trial and I have had an upset stomach since the early hours of the morning. It gets like that when I'm nervous or too stressed. A month ago it was ruled that she is mentally capable to stand trial. The crazy card did not help her. I am one of the state witnesses which means I'm getting in the box today.

Sihle: are you sure you are not pregnant baby?

Me: yes. I'm just stressed

Him: I'm asking because before we found out about Nyaniso, you had the same upset stomach and said inyongo

I laugh and shake my head. I know I'm not pregnant because I had my tubes tied after Amani. 3 kids was the agreement and we have them

Me: and inyongo is almost 4 years old now

Him: they've grown up so fast. Nhlango is already in grade 1. We are parents to a school going child. That's wild

Me: I know right. We have grown too

Him: well I grew up way before you did

Me: that's debatable

Him: it's not. Let's get ready and leave

After taking a shower together, we get dressed and leave the house at 7am. I'm hoping this will be over today, I just want to move on from it and focus on my family while fully knowing that Kamo is behind bars. When we get to court, we are early but my friends are here to support us. Well I'd like to assume they are here for us and not Kamo. I've distanced myself from them since what happened to Amani. We only talk on the phone, I haven't allowed anyone into my home yet.

Sihle: Siya and Lisa are here

Me: and I just spotted Avuyile and Zinathi. I'm sure that's team Kamo. Zinathi is Khanye's sister

Him: I don't think there is a team Kamo. Everyone knows what Kamo did was wrong. Only a fool would support her right now

Me: you'd be surprised

We walk towards them, exchange greetings and hugs. We haven't seen each other since Sihle's party

Lisa: how are you feeling?

Me: I'm good. I just want this to be over

Siya: they must just sentence her to 500years in prison. She must die there

Zinathi: and what about her child?

Siya: she doesn't care about that child

Zinathi: you don't know that

Avuyile: she left Langa and stole Star's baby, disappeared with him for months. I doubt she thought about her child during that time

Zinathi: wow Avuyile

She walks away towards her brother's car. I'm not even taking this to heart because I knew this is how it would be. Not everyone is going to be on our side and that's ok. It's their choice. The court doors open at 8am and I go in to see the prosecutor. He preps me for when I'll be going on the witness stand, he tells me the kind of questions I should expect and all of that. He also assures me that we have a strong case.

The trial turns out to be lengthy, draining and frustrating. Kamo is still pleading not guilty and I'm sure Khanye is the one paying for this lawyer. He is good. We go for recess just before the accused's witnesses take the stand. The moment we step out of court, Sihle wraps his arms around me

Sihle: you did great up there

Me: really? I was so nervous

Him: you told the truth and that's doing great. Even when the lawyer was cross examining you, you stood your ground. I'm proud of you my love

He kisses me but pulls away when someone clears their throat. I turn around and it's Khanye. He is with Lango. He has grown so much since the last time I saw him

Khanye: hi

Me: hi

Sihle: sho. Lango lets go get you some chips

Sihle looks at me and I nod then they walk away. My attention now focuses on Khanye

Him: how are you?

Me: I'm fine and you?

Him: I'm fine

Prior to this moment, Khanye and I have never dealt with awkward silence. Its uncomfortable, to say the least. I feel betrayed by him, he didn't support me while I was dealing with Amani's kidnapping and he blamed me for the cops searching his house as if I ordered them too.

Him: I just spoke to Kamo's lawyer, things are not looking good for her

I don't respond. I am happy that things are not looking good for her. She deserves everything that's coming to her

Him: he says that she might be facing 12 years behind bars

Me: that's nothing. Langa won't even be in high school by the time she comes out. She must get more. She deserves more

He sighs. The stress is evident in his eyes. The pain is there too but I'm not to blame for any of this. It's not my fault. My family and I are the victims here not Kamo

Him: Star I know what she did was wrong and I can't imagine the pain that she caused you and your family but my family suffered as well

Me: and whose fault is that? Mine?

Him: I'm not blaming you for this

Me: but you are not blaming her either. Wow Zukhanye. Just wow

Him: look, you have to understand that I am a parent first before I'm your friend. My kids have suffered a great deal, their mother disappeared for months and I didn't have the answers they sought. It was painful to watch my children cry themselves to sleep because of this.

I don't understand what Khanye wants from me with this conversation. I really don't. We all suffered yet he wants to protect the person that is the cause of our pain. Ai ngeke

Me: I needed you but not once did you show up for me. I had lost my child and you had lost your girlfriend and the mother of your child but not once did you offer to help me find her. You turned your back on me during the time when I needed you most

Him: I love her Star. I have never loved someone as much as I love Kamo. She made a mistake because she is human. She was not well, I told you about that. Under normal circumstances, Kamo would never intentionally hurt you

Me: sick or not, it doesn't change the fact that she did hurt me. I'm not saying I'm perfect or that I'm a saint because I'm not. I have my flaws too. I have forgiven her because it's the Christian thing to do but she hasn't apologised, she hasn't acknowledged what she did to me and my family which is why I will never forget this nor let her anywhere near me and my family. You can continue to love her and support her but I'm not going to do that. I don't love her, you do

We are not fixing our friendship today, that's evident but I'm glad we are having this conversation. It's good to get things off your chest and set yourself free.

When we get back in court, the defence leads their witnesses and Kamo gets put on the stand as well. It takes everything in me not to want to attack her right there. Sihle tightens the hold in my hand as my breathing gets faster and unstable

Sihle: calm down baby. Breathe in and slowly exhale. Don't allow her to have power over you right now. Slow breaths ok?

I do as he says then focus on the rubbish Kamo is saying. She is speaking as if only now she realizes what she has done. She keeps crying and apologising. She is trying to play the victim and it's making me so angry. When the trial eventually comes to the end, we are told that judgement and sentencing will be done in two days. I am so tired in every possible way.

We decide to go out for dinner with my friends since they will be staying until this case is closed.

Lisa: I've missed you so much

Me: I'm sorry for distancing myself from you. It was all just too much and I needed to deal on my own

Her: I understand. Are you and Khanye ever going to fix things?

I sigh as the conversation I had earlier with Khanye flashes through my mind. I doubt that things will ever go back to how they were before this whole mess. Neither of us won from this, we just lost, and that sucks

Me: I don't know

Her: he isn't coping Star. Men aren't built like us, he can't raise two kids on his own

Me: Lisa I'm not raising Kamo's child for her. That's not going to be fair on Lango or myself

Her: I'm not saying take her kids in. I'm just saying that you and Khanye need to fix your friendship. He needs you. Having you will take the load off his shoulders

Me: and put it on mine? Because I don't have enough already on my shoulders? I feel for Lango, I really do but I can't help. I'm going to be selfish with myself because when I'm kind, people take advantage of that

The two days fly by so quickly and we are back in court today. Kamo is found guilty and sentenced to 18years in prison. Justice is served but the fact that she will be back in

society before Amani even reaches high school is crazy. I'm however happy that it is all behind us. We can find peace in knowing that she is paying for her crime

A lot like friendship

Chapter 48

I started applying for a job at the start of the New Year and only called for an interview in February. I manage to get a job at one of the multiracial private schools in town. There are only 4 black teachers in a school that caters for students between grade RR up until grade 12. It's going to be tough to make my career here but its fine. I'm here for money and nothing more. I volunteer at the previous school I used to teach at which is in the township. That's on weekends though and some days after school. It's just for the guidance counselling.

I get up an hour before Sihle does, take a shower then wake the kids up. Nhlango goes into the shower while I bath Nyaniso and Amani. When they are dressed, Sihle wakes up and I sort out his clothes while he showers. I have a full time job before my actual job. We all have breakfast together, cereal of course then leave the house around the same time. While I'm at work I receive a call from Khanye

Me: hello

Khanye: hey. How are you?

Me: I'm well and you?

Him: I'm ok. I'm around and I wanted to know if you are free for lunch

Me: uhm sure. We can meet up at the beach front at 3PM

Him: not a problem. See you then

Me: bye

The prison Kamo is locked up in is around here so maybe he was here to see her or maybe he was here to see Jasmine since she stays with Amy's parents now. Whatever the reason may be, I know he didn't come here for me. I go through the first 2hours of the day with my class and then its recess. I use this time to structure me weekly plan

"Hey,"

I lift my eyes and they land on Mr Mkhwanazi. Andile Mkhwanazi. He is one of the few black teachers in this school. He walks in and sits on one of the desks in the front row. There are married teachers in this school that are crushing on this man. He looks good, I won't lie but I'm not fazed by him

Me: hi

Andile: are you good?

Me: I'm well, how may I help you?

Him: straight to the point. I like that

When he notices that I'm really not interested in his small talk, he clears his throat and smiles a little

Him: I just wanted to come check on you and to say hi

Me: as you can see, I'm quite occupied

Him: ok then. I'll be on my way

I don't respond but instead I focus on what I was doing. I know an entitled, arrogant and self-centred guy when I see one and Andile is definitely one of those guys. Women fall at his feet.

When my day comes to an end, I send Sihle a text asking him to pick the kids up from school then drive to the beachfront to meet up with Khanye. His car is already in the parking when I get there. I'm a bit uneasy about this meeting but the least I can do is hear him out

Me: hey

Khanye: hey

He gets up to hug me before I sit down. It's awkward and weird again but I guess it's understandable considering what we have been through. A waiter comes to take my order then walks away

Me: how are you?

Him: I'm surviving and you?

Me: I'm good

Him: Star, I'm sorry. The last time we spoke, I didn't get a chance to say how sorry I am. I should have been there for you. You were my best friend and maybe at the time I was just naive and believed that we could survive anything. I'm not going to apologise for Kamo, she can do that on her own. I just want us to fix things. We haven't spoken in close to a year, I miss you. I was wrong and I'm sorry

Me: I don't know what to say. Maybe I also need to apologise. I could have handled things better

Him: I was just so relieved when you took her to visit you guys because it meant there would be peace in my house. My kids got to walk around the house freely without fear that they would see her and she would start shouting at them. I just didn't think she would bring harm to you. I didn't think it was that bad

You can't stop a ripple effect until it is done. What Kamo did caused a ripple effect of pain. She hurt me, she hurt Khanye and Khanye and I hurt each other. The kids were also affected and it all started with one single action from her.

Me: how did we live with someone for so long and not know where she is from?

We laugh and take sips of our drinks. I still can't believe we were that careless. We brought this person into our lives, shared intimate parts of our lives with her and she was always guarded with hers. That should have been the first red flag but I down played it because once upon a time I was a person who kept my past locked up. I became too understanding when I should have been alarmed

Him: you have no idea how angry she would get when asked about her family. I wanted to pay damages for Lango but she told me to give her the money and she will deposit it to her mother

Me: and you did that?

Him: hell no. That's not how it works. I tried doing my research but I came to dead ends all the time until I gave up. She didn't have a criminal record so that was ok

Me: I've missed you so much

He smiles. He is the one person that has been there since the beginning, the friend I never knew I needed and my pillar of strength during some of the hardships I've faced. At some point we got hijacked and I was raped in his presence. We share a bond and it was shattered but it wasn't broken

Him: I've missed you too. Can we just try to move on from this? It doesn't have to happen overnight, we can take it slow

Me: are you still in a relationship with her?

He shakes his head

Him: I broke it off. I can't switch the feelings off but I'm sure over time I'll get over her. I'm not even going to allow Lango to visit her. He doesn't need that kind of thing in his life. She will just have to rebuild their relationship when she gets out

Me: your children have been through so much

Him: it's crazy. Also I'm thinking of moving this side. Sell my house in Bloem and move this side. That house, that city just has too many bad memories. My children and I need a fresh start. I was actually here for a job interview, hopefully I'll get it

I can't help the smile that appears on my face. This will be amazing, our children will grow up together and we will rebuild our friendship at a closer distance. The best news ever

Me: I hope you get it. Hopefully this place will unlock the happiness that has been taken from you so many times

Him: my kids are my happiness. I'm going to stay away from women for a while, especially your friends.

Me: the problem is me, clearly

Him: I told you from day one that my girlfriends will hate you

The lunch date turns out to be amazing, it's refreshing and will bring about a new start. This is the final piece that was needed in order to fully close the chapter and start a new one.

I get home just after 6PM and my husband is cooking

Me: I'm sorry I'm late

I kiss his lips the place my bag on the counter

Sihle: it's ok love. How was your day?

Me: let me freshen up and tell you all about it.

I greet his kids who are laying on the carpet and watching TV then I head to our bedroom to take a shower and change. I put on leggings and an oversized shirt

Me: I met up with Khanye and we agreed to fix things

Him: is it? That's great love. You guys were great friends

Me: yeah. He might also be moving this side

Him: to be closer to Kamo?

I shake my head

Me: for a new start and to be closer to Jasmine. I'm sure she will go back to living with him when he is this side. He says he broke up with Kamo

Him: oh that's good for him

A lot like friendship

Chapter 49

[3 YEARS LATER]

My family has been filled with love and happiness for the past three years. My marriage is at its peak, I'm happy and in love so much that I still find it hard to believe that in 8 months, Sihle and I will be celebrating our 10 year anniversary. Wedding anniversary that is. It's crazy because it still feels like I married him yesterday. I don't doubt that this is the man that God moulded for me. Never has he ever laid a hand on me, never disregarded my feelings and he has never cheated on me. Trust and communication have been our pillars. We talk, a lot and it helps us. We don't have the perfect marriage, we disagree sometimes and we fight over things but we talk and apologise and find a way forward. We found our place in church, we pray a lot more and I guess we owe that to Amani's kidnapping. It somehow brought us closer to church

Sihle: how are you still so weak to my touches?

Me: the same way you are still so weak to my mouth on your cock

We laugh. We had just made love, silently because the kids are up and our room is not soundproof. We are at the point where we have to send our kids away to their grandparents just so I can moan and scream as I please. Kids ruin everything, I tell you.

Me: we have to get ready for Jasmine's birthday party

Him: oh yeah. They are having it at Khanye's house?

Me: no. Baby did you even read the invitation card?

Him: it was too colourful and it was addressed to Nhlango and his brothers

Khanye got the job and moved this side. Having him so close has been amazing for us and our friendship. We needed this. We are too old to be making new friends because people out there have shady intentions. The birthday party is being hosted by Amy's parents which shall be interesting for me because my ex will be around. I haven't seen

him in years which I am so grateful for. I just hope that he has grown up and the entitlement has somehow worn off.

We shower and get ready then have breakfast before being on our way.

Sihle: do I have your permission to beat up your ex if he annoys me?

Me: my full permission baby

Nhlango: wait, mom has an ex? Why does mom have an ex?

Me: boy, keep quiet. No one is talking to you

Nyaniso: what's an ex?

Sihle: an ex is something that was but isn't anymore

Nyaniso: I don't get it baba

Sihle: good

Nhlango is 9years old, he shouldn't know what an ex is either but he hangs out with Nande a lot so I'm not surprised. Nande uses my son as a chick magnet. I leave them to argue about this ex business while we drive to the house. When we get there, everything has been set up. They have a frozen theme happening and everything looks amazing. A bit over the top but amazing. Sihle takes my hand as we walk towards the yard, the boys have run in already. Nhlango spotted Lango and they ran

Sihle: I'm so glad we have sons because pink gives me nausea

Me: you are so dramatic Kodwa Khumalo. It's beautiful

Him: unicorn vomit kind of beautiful I guess

Me: disgusting much?

I spot Khanye with his siblings and Avuyile. That will be our spot until this whole thing is over. I'm just hear for my Jazzy Fizzle and not her crazy maternal family. We hug everyone before taking our seats

Me: why are you guys drinking juice?

Avuyile: same question I asked

Khanye: it's a kid's party Starlight

Me: I don't understand what our throats have to do with the kids

Zinathi: you want the white people to come for us? There is alcohol at Khanye's place

Sihle: for the after party? I like how you think

Sihle and Khanye fist bump while I'm just left confused. We are going to spend hours here drinking juice. Yho saze sahlukomezeka. Had I known this, I would have bought a 6 pack nyana and kept it in my handbag

Khanye: don't look now but your ex is making his way this side

Sihle: he better not start shit because I will knock all his teeth out

I roll my eyes. He must not speak nonsense to me because Sihle has been working out all week just for kicking Blake's ass.

Blake: good morning everyone

We greet back. He is with some tall and skinny blonde that is not Nat. I wonder how that ended because they were convinced that they will be together forever

Blake: Star, it's been a while

Me: hmmm

Blake: how are you?

Me: married and happy. You?

Blake: I'm good. This is my fiancé Simone

Me: alright

Blake: we don't have to be enemies you know. We all love Jasmine and we must get along for her sake

Me: uyahlanya wena yaz. You know sometimes I wonder what happened to you. You used to be such a cool guy, you were kind and supportive and then out of the pink and the blue, you switched up. If I didn't know any better, I'd say uNat wakuloya straight

This is why I should have alcohol. I need iPercent nyana just to be able to handle Blake. He drains the sanity out of me and it's as if he can't hear himself when he speaks. Everything just sounds normal to him. He should have just dated Kamo. They would have been perfect together living it up at Life Esidimeni

Simone: we can't understand what you are saying

Me: the person I'm talking to understands me so wena don't worry yourself about it

Blake: I didn't change Star, you started seeing me differently because of him

He points at Khanye and I roll my eyes again. I'm done with this person. I really am because there is no getting through to him and I'm at the point in my life where I don't owe exes lousy explanations. He must just believe what he wants to believe and keep it moving

Sihle: we thank you. You can go now

Blake: you shouldn't even be here. You hurt my sister

Sihle: remind me again on who your sister was

Blake: don't piss me off Sihle. I'm warning you

Sihle gets on his feet and walks closer to Blake. I'm going to be Stevie Wonder to whatever happens next because it's none of my business. Blake will get his ass kicked, that's for sure and we will probably be told to leave. I'm good with that too because I need a drink

Sihle: or what? You'll call your mama to come shout at me?

Blake: leave my family out of this

Now all eyes are on them because Blake is a little loud bitch. Can't even have a manly conversation with another guy. Their mothers come running out of the house, angithi they are BFFs

Mrs M: Blake, what's all the noise about? I told you to stay away from Star

Blake: I just came to greet

Mrs M: no, leave them alone. You are scaring the kids with your noise

Blake: mom, you don't know what he said about Amy

Mrs M: let my daughter rest Blake, please. Stop using her to fight your battles. Come, your father is calling you

Blake: mom

Mrs M: I said come Blake

They walk away leaving us with my mother on law who is currently not pleased with her son. I'm also sitting this one out. Ayingidingi

Mrs K: seriously Sphiwesihle? At a child's party?

Sihle: I'm not the one who was screaming

Mrs K: but uyamazi nje ukuthi uhlanya lolu. He is always looking for a fight. He is still grieving his sister's death

Sihle: 27 years later? Ai he must just stay away from my wife and I because I will fuck him up

Me: language Khumalo

He winks at me and smiles. I am still so in love with his smile. It still does the things to me. His mother goes back to wherever she came from and Sihle sits down

Khanye: this is the shit I have to deal with from this guy every single time

Sihle: mshaye. He will stop

Khanye: he is my daughter's uncle. I can't beat him up

Sihle: it's the only way he will stop though

Avuyile: we can always make it look like he was getting mugged. He does need a beating though. A serious one

Zubenathi: this is one hell of a hectic birthday party

Ziyanda: it's a lesson to you. Don't mix the races

We leave when the party has died down and go to Khanye's house. Now the adults get to have fun. I'm drinking Bernini Blush and Sihle is drinking whiskey. The kids are with his parents so we get to have fun plus we are sleeping over.

Sihle: I love you

Me: what do you want?

He gives me a sly smile which convinces me that yep, he does want something and I know I'll say yes to whatever he wants. I'm weak like that

Him: meet me in the bathroom in 3 mins

My clit tingles as he nibbles on my earlobe. I love it when he is like this. It's a turn on, on its own nje. Everyone is focused on the story Avuyile is telling so no one is even looking at us

Me: ok. I'll go first

I get up and quickly go to the bathroom with my intimate wipes shoved in my back pocket. I quickly wipe my coochie and wait for him. I've already removed my panties anyway. He walks in and I smile to myself. 34 has never looked so sexy.

Him: you look happy to see me

Me: always am

Drunk sex is definitely top 2. It's sloppy and rushed but produces the best orgasms. He takes it from the back while I rub my clit and his hands are squeezing my boobs. Sex with Sihle always feels so good and different every time.

Him: fuck I love you so much

Me: I'm so close

He continues to pound me, my legs almost feel numb and wobbly so I hold on to the basin with two hands inside of one. When my orgasm washes over me, I almost lose my balance. He reaches climax just after me and we find our way to the cold floor tiles

Him: I have the best wife in the world

He kisses my forehead.

Me: you are a sex addict

Him: only for you

Me: I love you too

We get cleaned up, thank you wipes, then make our way out to join the others

Avuyile: don't you two ever get tired of fucking though

Me: I don't know what you are talking about

Khanye: yeah right

Sihle and I look at each other and smile. They must just let us be. We are young and in love. We deserve to be living like this

A lot like friendship

Chapter 50

I didn't grow up surrounded by love and affection. I have never witnessed lasting love during my childhood which is tragic now that I think about it. Every child deserves to experience love in some way. It's probably why I shower my sons with so much attention and love. They are worthy of everything that I was denied of having. My start to life was not easy, I suffered a tremendous amount of pain. I witnessed things that people under the age of 18 should never witness but I managed to escape. I became one of the few people that didn't become what they were raised in. Leaving home for the years that I did worked out for me, it didn't mean my life was suddenly easy but it worked out. When I look back on my life, I no longer cry instead I rejoice in how far I've come. I rejoice that, despite the losses that I have suffered, I still remain strong and unbroken.

Today my husband and I celebrate 10 years of marriage and what a journey that has been. God knew what he was doing when He sent this man my way, he knew I didn't want him but I needed him. Being with Sihle has opened my eyes to wider possibilities and limitless opportunities. To have a man that supports you, encourages you, respects you and loves you is a blessing not many people have. Every time I get on my knees to pray, I thank God twice for this man and the children we have together. I love being a wife and a mother, it fulfills my soul like nothing else. There is a satisfaction that comes from taking care of my family and just making sure that we are all well.

We are having a Thanksgiving dinner to celebrate our anniversary. We didn't want to do the cliché of renewing vows and all of that. Over the years we have become quite reserved and private. We are more about the intimate gatherings over the crowds we used to attract

Lisa: how do you guys do it? You make marriage look so easy and fun

Me: marriage is what you make it. It takes effort and dedication. I'm no expert but I've learnt a few things along the way

Her: yeah I guess so but motherhood is tough. I don't remember the last time my house was clean for a full day.

I laugh because I agree with her. Kids don't care that you woke up at 5am to clean the house, they will have your floors dirty and sticky by 7am. They are not bothered that you

bought Egyptian cotton sheets for your bed, they will jump on it with dirty feet without a care in the world. I can't imagine life without my babies though. I'd be so incomplete.

Lisa is helping me get ready for this dinner because just like our wedding, everyone is here. We are a big deal today and I'm making sure that I look almost as beautiful as I did on my wedding day. The pressure to look good is always on when I'm going to be around Sihle. The man looks effortlessly sexy on an average day. The door opens and Asiphe and Tali walk in. They look beautiful in their dresses, especially Tali. This girl has grown so much

Asiphe: you guys are drinking alcohol without us

Me: that will teach you to bring your own alcohol to such events

The lady doing my makeup laughs. We've been sipping on champagne all morning. My head is even buzzing now

Tali: bhuti will kill you guys, everyone is already waiting

Me: and they must wait longer

Lisa: no. This is not your wedding day, we will not accept you being late.

I give her the side eye before sipping on my champagne. It's still my day, I don't understand why they refuse to let me shine. After a few minutes, more like 30 minutes but whose keeping track?! Anyway after 30 minutes I'm done getting ready and we walk out into the garden. That's where everything has been set up and it looks breath-taking. The gold and white combination looks classy and elegant. I love it.

My husband kisses my cheek before pulling the chair back for me to sit down. The smile on his face gives me the impression that I've impressed him

Sihle: you look absolutely gorgeous sthandwa sami

Am I not blushing? 10 years later and he still has that effect on me. I turn into a teenage girl who is experiencing love for the first time when I'm with him. Even though I know he is nothing like the Sihle I went to high school with, in my fantasies he is still that bad boy. It's a huge turn on for me to picture him like that.

Nhlango: mom looks beautiful hey

Nyaniso: I know, right. It's as if it's not the same mom that was punching the jeqe dough yesterday

I don't know whether to hug them or flip the middle finger at them. My kids are just a bag of confusion. We have starters over a light conversation then move to mains and we do speeches just before dessert. Sihle's dad goes first. He is such a sweet man, intimidating but sweet

Mr K: when my son uSihle told me that he wants to propose to Nkanyezi, I had my doubts. I raised this boy and not once did I picture him as a husband. I always thought he would end up as the cool uncle that drinks Hennessy and smokes cigars. I'm glad I was wrong though, clearly the boy has always been taking notes from me. Congratulations my children, you've come a long way. The journey had its potholes and curves but you guys hung on. Just continue doing what you are doing and God will bless you with many more years together. I love you both so much

The thing about Sihle's dad is that he can toy with your emotions. He can have you laughing one moment and the next moment you are crying. He is turning out to be a great grandfather to our boys and just an amazing man.

Mrs K: you people need to box your emotions and express them at the end when we are done. How am I supposed to speak to people who are crying?

We laugh because as much as she is serious, the way she says it is funny.

Mrs K: I remember meeting Nkanyezi for the first time as my son's girlfriend. I had met her before because they were friends or whatever but when I met her as his girlfriend, I loved her instantly. I loved how she carried herself and how she was sure of herself. As a woman, you need to be sure of yourself and your position in your man's life. It helps him to find his position in your life as well and carry it out well. Nkanyezi and Sihle complement each other and they are friends. Friendship is important in a marriage, even in a relationship. It's important. It minimises the outsiders from your sacred union. You guys are a beautiful couple, you are blessed with love and wonderful children. I'm

happy to still be here to celebrate this milestone with you guys and I know we will be celebrating many more in future. I love you

She blows us kisses and I catch mine and place my hand over my chest. This woman has cemented her place in my heart. I'm one of the lucky people that are blessed with a wonderful mother in law. The woman is a gem honestly. My mother is up next

Mom: I don't have many words to share but I'm so grateful to see my daughter so happy. That's all we ever wish for our children, that they find true happiness and Nkanyezi has found it. Thank you Lord for being the light at the end of a dark and cold tunnel. Sihle, ngyabonga mfana wami for everything you are to my daughter. The love you two have for each other is the kind we only read about in fairytales. May God continue to bless you abundantly and may you never forget what God has done in your lives. Ngyabonga zingane zami.

Everyone gets a chance to say something to us and about us. For once it feels good to just sit back and hear people talk about us. It's like watch a movie about yourself but without the script. Raw and uncut

Khanye: this is the relationship no one saw coming yet it's the one that has been unshaken. Star, I love you buddy and I've only ever wished happiness for you. Years ago I told you that there will come a time in your life where you will be so happy, you'll be shitting rainbows. Aphi amanga ami? Happiness looks so good on you. It goes to show that you were made for it. Congratulations on standing by each other for a whole decade. I'm sure it wasn't easy, there have been challenges but you have endured them. They won't say it but I will, you guys inspire us to never give up on love. Sihle, thank you bruh. For loving her and never hurting her.

At this point I'm not even trying to hide that I'm a hot mess. I appreciate every person here today because they've all played their roles in my life so beautifully. I'm blessed when it comes to friends and family. No one can take that away from me. I look at my husband and he smiles. This smile is still my weakness and he knows it. He takes my hand and we both get on our feet. I just want to cuddle up closer to him so I can baste in his scent. I hope he never dies and if he has to, he must die after I die because I don't want to go through life without him

Sihle: I love this woman so much. I mean, look at her guys, how gorgeous is she?

I'm blushing again because of him. All eyes are on us but my eyes are on him. Only him. He is all I see at this moment

Sihle: 10 years ago I committed myself to loving you and not a day has passed without my heart reminding me of that commitment. Even when we lost Amani and you were sure that our marriage was over, my heart reminded me that I committed it to you. That I made vows to you and to God that I will love you even when it gets difficult, even when I don't like you and even when you beg me not to, I will still love you. Being with you has been beautiful, it has been ugly, it's been sad and it has been pure bliss but above it all, I wouldn't trade what we have for anything in the world. You were made for me and I was made for you. We will grow old together, we will get to see our grandchildren and their children and we will die together when we are 102years old. Thank you for being who you are in my life, it wouldn't be much of a life without you. I love you so much
Mkami

These feel like the vows all over again just a million times better because we are experienced in what we are talking about. We have walked this journey together; the good, the bad and the ugly. We knew it was never going to be smooth sailing

Me: firstly thank you all for being here with us. Thank you for the roles you play in making our lives easier. It's very rare to find true friendship and chosen family but here I am with both. I really appreciate you all and I love all of you in your own unique way.

I turn to Sihle

Me: myeni wami, you defeat me. You have a way with words that I can never match even if I tried. To be loved by you has been such a privilege and to know that despite all that we have been through, not once did you give up on me makes my heart swell with more love for you. I love you so much Khumalo. Thank you for loving me the way you do, supporting and encouraging me and loving me enough for the both of us.

He kisses me, it's what I've been wanting him to do since I laid my eyes on him. After the speeches we have dessert then enjoy the rest of the day together with family. It turns out to be a really beautiful day and I couldn't have wanted to celebrate it any other

way. Sihle's parents leave with the kids which means I have my husband all to myself. Heaven on earth I tell you

Sihle: I can't believe you thought I wasn't your type

I laugh. My head is on his chest and his arm is around me. We just made love and we are now cuddling on the couch. No kids means we can do it anywhere we want

Me: you thought the same thing

Him: I told you what you wanted to hear

Me: just like you are doing now

I know all his tricks, I don't know why he still thinks he can smooth talk me

Him: I'm trying to charm you. Can you act accordingly?

Me: charm who? I'm immune to your charms

Him: yeah right. You are even blushing already

Me: no I'm not hawu

Him: you are cute when you are blushing. The one thing that I love about us is that we have a love that's a lot like friendship

Me: we do. It's a lot like friendship but with a sprinkle of six gun spice and sugar

I lift my head and stare at him. He has his eyes closed but he isn't sleeping. He looks like the peace that he brought into my life. There are so many things that changed after we started dating. I made up with my mother and I came back home. I don't think I would have done that without him. I know that when he looks at me, he doesn't see the girl that was raped and abused. I'm not a victim to him instead I'm who I'm destined to be... a force to be reckoned with. I'm bright and powerful. I am and will forever be iNkanyezi Enhle.

*****THE END*****